



Florida Department of Transportation, District 3
Environmental Technical Advisory Team Meeting
October 22, 2009 (9 a.m. – 4 p.m., Central Standard Time)

AGENDA

All times shown are in Central Standard Time (CT).

8:30 – 9:00 Registration

9:00 – 9:15 Welcome and Introductions (Blair Martin & Jason Peters– *FDOT*)

9:15 – 10:30 District 3 Update

- Engineering Guidelines (*Doug Reed – PBS&J*)
- Section 7 Consultation (*Mary Mittiga – USFWS*)
- Regional Mitigation Plan (*Duncan Cairns - NFWFMD*)
- Environmental Resource Permit (ERP) Process (*Andrew Phillips - USACE*)
- Upcoming Projects (*Wendy Lasher – PBS&J*)

10:30 – 11:30 CEMO Overview and EST Updates (*Buddy Cunill and Peter McGilvray – FDOT CEMO*)

11:30 – 1:00 Lunch on your own

1:00 – 2:00 Projects of Special Concern (*Greg Garrett and Larry Barfield – PBS&J*)

- Gulf Coast Parkway and Cumulative Effects Evaluation
- CR 388 Segments 1 & 2

2:00 – 2:15 FHWA Presentation (*TBD*)

2:15 – 2:30 Break

2:30 – 3:45 Open Discussion Topics (*facilitated by Wendy Lasher and Kristin Huber – PBS&J*):

- ETDM Process
- EST Needs
- Agency Comment/Reporting Issues
- Degree of Effects
- Dispute Resolution

3:45 – 4:00 Closing (*Peggy Kelley – FDOT*)



MEETING SUMMARY

I. Attendees

See attached sign-in sheets.

II. Meeting Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of the meeting included the following:

- How can we improve the process and roles within the Environmental Technical Advisory Team (ETAT)?
- How can we coordinate and communicate better between the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and the ETAT?
- Strive to further develop our working relationships.
- Update upcoming projects and the status of ongoing projects.

III. District Three Update

- Doug Reed (PBS&J) gave a presentation on engineering issues that covered area type, design speed, and a detailed breakdown of the roadway typical section components. This presentation can be viewed and downloaded from the Environmental Screening Tool (EST) Library.
- Mary Mittiga (United States Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS]) gave a presentation on Formal Section 7 Consultation, which is required for any action that is likely to adversely affect a listed species or critical habitat. The presentation included information on the Endangered Species Act, endangered and threatened species, and Section 7 guidelines; information needed to initiate, timeframe requirements, information on biological opinion, and term and conditions. This presentation can be viewed and downloaded from the EST Library. Also, Ms. Mittiga mentioned that for development by private developers, this consultation would be under Section 10 which is more stringent.
- Duncan Cairns (Northwest Florida Water Management District [NFWWMD]) discussed briefly where to find information on the Northwest Florida Umbrella, Watershed-based, Regional Mitigation Plan (UWRMP or "Umbrella Plan"). This mitigation agreement between the United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Jacksonville District and NFWWMD, signed in July 2006, establishes procedures, guidelines and responsibilities to implement regionally significant, watershed-based, umbrella mitigation for unavoidable wetland impacts caused by FDOT projects within the jurisdictional boundaries of NFWWMD. This plan is updated annually by NFWWMD as new mitigation projects and impacts are proposed, as projects are modified or deleted, and to report estimates of mitigation credit for each project



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completed for mitigation purposes. More information on this plan can be viewed at www.NFWMDwetlands.com.

- Andy Phillips (USACE) gave a discussion on “Celebrating the Successes Throughout the Year.”
 - In July 2009, the Umbrella Plan Interagency Review Team received the 2009 Interagency Partnership Award from the Transportation Research Board.
 - The ETDM Process and EST are in the front running for the nation. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is using ETDM as a national model.
 - FHWA is drafting a funded position handbook. They will be interviewing agencies within Florida. This handbook will help other states implementing similar processes.
 - Mr. Phillips was pleased with the cross training that occurred at the ETAT Meeting (referring to engineering basics that Mr. Reed presented) and encouraged future cross training either by EST webinars or just visiting each other’s offices.
 - Mr. Phillips also encouraged utilizing downtime to improve the ETDM and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. USACE developed the Regional General Permit, which will be used in the future to streamline permits.
 - USACE has been trying to reduce median widths through wetlands and get this coordination and a streamline cross-section in place.
- Wendy Lasher (PBS&J) went through the following upcoming projects in District 3. Maps and a summary of each project can be viewed in the EST Library.
 - SR 87 Connector – New alignment to connect SR 87 North to SR 87 South in the vicinity of Whiting Field
 - I-10/US 29 Interchange Reevaluation
 - I-10 Beulah Road Interchange
 - Nine Mile Road from Pine Forest Road to US 29

IV. FDOT Central Environmental Management Office (CEMO) Overview and EST Updates (The PowerPoint presentation is available on the EST Library)

- Pete McGilvray (FDOT CEMO) gave a review of enhancements in the past year. Mr. McGilvray highlight the following new EST features:
 1. Map Enhancements
 2. Project Tracker
 3. Community Characteristics Inventory
 4. Upcoming Enhancements



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- a. Electronic Review of Environmental Documents
 - b. EST Simplification
 - c. New Welcome Page
 - d. New Simple Search
- Mr. McGilvray noted that some of these enhancements will be incorporated into the public access site. There was also a discussion on reducing file sizes and the amount of pages in the reports.
 - Buddy Cunill (FDOT CEMO) discussed the following topics:
 - Agreements
 - Funding/Spending
 - Major Benefits
 - Support and Training
 - 2010 Survey
 - Path Forward

V. Projects of Special Concern

- Greg Garrett (PBS&J) gave presentations on the ongoing Gulf Coast Parkway (GCP) and West Bay Parkway (CR 388) projects. Both of these presentations can be viewed on the EST library.

GCP

- Mr. Garrett discussed the Alternatives Evaluation Summary Report and how five corridors have been identified for further evaluation. The Alignment Public Meetings were held on October 15 and 20, 2009, in Bay and Gulf Counties, respectively, and a Stakeholder Meeting was held on November 3, 2009. He noted that the anticipated project schedule is as follows:
 - Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) – Early 2010
 - FHWA/Cooperating Agency review – Spring 2010
 - Public Hearing – Summer 2010
 - Final EIS – End 2010
 - Record of Decision Prepared – Summer 2011
- Larry Barfield (PBS&J) gave an overview of the ongoing Cumulative Effects Evaluation and the Agency Advisory Group (AAG).

West Bay Parkway (CR 388 Segments 1 and 2)



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- Mr. Garrett discussed the Land Suitability Mapping Analysis and the development of corridors. He gave an overview of the recently completed Programming Screen Review. Then he gave an outline of what's next for each project:

Segment 1 – (EIS)

- Alternative Corridors Public Meetings
- Corridor Evaluation Summary Report (EIS only)
- Methodology Review
 - Special resource concerns
 - Data review
- Evaluation of Corridor Performance
 - Purpose and Need
 - Natural and Social Environmental Impacts
 - Costs
 - Rank and Tier of Corridors
- Reasonability
 - ETAT Input
 - Public Input

Segment 2 – (Environmental Assessment [EA])

- Programming Screen Summary Report
 - Class of Action
- Development of Alternative Alignments
- Alternative Alignments Public Meeting
- Cumulative Effects Evaluation



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VI. FHWA Presentation

Cathy Kendall (FHWA) gave a presentation on “Degrees of Effect” (DOE). This presentation can be viewed on the EST library. Ms. Kendall’s presentation included:

- Degrees of Effect are assigned based on one’s perspective, but agencies’ text recommendations can clarify intent.
- Degrees of Effect are part of what goes into the Class of Action Determination.
- Distinct Degrees of Effect for each alternative can provide helpful input into scoping (reasonable/feasible alternatives, likely cost, mitigation needs, etc.), but do not by themselves equate to a preferred alternative.
- Ms. Kendall noted that Assigning DOE based on resource importance has advantages and disadvantages:
 - Advantage – Distinguishes the importance/fragility of a resource to provide “highlighted” direction for PD&E scoping, regardless of Class of Action.
 - Disadvantage – Implies that a higher Class of Action may be needed, when the stronger DOE may be intended to emphasize the resource for the scoping.
- Ms. Kendall stated that having Substantial or Dispute DOE can give reason to eliminate an alternative. Looking at the DOE can help decide if an alternative is feasible.
- One question from the ETAT was if the ETAT can recommend eliminating an alternative as part of the ETAT review. Ms. Kendal indicated that it is good to put this information in the DOE so that it can be used in the overall comparative analysis.

VII. Open Discussion

- The agencies expressed that they would like to have more project field visits.
Response: District 3 has started ETAT field visits on projects, including the recent CR 388 Segments 1 and 2 projects. District 3 will have ETAT coordinated field visits for FDOT EAs and EISs. District 3 will accommodate requests for visits; just contact Peggy Kelley if you want to meet on certain projects.
- The ETAT would also like notification of public meetings. The agencies are not always sure of what the issues are. It is useful to know what the public issues are, especially if the project is controversial.
Response: Pete McGilvray is making enhancements to the training and project scheduling calendar and at the same time he can provide a mechanism to add public meetings, but this would be a separate function than the already FDOT-wide calendar.



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- Why does the EST timeout?
Response: FDOT policy is that if there is 15 minutes of inactivity the EST will time out. This is a security policy that FDOT has signed. Press the Session Active button at the top of the screen and it will refresh your session time clock.
- One agency noted that the map in the EST stays the same when changing between projects.
Response: Press the Show on Map button and it will adjust the project.
- Can the agencies print out just their review comments?
Response: Yes, use the agency review report; prints out by agency, District, type of comment, by reviewer, etc. This can also be exported to an excel file.
- On the Mapviewer, can we turn off all the other projects/alternatives?
Response: An active projects layer and an alternative layer are being created. These two layers will be rolled out separately. You can also see a single alternative by using the project description report and scrolling down to the alternative of interest. Once there, there is a link that allows you to SHOW ALT ON MAP. Only that alternative will be highlighted. Also, within the map itself you can use the search to find the project of interest by ETDM # or name and the search returns each alt as a separate link. Lastly, the “Projects Needing Review” report lists projects by alternative. If you select the ETDM number for a single alternative it will launch the map with only that alternative highlighted.
- Can we print out individual maps?
Response: Hard copy maps can be printed that show alternative specific maps for the project area and 22 different issue maps to choose from. First use the project search to make sure the correct project is selected, then use the Maps menu → print hardcopy map function.
- The agencies stated that they appreciate when they see additional project information and studies in the EST such as contamination reports, etc.
Response: It is not typical for projects to have this kind of additional information. The ETAT may see this from time to time when projects are being submitted in the Programming Screen concurrently with the Project Development phase.
- There was a discussion about multiple alternatives and inputting comments. Agencies have been listing one comment for all alternatives, but stating the different alternative impacts within that comment. Some agencies are giving different DOEs for each alternative and then the same comment for all.
Response: Pete McGilvray does not want this. This is wasting a lot of time for the reader, paper, storage space, etc. He wants to see the comment tied to the alternative.



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Pete is trying to condense these reports. We do not want the same two-page comment in there for each alternative. Use the short form for the Minimal and below DOEs if you have a standard comment, but the Moderate and above DOEs should have individual comments. FDOT noted that it is useful when the agencies list separately the non-standard individual text for the reader. The ETAT can put the same comment using the short form for the general comment and then individually go into each one to put specific alternative comments. Solution (Greg Garrett): project level resource general comments (“Project Level Comments”) and then alternative level comments. Pete said this can be done.

- The agencies noted the amount of reviews that come out together between all of the Districts and requested that they be spread it out.
Response: Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) updates sometimes hit at the same time. You may see a spike once in awhile. FDOT has been asked to send out an e-mail to the ETAT to establish an expectation and the reason why the projects are being sent out. We are moving towards a more online, automated calendar of what projects are coming out when.
- Agencies stated that they do not like when the 45-day comment period ends on a weekend.
Response: The 45 days is actually 30 business days, which then includes weekends and holidays. The Districts try to take this into account, but the projects need to be released for review when the project is ready and the coordinator is available to submit.
- The Florida-Alabama Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) LRTP criteria uses ETDM information to prioritize projects. The TPO is working on their Needs Plan. They will be screening projects that will be submitted in the Planning Screen throughout the year. FHWA suggested that the TPO screen the projects that are in the Cost Feasible plan first. CEMO and FDOT District 3 will contact the TPO to coordinate the best way to utilize the EST and ETAT review.
- Why is the ETAT reviewing the Powerline Road (ETDM #7795) project and CR 388 (ETDM #11681) since they are in the same area?
Response: If the No-Build Alternative is selected for CR 388, then the County may still want a 2-lane road through that area. FHWA indicated that they would not sign a Class of Action on two projects with the same termini. The Powerline Road project is in the Planning Screen and is currently unfunded. It is unlikely that both roads would be built; it would be one or the other.



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- There was a discussion on DOE assignment. One agency stated that they usually looking at the worst case scenario. If FDOT/County state that they will make certain commitments in the Commitment and Recommendations section before the project is submitted, this may change how this agency comments and assigns the DOE on the projects. Several FDOT Districts are doing this already. When putting the Purpose and Need and project descriptions together, Peggy Kelley will send out to the appropriate FDOT groups along with permitting to see what FDOT can commit to ahead of time to enter in the EST.
- USACE noted that there are updated wildlife keys on its website. Go to the Endangered Species section and you will find all the keys and conditions (PDFs) at: <http://www.saj.usace.army.mil/Divisions/Regulatory/sourcebook.htm>

Peggy Kelly (District 3 ETDM Coordinator) thanked everyone for their attendance and participation. She noted the value of the commentary received during the ETAT meeting toward enhancing the District's ETDM Program.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 3:45 p.m. CT.