I-75 Sketch Interstate Plan
Environmental Documentation

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
CENTRAL OFFICE

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Project Team

Florida Department of Transportation, Central Office
- Systems Planning Office
- Transportation Statistics Office

Florida Department of Transportation, Districts Two and Five Representatives

Department Consultants
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Purpose......................................................................................................................................................................................... 1

Environmental Analysis............................................................................................................................................................ 3
   Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) .............................................................. 3
   NEPA Process ............................................................................................................................ 3
   Sketch Plan Environmental Analysis Approach........................................................................... 3

Summary ...................................................................................................................................................................................... 6

Appendices .................................................................................................................................................................................. 7
Purpose

The Florida Department of Transportation Central Office in coordination with the District Offices has prepared a Sketch Interstate Plan for the I-75 corridor from the Florida-Georgia border south through Sumter County, Florida. Exhibit 1 displays the I-75 Sketch Plan Corridor Area. The major purpose of this Sketch Interstate Plan is to improve the mobility of users of I-75 by examining the existing interstate system, with respect to planned improvements, and reveal general problem areas and trends that will be examined in more detail in a later phase. The preparation of a Sketch Plan is an integral part of the long range planning process for the development of the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS). As part of the Sketch Plan process, the Project Team, which included Department Staff and their consultant, developed multiple Technical Memorandums to analyze different concepts encompassing many focus areas. The I-75 Sketch Plan Technical Memorandums focus on:

- Safety
- Traffic
- Freight Mobility
- Environmental Analysis
- Planned Improvements and Conceptual Mobility Opportunities

The purpose of this Technical Memorandum is not to document the adjacent land composition in detail but to provide preliminary analysis and results. Further detail will be provided in subsequent planning and design stages. The Sketch Plan is designed to be a high-level preliminary planning study before a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) assessment. However, environmental considerations are taken into account and documented and Geographical Information Systems (GIS) maps are attached. For the purposes of the Sketch Plan, wetlands, floodplains, drainage, and land use within one mile along I-75 were documented and mapped.
I-75 Sketch Interstate Plan
Exhibit 1: Study Area

State of Florida
Department of Transportation
Systems Planning
Environmental Analysis

The Project Team reviewed environmental documentation along the Sketch Plan corridor. Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) screening was used as a preliminary assessment tool prior, as opposed to a detailed environmental assessment or impact statement consistent with the National Environmental Policy (NEPA).

Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM)

ETDM is a process for accomplishing transportation planning and project development for major capacity improvement projects. Early in the planning process, interest groups become involved by screening potential environmental effects. The public is able to become involved through workshops, emails, phone correspondence and the ETMD website.

ETDM provides an environmental screening process early in a capacity improvement project and provides for input through a partner agency review. However, the purpose of the Sketch Plan is not to analyze specific alternative capacity improvements along the I-75 corridor in detail but to provide conceptual capacity enhancements. For this reason, the Sketch Plan outlines a high-level course of action prior to a detailed ETDM screening using the Environmental Screening Tool.

NEPA Process

The NEPA process is “an evaluation of the environmental effects of a federal undertaking including its alternatives.” There are three levels of analysis depending on whether or not an undertaking could significantly affect the environment. These three levels include categorical exclusion determination, preparation of an environmental assessment/finding of no significant impact (EA/FONSI), and preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). Since the NEPA process requires a detailed environmental analysis, the State of Florida developed the ETDM process to review environmental impacts of transportation projects. Since the Sketch Planning process does not identify, analyze, or determine a recommended alternative or alternatives, it does not require the NEPA process.

Sketch Plan Environmental Analysis Approach

The Project Team, which included Departmental staff and their consultants, accessed ETDM to run the Sketch Plan project limits for I-75 through the Environmental Screening Tool (EST). The goal of entering the project into ETDM was to determine potential environmental implications and to link planning to project analysis. However, since a Sketch Plan is a preliminary needs assessment and a pre-NEPA document, the limits were analyzed through EST, but were not sent out for partner agency review at this point.

An objective of utilizing the ETDM Environmental Screening Tool in the Sketch Plan process was to establish a starting point, so when any projects moved forward in the NEPA process there was a
preliminary defined purpose and need. Since, the EST focuses on a project level for permitting future project, the study limits of the Sketch Plan were divided by county for analysis.

The preliminary environmental analysis consisted of Project Team collecting the ADHOC Reports from the Environmental Screening Tool. Below is the list of the ADHOC Reports collected.

**Table 1**

***Environmental Report Categories***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Category</th>
<th>Sub-Category Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air Quality</td>
<td>Air Quality Maintenance Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contaminated Sites</td>
<td>Drainage Basin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>DRI</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Enterprise Zone</td>
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<td></td>
<td>PUD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flood Plains</td>
<td>FEMA Flood Insurance Rates</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A &amp; AE Zones</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historical and Archaeological Sites</td>
<td>American Indian Lands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Florida Cemeteries</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Florida Historical Standing Structure</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Florida Archaeological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Florida Historical Site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Railways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobility</td>
<td>Existing Recreational Trails</td>
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<tr>
<td>Recreational Areas</td>
<td>FFWCC Management Areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Designation</td>
<td>Other Outstanding Florida Waters</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special or Outstanding Waters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wetlands</td>
<td>National Wetland Inventory</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palustine and Riverine Types</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wildlife and Habitat</td>
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</table>
The Project Team determined that given the scope and pre-NEPA nature of the Sketch Plan, it was not necessary to include a detailed assessment of all environmental, cultural, and historical conditions along the Sketch Plan corridor. Instead of focusing on the AdHOC reports, which are a typical analysis technique found within a Master Plan or PD&E corridor study, the Project Team decided that environmental documentation should fall within five primary categories. These categories are wetlands, drainage, floodplains, and existing and future land use characteristics confined within 1 mile around the corridor.
Summary

The purpose of this Technical Memorandum is to document the mainline environmental conditions within the corridor. Because the Sketch Plan is preliminary Needs assessment and does not address alternatives, the NEPA process does not apply; however, in order to establish a baseline for future planning and design studies, the ETDM screening tool process was utilized.

After analysis of this screening tool process by the Project Team, the decision was made to refine the process down to five categories: wetlands, drainage, floodplains, and existing and future land use characteristics. Maps detailing these environmental characteristics are included within the Appendix. Considering the length of the corridor and given the environmental and land use characteristics, multiple maps for each characteristic by District were required to provide the appropriate level of detail.
Appendices

Appendix A: Environmental Characteristics

- Wetlands A-1
- Floodplains A-2
- Drainage Basins A-3
- Existing Land Use A-4
- Future Lane Use A-5