FDOT Project Planning Manual

A Practical Framework for Implementation-Focused Planning Studies

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Project Planning Manual brings greater focus and consistency to early project planning in the transportation project development process. It provides a framework to define needs, evaluate alternatives, address risks, and coordinate with stakeholders, improving project readiness for the Project Development & Environment (PD&E) phase and helping accelerate project delivery.

WHY DOES PROJECT PLANNING MATTER?

FDOT policy calls for completing PD&E studies within 18 months and funding project construction within 8 years of PD&E initiation. **These expectations make early planning essential.** Resolving issues, screening alternatives, and coordinating with agencies and communities before PD&E helps reduce delays, rework, and uncertainty.

Consistent with FHWA's Planning & Environment Linkages (PEL) requirements, effective project planning carries relevant planning information into PD&E to streamline and advance the project's delivery.

BENEFITS OF PROJECT PLANNING

- Addresses federal requirements
- Improves project delivery timeframes
- Reduces duplication of effort
- Engages public, stakeholders, and agencies early
- Sets clear project expectations while allowing for flexibility
- Strengthens programming and delivery feasibility
- Saves time and money

PROJECT PLANNING ANALYZES IF A PROJECT:

- **Solves a transportation problem**
- **Has a feasible funding opportunity**
- **Is locally supported**
- **Is environmentally feasible**

PLAN EARLY. ENGAGE MEANINGFULLY. EVALUATE OBJECTIVELY. DOCUMENT CLEARLY.

The FDOT Project Planning Manual helps partners advance transportation projects from identified needs to implementable, context-sensitive solutions.

A CLEAR, REPEATABLE PLANNING PROCESS

1. **Define the Problem**
   Understand the planning context, land use, environmental conditions, and existing and future transportation demand.
2. **Develop Purpose & Need**
   Clearly define the transportation problem using data and community input, without prescribing a solution.
3. **Develop a Range of Alternatives**
   Identify a range of appropriate alternatives, including No-Build, Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSM&O) improvements, and capital improvements (build alternatives).
4. **Evaluate and Screen Alternatives**
   Compare alternatives and identify viable solutions using performance measures that reflect the project purpose and need and consider community and stakeholder feedback.
5. **Document, Program, and Advance**
   Document planning recommendations and next steps for PD&E, Design, or near-term improvements.

WHO SHOULD USE THE MANUAL?

- Transportation planners, engineers, environmental specialists, and public-involvement professionals
- Consultants and other project development partners
- FDOT Districts
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)
- Cities, counties, and local planning partners
- Expressway authorities

PRIMARY FOCUS

Qualifying transportation projects that require Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) screening and are anticipated to require PD&E, such as new or major roadway, bridge, interchange, and transit projects.

The guidance offers principles and best practices that support all planning-level studies and analyses.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

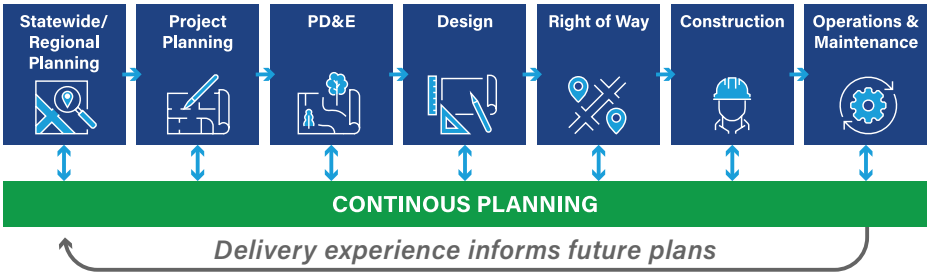
www.fdot.gov/planning/policy/planning-manual

WHEN SHOULD PROJECT PLANNING OCCUR?

Project planning bridges an identified transportation need and project implementation by defining the purpose and need, screening preliminary alternatives, identifying risks, and preparing projects for the next phase.

Planning Connects Every Phase

Typical project development process



HOW DOES PROJECT PLANNING ADDRESS FEDERAL PLANNING & ENVIRONMENTAL LINKAGE REQUIREMENTS?

PEL-READY PROJECT PLANNING EMPHASIZES:

- Early agency and public coordination
- Reliable and reasonably current data
- Transparent documentation and decision traceability
- Consistent alternatives evaluation
- Consideration of community, environmental, engineering, and financial factors

WHAT DOES STRONG PROJECT PLANNING DELIVER?

- A clear project purpose and need informed by community and stakeholder input
- Documented technical analysis evaluating how alternatives address the project's purpose and need
- A clear understanding of viable alternatives, including risks, fatal flaws, community and agency input, and suitability for advancement
- Planning-level costs, schedules, phasing, and funding considerations for viable alternatives
- Clearly defined next steps for PD&E or Design, including scope and additional analysis needed

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