Design-Build Lessons Learned

Projects that require the coordination, cooperation and approval of agencies or people beyond the control of FDOT are more likely to experience delay and therefore may be inappropriate for D-B. Examples are projects that involve right of way acquisition or complicated environmental issues. Districts must evaluate the risks associated with such variables when evaluating the possibility of using D-B procedures for a project. The potential benefits of D-B must be weighed against risk, which increases as the number and severity of such unknown factors increase.

Reviews of D-B projects indicate that an emphasis on the following issues may help ensure a successful D-B project:

- Pick the right project for D-B. Projects must be well defined, have little or no right of way required and few, if any outstanding environmental or permitability issues.
- Pick the right team. The selection process must be carefully structured to select the best-qualified team.
- Prepare a clear and concise request for proposal. The scope must cover all desired work requirements.
- Allow for contingencies to cover unforeseen conditions. Although a D-B project should not have overruns, there will be unforeseen conditions and additional work requirements that may arise. The project funding should include a contingency to cover these issues.
- Submit adequate component plan sets. Component plan sets such as roadway, structures, signing and marking, maintenance of traffic (MOT), and so forth, should be submitted for segments that can be logically reviewed and built.
- Allow adequate time for plan reviews. Plan reviews cannot be as thorough as for conventional designs because reviewers will probably not receive the full design in one submittal. Since the contractor has much more responsibility for the final product for a D-B project, thorough plan reviews by FDOT are not as necessary. However, FDOT plan reviews are important, and reviewers must be provided adequate time for their reviews.
- Process all information and decisions through the PM. D-B projects are fast paced and involve many concurrent activities. The PM must know about all these activities to ensure proper coordination.
- Recognize that communication is essential. Frequent project meetings with the PM, the contractor, designer, CEI and other interested parties are necessary.
- Document all actions and decisions. Because of the fast pace and concurrent activities, thorough documentation is essential throughout the project.