



FHWA Accelerating Project Delivery

Strategy: Planning & Environment Linkages

Illinois Peer Exchange



Federal Highway
Administration

December 10-11, 2018 | Springfield, IL

This activity report summarizes the presentations and discussions. The summaries follow the order of appearance on the agenda. Each presentation summary is one page long, has a brief overview, findings, highlights from the participant discussion, and has a text box containing the speaker's contact information. This peer exchange was funded through the Second Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP2) product [Expediting Project Delivery \(C19\)](#).



Source: Volpe Center

Peer Exchange Notes

This peer exchange discussed Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) approaches and focused on applying PEL to the I-80 bridge project on the Illinois-Iowa border. Seventy-eight stakeholders from Illinois DOT, Iowa DOT, resource agencies, and FHWA headquarters and division offices attended the peer exchange. Colorado DOT served as the peer for this peer exchange and shared their experiences with PEL throughout the peer exchange to guide Illinois DOT in thinking about the I-80 PEL project.

Key Issues Participants shared information on PEL approaches and worked to scope and identify needs for the I-80 PEL study.

Products Participants defined a list of existing resources that can be used in the I-80 PEL study. Participants also identified required information that must be incorporated into the I-80 PEL study as it is undertaken.

Next Steps Illinois DOT will move forward with the I-80 PEL study.

For More Information

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Resources

- [FHWA Planning & Environment Linkages](#)
- [FHWA Expediting Project Delivery](#)
- [CDOT PEL Program](#)

Presentations referenced in this document are available upon request to Madison.Burke@dot.gov.

What is PEL?

Contact

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Organization

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Presentation Summary

Provided an overview of what PEL is, how PEL can accelerate project delivery, background information on PEL, the benefits of PEL, and regulatory information on PEL approaches

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Presentation Highlights

- PEL uses the information, analysis, or products developed during planning to inform the environmental review process.
- PEL is authorized under multiple statutory authorities, the most recent authorities being:
 - [23 USC 168](#) outlines conditions for adopting or incorporating by reference a planning product.
 - [23 USC 139\(f\)\(4\)](#) describes requirements for eliminating alternatives if studied in planning.
- Many conditions for PEL are already completed as part of the normal transportation planning process.
- [One Federal Decision](#) sets a goal of reducing the average time for environmental review for major infrastructure projects to two years:
 - PEL benefits support the goals of One Federal Decision.
 - PEL can integrate into the [One Federal Decision environment review process](#).

CDOT PEL Study Framework & Resources

Contact

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Presentation Summary

CDOT leads a PEL program that focuses on larger-scale PEL studies. CDOT has completed 20 PEL studies since 2008. Through PEL, CDOT engages resource agencies and has found success with its Transportation Environmental Resource Council (TERC).

Phone

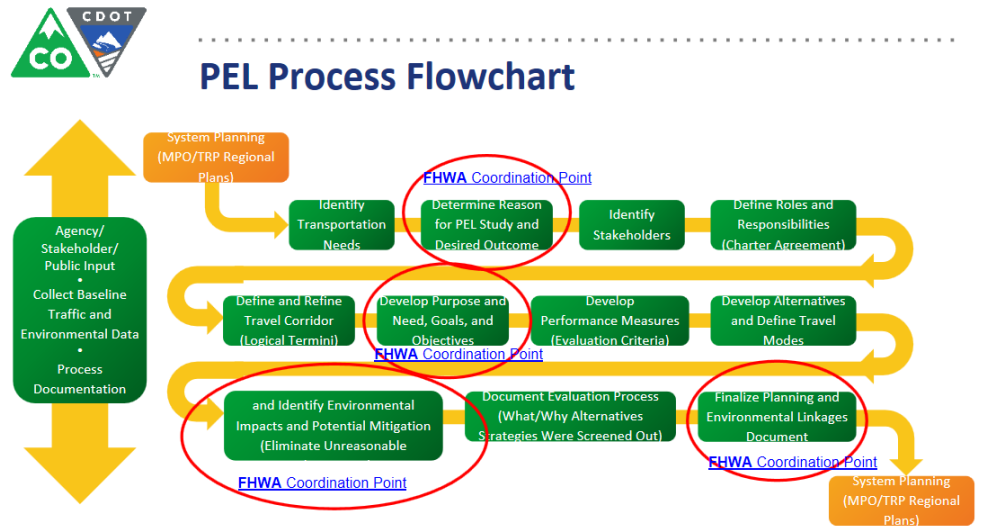
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Presentation Highlights

- CDOT’s PEL program focuses on fostering agency outreach, environmental scoping, and mitigation opportunities.
- The PEL process is flexible and can be used to make project or planning decisions.
- If a program or project is likely to have federal involvement in the future, PEL is a good tool to help streamline future National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes.
- CDOT data from PEL studies can be used in NEPA if less than 5 years old.



Source: CDOT

Participant Discussion Highlights

- Partner Engagement** Engaging resource agencies over years and establishing formal structures for engagement builds trust in the process.
- Public Involvement** Public involvement is flexible in PEL. CDOT uses kickoff meetings and open project comments on their website and seeks to keep an open and transparent process through PEL.
- Realizing Benefits** PEL is beneficial when construction money is not available. It is also beneficial to establishing a reasonable range of alternatives while eliminating unreasonable alternatives before NEPA.

Adopting PEL Approaches to IDOT Processes and Projects

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Discussion Summary

Participants received an overview of the I-80 bridge project, which will be a PEL study. Participants then discussed the PEL study's purpose and need, logical termini, and range of alternatives. Participants also identified existing resources that can be used in the PEL study and new information that will need to be identified during the PEL study.

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Discussion Highlights

- Illinois DOT will conduct a PEL study on the I-80 bridge linking Illinois and Iowa



Source: Illinois DOT

Products Identified

- Through the discussion, participants identified the following resources to be used in the PEL study:
 - A bridge inspection report for the I-80 bridge.
 - Preliminary assessments of geometry.
 - Crash data for the study area that can be used by the project consultant in a crash analysis.
 - Travel demand model and analysis already conducted by Quad Cities MPO.
- Participants also identified the following pieces of information needed in the PEL study:
 - Logical termini for the study area.
 - A traffic analysis to assess safety issues along the corridor.
 - Railroad interaction and bicycle/pedestrian issues will require study.
 - Environmental Justice communities and tribes will need to be identified and consulted.