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5. Implementing Project Planning

Planning products will ultimately be used to inform the next phase of project development. Advancement to the PD&E or Design phase depends on various factors including agency coordination, project scope, design year, schedule, and funding. Therefore, an implementation strategy should be developed to support the advancement of project planning recommendations.

5.1 Project Planning Study Documentation

Documentation should result in a complete, well organized planning record that clearly captures engagement, coordination, and decision-making. Project planning documentation supports the progression of transportation projects by:

- ◆ Defining the project purpose and need
- ◆ Identifying and documenting existing and future conditions considered during alternatives evaluations
- ◆ Developing candidate solutions to address the project purpose and need
- ◆ Documenting alternatives considered and eliminated
- ◆ Incorporating public, stakeholder, and agency input
- ◆ Providing recommendations

Final documentation should support handoff to the next phase by clearly identifying recommendations, assumptions, risks, and unresolved issues. Documentation of the alternatives analysis as described in [4.2 Alternatives Analysis](#), should include the items listed below to support alternatives recommended (or eliminated from) further study:

- ◆ Ability of each alternative to satisfy the purpose and need
- ◆ Projected costs of each alternative, and potential funding sources
- ◆ Agency, stakeholder, and public support or lack thereof for alternatives
- ◆ Projected cultural, natural, and social impacts of each alternative, summarized in a matrix
- ◆ Identification of anticipated mitigation needs and opportunities
- ◆ List of project constraints, challenges and/or risks
- ◆ Anticipated PD&E phase needs

If the project planning study is intended to be incorporated into the PD&E phase, it must satisfy all applicable requirements outlined in [Section 2.3 Incorporating Planning into PD&E](#) and the *FDOT*

Questionnaire for Linking Planning and Environment Review (PEL Questionnaire) should be completed as described in **Section 2.3.4 Adoption of Planning Study**.

Project planning documentation should also provide an **implementation strategy** that includes a project development schedule, review of funding options, and phasing of alternatives/improvements (as applicable). The feasibility of advancing the project development process is ultimately tied to the availability and timing of funding future phases, district priorities, local transportation plans, and regional/local emphasis. A well-defined implementation strategy is critical to address the purpose and need, and to help ensure a successful transition to the next phase of project development.

As the project planning efforts and planning-level recommendations are being completed, the project planning study should identify all activities to be considered in the next phase of project development. The linkage of project planning outcomes and future project development activities should be documented in the project planning study. The sections below describe how the project planning activities can link to future project development activities and work program planning.

5.2 Linkage to Future Project Development Activities

Project planning activities can support the identification of phased improvements that meet the purpose and need for the project through the horizon year and that address interim needs. For example, a short-term intersection improvement project may address the purpose and need for improved interchange operations while an interchange modification is necessary to achieve the purpose and need through the design year. The project phasing strategies, availability of funding, and FDOT's project prioritization process may determine the scope of short-, mid-, and long-term recommendations, as described below, for implementation in the FDOT Five-Year Work Program.

- ◆ **Short-term recommendations** or “quick fix” improvements such as signaling a stop-controlled intersection, fixing a small section of sidewalk, adding crosswalk markings, repairing or adding signage, or other maintenance-type improvements usually done through an existing continuing services contract.
- ◆ **Mid-term recommendations** may require more extensive analysis or additional funding than a “quick fix” option. These recommendations may include adding turn lanes, improving intersections, filling in trail gaps, or pavement resurfacing.
- ◆ **Long-term recommendations**, such as widening or realignments, often include a corridor or area-wide analysis and may require a subsequent PD&E study.

Once recommendations have been determined, an **implementation plan** should be developed to identify how the proposed improvements can link to future project development activities. The implementation plan can be documented in the project planning study as part of the next steps or conclusion to the report.

The implementation plan should describe, in detail, how each proposed solution will be advanced, including specific agreements by FDOT and its partner agencies required during project development (such as easements, joint-use agreements, or maintenance agreements). The plan should consider that the proposed improvements may be implemented over time as part of a series of projects, depending on purpose and need, any project segmentation, and the prioritization process.

For each solution, the implementation plan should summarize the following key information:

- ◆ **Estimated cost of solution:** Summarize each solution and its estimated costs for PD&E (if applicable), Design, Right-of-Way, and Construction. See [Chapter 4: Developing and Evaluating Potential Improvements](#) (pending) for more detail on developing cost estimates.
- ◆ **Next steps in the project development process:** Confirm the phasing strategy of each solution and document if the solution should move into PD&E or Design (whether Design is completed as an independent project phase, as part of another project or larger contract, or conducted by a local agency) as the next step.

- ◆ **Responsible agency:** Identify which agency and department will be responsible for the next steps. Also, document agency partners identified during the planning process.
- ◆ **Agreements:** Document any agreements made during the planning process, such as local agency agreements to fund or maintain project components that will affect programming future phases.
- ◆ **Timing and constraints:** Based on the projected future operations and timeframe when potential improvements are needed and can be funded (per [FDOT's Project Development Policy \(Document No.: 000-525-055\)](#)), assess the overall project development schedule to identify the timing of each phase.
- ◆ **Planning Consistency:** Document if any amendments or updates are required in the MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) or other local agency planning documents (for example, Comprehensive Plan or Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)).

The implementation plan should be reviewed and updated at least every five years to correspond with LRTP updates, and may be updated as project development advances, existing or future conditions change, funding becomes available, or agency priorities change. If the recommendation is not to move forward with a project, this decision should be communicated with stakeholders and the public, and if necessary, updates made to any LRTP or TIP documents to reflect that the project will not advance.

5.3 Linkage to Work Program Planning

The timeframe in which project improvements are needed is typically based on the projected future operations and analysis described in [Section 3.3 Existing and Future Conditions Analysis](#). For identifying the timing for programming future phases, the following statewide and metropolitan planning horizons should be considered.

- ◆ **FDOT's Five-Year Work Program:** Outlines the transportation projects to be funded in Florida over the upcoming 5-year period
- ◆ **Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP):** MPO product that addresses future transportation needs over a 20-year period

Minor projects that may advance to Design, Construction, or Operations, including short-term recommendations (such as bicycle/pedestrian improvements, lighting improvements, lengthening turn lanes, traffic signal coordination, or resurfacing) may likely be funded in the Five-Year Work Program. These types of projects are often conducted through existing continuing services contracts. Mid-term recommendations may be included in already programmed projects, such as resurfacing, restoration, and rehabilitation (RRR) projects, or programmed as stand-alone projects.

The next phase (PD&E or Design) for more complex projects may also be funded in the Five-Year Work Program. Although these recommendations are most often programmed as stand-alone projects, there may be opportunities to include a long-term recommendation within another programmed project. Due to the timeframe to complete subsequent phases, construction for more complex or long-term projects, such as those where a PD&E Study is required, will likely be programmed in future years beyond the Five-Year Work Program. In this case, construction funding should be identified as a candidate project in the FDOT Work Program and included in the MPO's LRTP. When programming future project phases, it is important to carefully consider the availability of construction funding for a project to ensure the programmed phases are in alignment with [FDOT's Project Development Policy \(Document No.: 000-525-055\)](#).

The outcome of project planning may indicate a project should be an unfunded need in the cost-feasible Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) timeframe. In that instance, the implementation strategy should inform the statewide, metropolitan, and local planning processes so the project can be identified for inclusion in the MPO/TPO LRTP Unfunded Needs Plan and Cost-Feasible Plan.

Districts should seek opportunities to combine funding opportunities for recommended planning improvements with other planned or programmed projects. For example, when developing an implementation strategy for short- or mid-term recommendations, opportunities may be identified by reviewing the list of planned RRR projects. If an identified planning project improvement falls within the limits of a RRR project, there may be an opportunity to budget for and implement these improvements concurrently with the RRR project, provided the project Design phase has not yet begun and the improvements can be included in the Design scope, enabling Districts to save time and money.

5.4 Scope Recommendations for the Next Phase

The project planning study should be used to inform the next phase of project delivery. The decisions made and analyses conducted during project planning can aid in the development of project scopes by establishing a clear foundation for what PD&E and Design will actually do, investigate, and deliver.

5.4.1 PD&E Scope Development

Project planning studies typically evaluate existing conditions, identify deficiencies (safety, congestion, multimodal gaps, structural issues, etc.), and develop a purpose and need statement supported by data. This information, when documented properly, can be translated almost directly into the PD&E scope: It clarifies what alternatives should be evaluated, what performance measures can be used to further evaluate alternatives, and which design criteria (e.g. FDOT Design Manual (FDM), the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Green Book, etc.) are most relevant. When the planning phase carefully documents the rationale for the project, PD&E can focus more on refining and comparing solutions.

The task of developing a PD&E scope should begin with reviewing the PEL Questionnaire if one was completed for the project planning study. In addition, the documentation described in **Section 4.4 Alternatives Recommended for Project Programming** (pending) directly informs the PD&E scope. The PD&E scope defines which alternatives should be carried forward, which alternatives were eliminated and the rationale for elimination, what environmental and engineering analyses are appropriate, and where more detailed information will be needed. The result is a PD&E scope that is tightly aligned with prior decisions and defensible from a planning and environmental perspective.

Project planning studies can also inform the scope for environmental, community, and stakeholder-related tasks. Early identification of sensitive resources (such as wetlands, endangered species habitats, historic properties/communities, schools, and parks) help determine the depth and breadth of environmental studies that will be needed. High-level screening tools, planning-level GIS analysis, and early agency coordination can be used to flag likely permitting issues, mitigation needs, and potential fatal flaws. These findings should be carried forward into the PD&E phase to ensure that previously completed work is not replicated and should also be translated into the PD&E scope as specific tasks such as detailed natural resource surveys, social and cultural resource evaluations, noise analysis, public meetings/hearings, and coordination milestones with regulatory agencies.

5.4.2 Design Scope Development

For projects that advance directly to the Design phase without the need for a PD&E phase, technical analyses conducted during the project planning study can directly inform the level of effort and resources needed for Design. Planning studies often develop preliminary traffic forecasts, conceptual drainage strategies, high-level cost estimates, right-of-way “footprints,” and constructability and phasing concepts.

While these are not final designs, they provide enough detail to anticipate design complexities, such as retaining walls, utility conflicts, structures, or work-zone traffic control challenges. These insights help define the Design scope in terms of disciplines (roadway, structures, traffic operations, signals/ITS, drainage, geotechnical, utilities, landscape, etc.), needed subconsultants, expected modeling tools, and schedule risks. When the Design scope builds directly on the planning study, it is more realistic, better aligned with funding and schedule constraints, and less likely to require major revisions once Design is underway.

5.4.3 Scope Development Best Practices

When deliberately structured to feed PD&E and Design, project planning studies become a bridge to the next phase by establishing a clear project definition, more focused alternatives, an informed environmental analysis strategy, a well-grounded stakeholder engagement plan, and a realistic Design effort. Below are some best practices for practitioners to consider when developing the scope for the PD&E and Design phases.

- ◆ **Refer to the Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) Questionnaire:** By utilizing the PEL Checklist as described in [Section 2.3 Incorporating Planning into PD&E](#), project managers can determine which activities have already been conducted as part of the project planning study and which are suitable for incorporating into the PD&E study.
- ◆ **Involve planning staff in scope development:** Planning staff that were involved in developing the project planning study should be involved in developing the PD&E or Design scope to bring continuity and explain why certain decisions were made.
- ◆ **Provide notes to the PD&E or Design team:** Notes on commitments and decisions that were made during the project planning study, locations of documents, information on team members involved such as the FDOT project manager and the consultant can be very useful for the next phase's project manager.
- ◆ **Conduct a Pass the Torch Meeting:** This meeting allows the project planning study team to present the analyses conducted and the decisions made to the PD&E or Design team, giving them a strong understanding of the project.

Providing continuity between the project planning study and the next phase not only improves project delivery efficiency but also leads to better, more context-sensitive outcomes that can withstand scrutiny from decision-makers, regulators, and the public.