Planning and Environment Linkages

Reference Links

- Environmental Review ToolKit, FHWA (Direct to: https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/integ/index.asp)
- Planning and Environment Linkages - Questions and Answers, FHWA (Direct to: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/hep/guidance/pel/pelfaq16nov.cfm)

Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) helps transportation decision makers consider environmental, community, and economic goals early in the transportation planning process. Practitioners can also use the information, analysis, and products developed during planning to inform the environmental review process. Although not required, use of PEL is encouraged by FHWA.

PEL benefits include consistency, improved sharing of information, and savings of costs and time by eliminating duplicative efforts. For many years federal law and regulations have supported PEL. The FAST Act and the Final Rule for Statewide and Nonmetropolitan Transportation Planning and Metropolitan Transportation Planning advances the concept of PEL by encouraging innovation and accelerated project delivery through use of these approaches.

Collaborative practices that support PEL include information sharing, communication, and building and strengthening relationships among partners and stakeholders. This Application provides information, questions, and examples for practitioners to consider PEL at specific points in the decision making process.

Long Range Transportation Planning

- LRP-1 - Approve Scope of LRTP Process
  Review PEL information that is available at the outset of the LRTP update. Ensure that any planning product information used in the LRTP update is considered for documentation for ENV-1 during project scoping.
- LRP-2 - Approve Vision and Goals
  Ensure regional vision and goals inform PEL approach and subsequent projects during scoping.
- LRP-3 - Approve Evaluation Criteria, Methods and Measures
  Document the evaluation criteria and methods used to evaluate scenarios for the long range plan, along with associated metrics, to inform corridor studies (COR-5) and project development (ENV-5).
- LRP-4 - Approve Transportation Deficiencies
  Ensure transportation deficiencies are documented fully to inform corridor planning decisions (COR-2) and purpose and need (ENV-3).
- LRP-5 - Approve Financial Assumptions
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.
- LRP-6 - Approve Strategies
  Document the approved range of strategies from LRTP to provide a regional context for scoping during corridor studies (COR-1) and/or environmental review (ENV-1).
- LRP-7 - Approve Plan Scenarios
  Document the basis for elimination of specific strategies in long range planning to inform corridor planning solution sets (COR-6), and the determination of an appropriate study area for the proposed project (ENV-4). This information, and any supporting data, may also be used for documentation purposes at COR-7 and ENV-6.
- LRP-8 - Adopt Preferred Plan Scenario
  The adopted preferred plan scenario identifies the strategy used to address individual transportation deficiencies as well as documents the project concept that will be used for programming. This information informs the selection of solution sets (COR-6) and alternatives (ENV-7).
- LRP-9 - Make Conformity Determination by MPO
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.
• LRP-10 - Adopt LRTP by MPO
  Ensure the adopted LRTP is available to inform the scope of corridor planning and/or environmental review (COR-1, ENV-1) including the
decision to conduct a PEL study and any advance mitigation strategies and agreements to inform ENV-8 and ENV-12.
• LRP-11 - Make Conformity Determination
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.

Programming

• PRO-1 - Approve Revenue Sources
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.
• PRO-2 - Approve Project Cost and Revenue Allocation Approach
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.
• PRO-3 - Approve Project List from Adopted Plan
  During consideration of the Project List, identify PEL candidate projects or provide an update on the status of active PEL approaches.
• PRO-4 - Approve Project Prioritization
  Use the PEL approach outcomes and project concepts to inform project prioritization.
• PRO-5 - Reach Consensus on Draft TIP
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.
• PRO-6 - Adopt TIP by MPO
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.
• PRO-7 - Approve TIP by Governor and Incorporate into Draft STIP
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.
• PRO-8 - Reach Consensus on Draft STIP
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.
• PRO-9 - Approve STIP with respect to Fiscal Constraint
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.

Corridor Planning

• COR-1 - Approve Scope of Corridor Planning Process
  Consider whether the corridor planning study will be conducted using a PEL approach.
• COR-2 - Approve Problem Statements and Opportunities
  Document the problems and opportunities identified to inform the purpose and need developed in ENV-3.
• COR-3 - Approve Goals for the Corridor
  Document the approved goals to inform purpose and need in ENV-3 as well as the selection of evaluation criteria, methods, and measures in
  ENV-5.
• COR-4 - Reach Consensus on Scope of Environmental Analysis
  Collaborate with environmental review resource agencies and other partners to reach consensus on the level of analysis that will be needed
  for direct incorporation of corridor planning outcomes into environmental review.
• COR-5 - Approve Evaluation Criteria, Methods and Measures
  Based on the agreements reached in COR 4, document the approved evaluation criteria to inform ENV-5.
• COR-6 - Approve Range of Solution Sets
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.
• COR-7 - Adopt Preferred Solution Set
  Document the transportation projects identified within the solution set for input to the range of alternatives considered in ENV-6 and
  conceptual mitigation at ENV-8.
• COR-8 - Approve Implementation Criteria for Prioritizing Projects
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.
• COR-9 - Adopt Priorities for Implementation
  Consider how the PEL corridor planning study outcomes may impact the individual transportation project priority.

Environmental Review/NEPA Merged with Permitting

• ENV-1 - Reach Consensus on Scope of Environmental Review
  Gather information from PEL approaches and information generated specifically to inform environmental review in long range planning and/or
corridor planning. Relevant questions and data from LRP-1, LRP-2, LRP-6, and LRP 10 as well as COR-1, COR-3, COR-6, and COR-9 may
  be useful.
• ENV-2 - Approve Notice of Intent
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.
• ENV-3 - Approve Purpose and Need/Reach Consensus on Project Purpose
  Collect information on transportation deficiencies, problems, and opportunities (LRP-4, COR-6) for technical inputs to the purpose and need.
The purpose and need should be consistent with the regional vision and goals (LRP-2) and corridor goals (COR-3).
• ENV-4 - Reach Consensus on Study Area
  Review data for specific scenarios/solutions identified in LRP-7 or COR-6 to inform identification of the initial project study area.
- ENV-5 - Approve Evaluation Criteria, Methods and Measures
  The evaluation criteria, methods and measures for comparing alternatives are informed by the outcome of LRP-3 and COR-5. If the approved criteria, methods, and measures are inconsistent with those used in planning, document and provide the basis for that decision.

- ENV-6 - Approve Full Range of Alternatives
  Consider the identification of strategies from long range planning and solution sets from corridor planning in selecting the full range of alternatives (LRP-7 and COR-7).

- ENV-7 - Approve Alternatives to be Carried Forward
  Consider the outcomes of LRP-8 and COR-7 to inform the alternatives carried forward for consistency with region-wide multimodal improvements.

- ENV-8 - Approve Draft EIS with Conceptual Mitigation
  Inform the conceptual mitigation decision using the advance mitigation strategies and/or agreements documented in PEL approaches (LRP-10 or COR-7).

- ENV-9 - Approve Resource Agency Public Notice
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.

- ENV-10 - Approve Preferred Alternative / LEDPA
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.

- ENV-11 - Approve Final Jurisdictional Determination
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.

- ENV-12 - Reach Consensus on Avoidance and Minimization for the LEDPA
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.

- ENV-13 - Approve Final EIS and Record of Decision
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.

- ENV-14 - Render Permit Decision and Approve Avoidance and Minimization
  This Key Decision is not associated with application.