

## OVERVIEW

The SCE Evaluation process to adequately analyze social, economic, and cultural effects of transportation actions on communities includes:

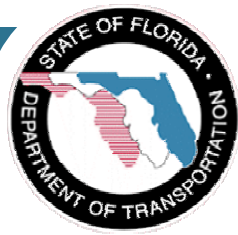
- Collecting community information that includes how the community functions within its setting;
- Working with the community to develop transportation projects that support community goals and preferences; and
- Working with the community to identify, evaluate, and resolve potential effects.

### 2.1 ORGANIZATION OF THE SCE PROCESS

The SCE Evaluation process is a cooperative effort among FDOT, local government, the public, MPOs, and other government agencies. It is a dynamic and iterative process. Starting with the planning phase of a project, SCE issues are addressed prior to the development of significant project details. Planning at this level requires an understanding of big picture issues related to communities and can require intense public involvement efforts. Engaging affected communities through proactive community outreach efforts is a necessary component of the planning process.

Public involvement is integral to the SCE Evaluation process. It is not intended to be a separate task but rather overarching and fully integrated within all stages of planning and project development. The level of public involvement should be tailored to the nature and scope of the project and its potential effects. Public involvement activities will vary depending upon the purpose and goals of the activities.

For example, public involvement activities to collect and assess data may include one-on-one meetings with local agency officials and community leaders, the data gatekeepers, as they may have access to the necessary data or can authorize interagency sharing of data and information pertinent to an SCE evaluation. Public involvement activities to review the



data and provide additional community data may include public workshops in which the residents are given the opportunity to review the community boundaries, community characteristics inventory, and other information relating to transportation decisions.

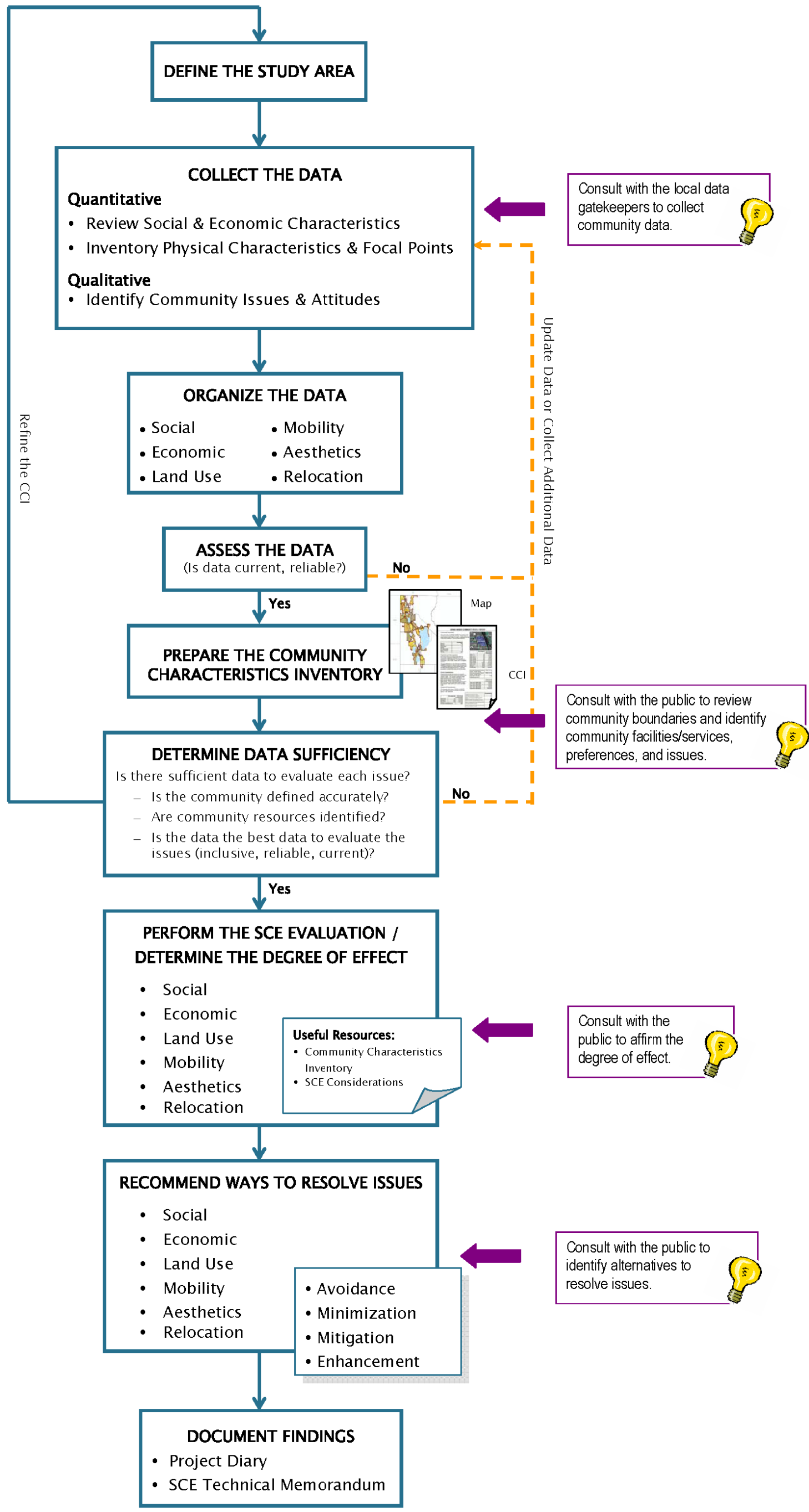
The basic steps of the SCE Evaluation process (Figure 2-1) are:

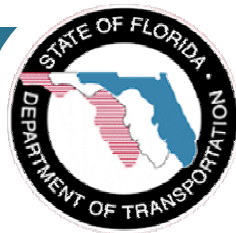
- Define the Study Area;
- Collect/Organize/Assess the Data;
- Prepare the Community Characteristics Inventory;
- Determine Data Sufficiency;
- Perform the SCE Evaluation/Determine Degree of Effect;
- Recommend Ways to Resolve Issues; and
- Document Findings.

Each step of the evaluation process is framed by six separate key sociocultural issues: social, economic, land use, mobility, aesthetics, and relocation. These broad issues have been developed to help the community analyst simplify the evaluation process while ensuring that Title VI/Civil Rights considerations, which cross all six issue areas, are evaluated. (Appendix C)

2

Figure 2-1 SCE Evaluation Process





## 2.1.1 Define the Study Area

Knowing the geographic limits of the transportation action is fundamental to a preliminary determination of the study area.

The **study area** is a geographic region which incorporates the communities affected by a project.

The community analyst initially will want to define as broad a study area as practical given the project evaluation phase (e.g., planning, programming, or project development).

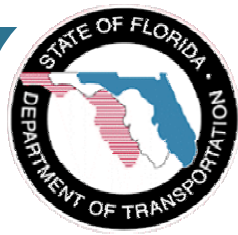
In the early stage of defining the study area, field analysis of the transportation corridor is generally conducted to develop familiarity with existing conditions along the corridor, including communities likely to be affected by the action. Also, particularly in the case of road projects, there may be intersecting transportation facilities that provide connectivity to nearby communities having the potential of being affected by the project.

Communities can either be a well defined geographic area such as a neighborhood or subdivision, or a less physically delineated place such as an unincorporated area with a name recognized by the community but without defined boundaries. The community analyst need not be concerned initially if the study area is amorphous rather than rectilinear, or only includes areas along, adjacent, or parallel to the transportation action. Through the iterative evaluations and public involvement, further definition and refinement of the study area will occur.

## 2.1.2 Collect / Organize / Assess the Data

Once the study area has been defined, the community analyst begins the task of collecting and organizing the social, economic, land use, mobility, aesthetic, and relocation data. The quality of the sociocultural effects evaluation depends upon the comprehensiveness, currency, and quality of the data collected. Although much quantitative data can be found in databases and GIS libraries, an accurate assessment cannot be completed

2



without geographic verification and public involvement. Public involvement activities will assist the community analyst in determining:

- Community facilities and services not previously noted;
- The importance of community facilities and resources;
- Community preferences and priorities; and
- Community issues.

## 2.1.3 Prepare the Community Characteristics Inventory

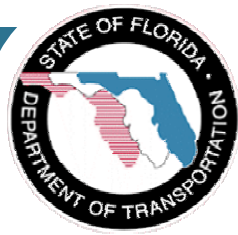
The Community Characteristics Inventory (CCI) is the summary of the historic and present conditions of the community. The purpose of the CCI is to provide the community analyst a focused summary for each of the issues as they relate to specific communities and population segments. As projects progress through the SCE Evaluation process, the CCI (originally developed at the macro level during planning and programming) is refined to the neighborhood, or micro level in project development and later phases.

## 2.1.4 Determine Data Sufficiency

Prior to performing the SCE evaluation, the community analyst should determine if there is sufficient data to evaluate each SCE issue by considering the following:

- Is the community defined accurately?
- Are community resources identified?
- Is the data the best data to evaluate the issues (inclusive, comprehensive, reliable, current)?

2



## 2.1.5 Perform the SCE Evaluation/Determine the Degree of Effect

The objective of the evaluation is to identify and evaluate the effects of the transportation action on the social fabric of the affected community. A principal component of the issues identification and evaluation process is community involvement. Effects are interconnected and it is important that the community analyst recognize the relationship of effects. Examining how these effects relate to each other and the counterbalancing effects of various considerations is critical to the resolution of issues.

## 2.1.6 Recommend Ways to Resolve Issues

When adverse sociocultural effects are identified, the community analyst identifies potential strategies to address them. This step involves problem-solving and generating solutions. There are four primary methods for addressing sociocultural effects that should be considered:

- Avoidance – alter the project so an effect does not occur;
- Minimization – modify the project to reduce the severity of an effect;
- Mitigation – undertake an action to alleviate or offset an effect; or
- Enhancement – add a desirable or attractive feature to the project to make it fit more harmoniously into the community.

## 2.1.7 Document Findings

Documentation of SCE evaluation activities creates a record of commitments made as a result of the activities. Proper documentation includes compiling all materials related to the SCE evaluation and public involvement activities for incorporation or reference in the NEPA reports. The SCE Technical Memorandum and the Project Diary are two suggested methods for documenting the public involvement activities and SCE evaluation findings.

2