

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN FOR FDOT OPP RESILIENCE ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

This Community Engagement Plan (CEP) describes community engagement activities to be conducted for the development of resilience-related plans, projects, and other activities. The purpose of community engagement is to provide early and continuous opportunities for community input into statewide transportation resilience needs, opportunities, and decision-making processes.

GOALS OF THE CEP

The overall goal of this CEP is to use an efficient process that actively involves partners, stakeholders, and members of the public in the development of resilience-related planning, projects, and other activities. This goal is supported by three objectives:

- **Statewide partner engagement** – Strengthen coordination with key statewide partner organizations.
- **Regional and local partner engagement** – Encourage input, feedback, and support from regional and local partners.
- **Public engagement** – Promote multiple and convenient opportunities for interested members of the public to offer input and feedback.

FDOT GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement is two-way communication aimed at incorporating the views, concerns, and issues of the community into the decision-making process. FDOT's Public Engagement Resource Guides identifies four guiding principles for community engagement including:

- It should be continuous through all phases of a project, allowing the public to hear and be heard through the project life cycle.
- It should be inclusive of all decisionmakers, those who will be affected and those with an interest in the project.
- It should use the most appropriate technique for each audience. Knowing the community helps determine the most appropriate outreach techniques and establish the measure to evaluate those techniques.
- It should make a record of input to let the public and partners know their comments and concerns have been heard. Documentation shows that a process was used in evaluating comments and addressing them as appropriate.

CONNECTION TO THE FLORIDA TRANSPORTATION PLAN (FTP)

The FTP is the single overarching plan guiding Florida’s transportation future. It is updated every five years and is a collaborative effort of state, regional, and local transportation partners in the public and private sectors. The entirety of the FTP incorporates four elements for the vision, policy, performance, and implementation of the plan.

The FTP goal of Agile, Resilient, and Quality Transportation Infrastructure directly addresses resilience. The six other goals also relate to resilience. For example, the transportation system cannot be resilient unless it is also safe and secure, and alleviating disruptions in transportation infrastructure and operations serves to strengthen Florida’s economy. The specific key strategy for resilience is to identify and mitigate risks to the transportation system and the customers who use it. The FTP identifies actions for addressing this strategy, including identifying vulnerabilities; expanding asset management decisions; adapting transportation planning, design, construction, and maintenance techniques; identifying and implementing approaches to improve overall infrastructure and community resilience; developing a long-term approach to transition infrastructure and development away from vulnerable areas; and updating emergency management plans.

EXPECTATIONS FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This CEP outlines coordination and implementation activities as required by state law and is used as best practice. These activities are designed to implement FDOT’s three-phase approach to community engagement: raising awareness, obtaining input to inform policy, and soliciting feedback on draft plans. The input and feedback will be used to inform FDOT management and incorporated into final products.

During the development of resilience-related plans, projects, and other activities, all state and FDOT regulations, statutes, rules, and policies relating to community engagement will be followed for the purpose of raising awareness, obtaining input, and soliciting feedback. The next section reviews best practices for community engagement.

In addition, the FDOT Public Engagement Resource Guide provides techniques and methods to encourage meaningful public participation throughout the transportation decision-making process. The resource guide is intended for use by FDOT staff, FDOT consultants, and any others interested in conducting effective community engagement. It provides guidance for developing and implementing effective community engagement activities that meet and may, in some cases, exceed federal and state requirements.

STATEWIDE FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This section summarizes state requirements for community engagement as it relates to statewide planning.

OVERVIEW OF STATE REQUIREMENTS

Community engagement must be conducted in accordance with Florida Statutes, where applicable. State requirements for community engagement are shown in **Table 1**.

TABLE 1. STATE REQUIREMENTS RELATED TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Requirement (Statutory Citation)	Actions to Accomplish the Requirement
Each agency shall give notice of public meetings, hearings, and workshops by publication in the Florida Administrative Register and on the agency’s website not less than 7 days before the event. The notice shall include a statement of the general subject matter to be considered. [Sec. 120.525(1), F.S.]	If determined to be needed, FDOT will ensure any meetings are noticed in the Florida Administrative Register, on the FDOT.gov website (public notices page), and on the Resilience website.
The agency is not permitted to conduct any proceeding otherwise subject to the provisions of Section 286.011, F.S., exclusively by means of communications media technology (CMT) without making provision for any member of the public who desires to attend. [Florida Administrative Code 28-109]	FDOT will conduct hybrid (in-person and virtual) meetings in accordance with department policy as part of the development of resilience-related planning, projects, and other activities.

OVERVIEW OF BEST PRACTICES

This section incorporates the lessons learned and the experience gained from previous statewide planning processes. This CEP reflects FDOT’s longstanding best practices of community engagement emphasizing:

- Use of open and inclusive processes to involve the public and partners early and often.
- Engaging in outreach opportunities using a variety of tools to reach as many partners and members of the public as possible.
- Reaching out to partners at their regularly scheduled meetings and events.
- Targeting outreach to specific stakeholder groups such as resilience coalitions and collaboratives.
- Considering community input and feedback throughout the plan development process.
- Participating in ongoing partnership-building to achieve improved coordination and consensus among diverse interests.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section documents the roles and responsibilities for implementing the CEP for FDOT staff.

OFFICE OF POLICY PLANNING (OPP)

OPP leads many of the policy-driven resilience-related initiatives. Their responsibilities related to community engagement for these policy plans include:

- Leading coordination activities with all statewide partner groups.
- Leading planning and preparation for statewide briefings.
- Periodically updating the FDOT Executive Board as well as Central Office and District Directors and Managers.
- Coordinating review and approval of the drafts and final products.

OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT (OEM)

OEM leads many resilience-related and other environmental initiatives. Their responsibilities related to community engagement for policy plans include:

- Assisting OPP with coordination activities with all statewide partner groups
- Assisting OPP with planning and preparing for statewide briefings.
- Providing subject matter expertise to and review of draft and final products

TECHNICAL ADVISORY TEAM

A Technical Advisory Team (TAT) is responsible for reviewing all technical work in support of resilience-related planning, projects, and other activities including recommendations, prioritization, and review of draft products. The TAT includes technical staff from Central and District program offices.

OPP will lead and provide staff support for the TAT. The TAT will meet regularly via Teams virtual conference.

OTHER FDOT OFFICES

Central and District Office responsibilities related to community engagement for resilience-related policy plans include:

- Collecting, documenting, and responding to input received from District staff and offices regarding resilience-related plans, projects, or other activities and sharing this information with OPP.
- Assisting with regional and local coordination activities regarding community engagement, as needed
- Assisting with briefings and updates related to resilience initiatives.

FDOT's Executive Board, Directors, and Intermodal Systems Development (ISD) Managers will receive regular updates and have opportunities for input throughout the development of resilience plans, projects, and other activities. These internal groups will review and provide feedback on the draft resilience-related products developed by OPP.

OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Meaningful outreach to the community is achieved through a multi-step process. This is accomplished by ensuring numerous opportunities are provided for two-way communication between FDOT and interested partner agencies, resilience advocacy groups, environmental groups, other stakeholder groups, and the public.

The activities described in this CEP are aimed at promoting awareness for the development of resilience-related plans, projects, and other activities. They are intended to maximize input and feedback opportunities from partners, stakeholders, and the public.

LIST OF PARTNERS AND THE PUBLIC

Coordination activities will encourage input, feedback, and support from as many partners as possible in developing resilience-related plans, projects, and other activities. The list of groups engaging with FDOT is dynamic and will grow consistent with increased interest and public involvement. Engagement techniques will be tailored for the different partners depending on the nature and interests of the groups.

- **State and federal agencies and commissions** such as the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Division of Emergency Management, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Department of Economic Opportunity, and Federal Highway Administration.
- **Statewide Office of Resilience** specifically the Chief Resilience Officer within the Executive Office of the Governor.
- **Associations representing regional and local government resilience interests** such as the Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council [MPOAC], Florida League of Cities, Florida Association of Counties, Small County Coalition, Florida Regional Councils Association, and the Water Management Districts.
- **Regional Resilience Compacts, Coalitions, and Collaboratives** including Southeast Florida Regional Climate Change Compact, Southwest Florida Regional Resiliency Compact, Tampa Bay Regional Resiliency Coalition, Heartland Regional Resiliency Coalition, East Central Florida Regional Resilience Collaborative, Emerald Coast Area Resilience Collaborative, Northeast Florida Regional Resiliency Collaborative – Resilient First Coast, and Apalachee Strong Regional Resiliency Collaborative.
- **Community and environmental organizations** such as 1000 Friends of Florida, Audubon Florida, and The Nature Conservancy.
- **Statewide organizations representing modal partners** such as the Florida Airports Council, Florida Ports Council, and Florida Public Transportation Association.
- **Economic development, professional, business, and industry associations** such as the Florida Chamber of Commerce.
- **Florida’s six designated Native American Tribes.**
- **Interested members of the public** such as residents, visitors, and businesses.

TOOLS FOR OUTREACH

OPP will develop tools that will create awareness of the plan by partner agencies and the public, obtain input on topics and issues, and receive feedback on the draft plan. OPP will work with other FDOT Offices and Districts to identify other outreach opportunities unique to the communities they serve.

FTP Environmental Partners Working Group

The FTP Environmental Partners Working Group is a group convened by FDOT to provide input on long-range planning related to environmental opportunities and challenges. The group members represent a variety of environmental interest groups, including 1000 Friends of Florida, Audubon Florida, Defenders of Wildlife, Florida Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Land, and state agency partners. This group provides valuable input and feedback on resilience related activities. OPP is responsible for organizing this group and providing staff support.

Partner Briefings and Targeted Outreach

OPP is responsible for conducting briefings to statewide and regional partners to create awareness of resilience-related plans, projects, and other activities; obtain input on key issues and potential policies; and take feedback on draft products. As appropriate, OPP will conduct targeted outreach to the partners identified above and the public to ensure their concerns and comments are recorded and addressed.

Coordination will occur through regularly scheduled meetings (and ad hoc as needed), individual and staff-level briefings, and invitations to participate in regional and statewide workshops and conferences.

Standard Presentation

OPP will create and periodically update a standard PowerPoint presentation (with detailed speaker notes) describing the development and update of resilience-related plans, projects, and other activities to ensure a consistent message to the public and partners when conducting briefings. As needed or requested, OPP will provide tailored content for specific partner meetings. OPP will document comments and input for each meeting. Standard presentation material will be made available through the Resilience SharePoint site.

FDOT Resilience Website

OPP is responsible for maintaining the FDOT Resilience website. The website will provide a full range of information related to the development of resilience-related plans, projects, and other activities and will serve as a comprehensive resource for the public and partners. The website will be used to share materials and announcements for meetings, briefings, and workshops. The Resilience website is ADA Section 508 compliant and will be promoted via the FDOT website's Home Page, the OPP website, and Central Office and District email lists and social media outlets, where applicable.

Frequently Asked Questions Brochure

A Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document may be created, as needed, for resilience-related plans, projects, and other activities to provide answers to commonly asked questions during the development process. If needed, the brochure will be posted on the Resilience website.

Email Updates, Event Notices, and Social Media

An email contact management software may be used periodically to send updates and notices to those who express an interest in the development of resilience-related plans, projects, and other activities to provide updates and current information regarding activities and opportunities for input. Other email distribution lists may be used as needed to reach targeted groups for feedback. TAT members will be encouraged to forward emails to their own mailing/contact lists, as appropriate.

Statewide Events

Statewide events provide an opportunity to reach many people at one time. Statewide webinars may be convened at key points to inform statewide, regional, and local partners about the status of resilience-related plans, projects, and other activities. In adherence to state rule, a physical location will be provided to complement any virtual/electronic meeting.

Public Comment Period

Depending on the product, a public comment period may be offered to receive input from partners and the public. It will be made available for review via the FDOT website for a set number of days. Notice of the public comment period will be published using the website as well as other mechanisms. Comments will be accepted via an online survey in addition to in-person, phone, email, facsimile, or U.S. mail. Each comment will be reviewed to understand the remark and a response will be determined. All comments, along with the response and any actions taken, will be published on the FDOT website. Prior to the release of the draft product, a statewide webinar may be held to review the draft product and launch the public comment period. Following the public comment period, final edits will be made, and the final product will be released.

Outreach Tracker

To support the distributive nature of briefings and provide consistent reporting of completed FDOT community engagement activities, OPP will use a tracking mechanism to track activity and dates; document the briefing purpose and participants; and summarize input, questions, and follow-up items. OPP will be responsible for providing an update to the Technical Advisory Team and leadership throughout the process. Reporting back regularly on community engagement activities encourages ownership in the activities and allows for meaningful insight that will shape the resilience project's final product.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Florida Department of Transportation

Office of Policy Planning

850-414-4800

resiliency@dot.state.fl.us

<https://www.fdot.gov/planning/policy/resilience/>