Planning and the Environment

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Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL)

• Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) is both a FHWA program and an approach to transportation decisionmaking.

• Represents a collaborative and integrated method of transportation decisionmaking that considers environmental issues early in the planning stage and carries these considerations through to the project development and environmental review processes (NEPA)

• Encourages interagency coordination and public communication to develop projects that best serve a community’s transportation needs while supporting other quality-of-life goals

• Integrates consideration of land use, transportation, and the natural and human environment

• Promotes partnerships leading to a balanced decision-making process.
Resources of Concern

Access
Air Quality
Cultural Resources
Hazardous Waste
Traffic Noise
Economic Impacts
Water Quality

Aesthetics
Environmental Justice
Geology
Land Use
Safety
Biological Resources
Public Involvement
How Can Planning Products be used in NEPA?

**Transportation Planning**
- Transportation Deficiencies & Needs
- Problem Statement
- Solutions Evaluation & Screening
- Preferred Solutions

**NEPA Decision Making**
- Project Scoping
- Purpose & Need
- Alternatives
- Preferred Alternative

**Documentation**
Documentation is Key

• The goal is to document planning-level information to NEPA standards so this information can be used as a foundation for the NEPA scoping process and be appended or referenced in the final NEPA document.
• Reduce and minimize NEPA studies during the transportation planning process.
• Linking planning and NEPA is requires good public and agency involvement and documentation of planning information.
• This may create additional work during planning, but the documentation helps avoid revisiting decisions or re-doing work under during the NEPA phase.
• Planners and NEPA practitioners will need to work together to ensure adequate documentation is prepared.
Benefits of PEL

- Identify and address complex environmental challenges early and avoid environmentally sensitive resources
- Design projects that meet transportation, environmental and community needs
- Minimize duplication of efforts and data
IPaC
US Fish and Wildlife Service Information for Planning and Conservation

IPaC is a project planning tool which streamlines the FWS environmental review process for Threatened & Endangered Species.

Use IPaC to identify your project location and receive an official species list (pursuant to 50 CFR 402.12) of T&E species that should be considered when evaluating the potential impacts of a project.
USFWS Critical Habitat Mapper
CHAT
Crucial Habitat Assessment Tool

- The tool is managed by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA).
- CHAT is designed to reduce conflicts and surprises while ensuring wildlife values are better incorporated into land use planning, particularly for large-scale linear projects.
- It is a non-regulatory tool and not intended for project-level approval.
NVCHAT

• Non-regulatory tool that provides species and habitat information at the landscape scale.

• Not for use as a substitute for on-the-ground surveys and agency consultation.

• Ideal tool for first-cut, due diligence review and planning for infrastructure projects, including transportation.
Use of CHATs within Long-range Planning Processes

• Supported by key sections of MAP-21, including:
  – Metropolitan Planning §§ 1105, 1201 (23 USC §§ 104, 134);
  – Statewide Non-MPO Transportation Planning §§ 1202, 52005 (23 USC §§ 135, 505);
  – Federal Lands Transportation Program (FLTP) and Federal Lands Access Program (FLAP) § 1119 (23 USC §§ 201, 203);
  – Accelerating Project Delivery § 1305 (23 USC § 139);
  – Integration of Planning and Environmental Review § 1310 (23 USC § 168);
  – Programmatic Mitigation Plans § 1311 (23 USC § 169).

• Greatest use of regional CHAT data would be for pre-STIP planning activities.
EJ Screen

- EJSCREEN is an environmental justice mapping and screening tool that provides EPA with a nationally consistent dataset and approach for combining environmental and demographic indicators.

- The tool provides demographic and environmental information for a specified area. All of the EJSCREEN indicators are publicly-available data.

- EJSCREEN includes 12 environmental indicators (air quality, water/haz waste/air, water quality, dust lead paint, traffic-2012AADT data); 6 demographic indicators (Percent Low-Income, Percent Minority, Less than High School Education, Linguistic Isolation, Individuals Under Age 5, Individuals Over Age 64);

- EJSCREEN includes a method for combining environmental and demographic indicators into 12 EJ indexes.
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