FHWA’s Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) Program:
Using the PEL Umbrella Approach to Streamline Transportation Decision-making
Discussion Framework

• PEL Background
• Benefits
• Important Elements of PEL
  - Intra-Agency Coordination
  - Inter-Agency Coordination
  - Data Sharing and Analysis
• Lessons Learned
• FY 2008-2009 PEL Priorities
Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL): What is it?

• An **APPROACH** to transportation decision-making

• A **PROGRAM** promoting tools and resources

• Supports FHWA/FTA Planning and NEPA Regulations
PEL Activities

Planning

Environment

Eco-Logical
Integrated Planning Work Group
Linking Conservation & Transportation Planning
Context Sensitive Solutions
Expected Benefits of PEL

- Relationship-building
- Process efficiency
- On-the-ground outcomes
PEL: Weaving Planning and Environment
Important Elements of PEL

• Intra- Agency Coordination

• Inter- Agency Coordination

• Data Sharing and Analysis
Intra-Agency Coordination

Obtain executive level commitment to a more comprehensive process

Increase coordination among planning, environment, GIS, and IT staff

Sample Actions:
- Conduct inter-disciplinary meetings
- Host cross-training sessions
- Develop agency-wide guidance
Intra-Agency Coordination Example

Coordination includes sharing information, documents, history, files, commitments

Colorado DOT’s Linking Planning & NEPA Guidance and Online Training

• Incorporated planning products into environmental review process

http://www.dot.state.co.us/environmental/Training/NEPA_index.asp
Inter-Agency Coordination

Involve resource agencies early in transportation planning

Sample Actions:
• Establish interagency work groups or committees
• Host workshops (e.g., Linking Conservation and Transportation Planning)
• Establish MOUs/MOAs
Inter-Agency Coordination Example

Southeast Michigan Council of Governments’ (SEMCOG) Long-Range Transportation Planning

- Analyzed potential impacts of planned transportation projects on environmentally sensitive resources
- Consulted with multiple agencies to determine significant resources and appropriate buffer sizes
Data Sharing and Analysis

- Share data/analyses among agencies
- Overlay proposed transportation projects on identified sensitive resources
- Meet planning requirement for comparison of metropolitan plans to State conservation plans/maps; inventories of natural or historic resources

Data and Analysis Tools:
- Geographic Information Systems
- Project Screening Tools
Data Sharing and Analysis Example

Florida’s Environmental Screening Tool (EST)

- Identifies and maps environmental concerns
- Screens potential projects
- Resource agencies analyze their own data
- Secure website for project reviews
Lessons Learned

• Implementation of PEL approach is an ongoing, long-term process
• Determining and agreeing on the appropriate level of environmental detail is key
• Decisions along the way need to have good documentation behind them
• Communication/coordination, both internally and externally, is a major challenge
• There is a need to demonstrate the benefits of PEL
FHWA’s FY 2008-2009 PEL Priorities

Technical Assistance

• State-specific technical assistance

• Peer Exchange on GIS in PEL

• Linking Conservation and Transportation Planning Workshops

• Integration with FHWA Initiatives (Eco-Logical, Integrated Planning, etc.)
FHWA’s FY 2008-2009 PEL Priorities

Research and Targeted Expansion of PEL Areas

• Capturing best practices in State DOTs

• Exploring links between PEL and other planning and environment areas
FHWA’s FY 2008-2009 PEL Priorities

Outreach/Communication

• PEL website

• Publications and reports on new PEL resources and analysis

• Conferences, workshops to enhance awareness of PEL
Questions?

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