

Planning and Environment Linkages



What is PEL?

Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL) is a valuable tool for creating efficiency in transportation project development and supporting agencies to accelerate project delivery.

- » **PEL represents a collaborative and integrated approach** to transportation decision-making that considers benefits and impacts of proposed transportation system improvements to the environment, community, and economy during the transportation planning process.
- » **PEL assists project delivery.** Agencies can agree to a project's purpose and need, define the preliminary range of alternatives, eliminate unreasonable alternatives, and begin public involvement and documentation of planning decisions through PEL.
- » **PEL is flexible.** Practitioners can use a variety of authorities to implement PEL in a way that meets their individual needs.

Why Use PEL?

State and local agencies can achieve significant benefits by incorporating environmental and community values into transportation decisions early in planning and carrying these considerations through project development and delivery. **Benefits include:**

» **Minimize duplication of efforts**

A PEL approach improves information sharing and early consultation among State DOTs, Federal agencies, and resource agencies, resulting in reduced or eliminated duplication of work in planning and NEPA processes.

» **Documentation**

Taking a PEL approach can help document planning information and decisions for environmental review and NEPA.

» **Decisions & analysis to inform NEPA**

PEL uses transportation planning decisions and analysis, including purpose and need, identification of preliminary alternatives, and elimination of unreasonable alternatives, to inform NEPA.

» **Flexible approaches**

PEL can be implemented using a number of approaches, making it a flexible and adaptable tool across States. States can employ PEL to supplement and enhance their existing processes while still realizing PEL's benefits.

» **Enhanced community involvement**

PEL can give the public an early opportunity to assess project components and provide meaningful input on future projects in a way that is more accountable and responsive to the community.

» **Improved relationships & coordination**

Taking a PEL approach often improves relationships and coordination with partner agencies, including stronger information sharing and better communication.

PEL Resources

Visit the PEL website at environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env_initiatives/pel.aspx to access these resources:

» **Trainings & workshops**

Watch pre-recorded webinars that provide a detailed overview of PEL, walk participants through using PEL for historic preservation, and provide guidance on corridor studies, among other topics.

» **Guidance**

Browse detailed guidance on a number of key initiatives that encourage the integration of planning and the environment in the transportation decision-making process. Topics include collaborative decision-making, corridor planning, freight, and land use, among others.

New resources coming soon!

- » **PEL Guidebook.** Coming fall 2019, the PEL Guidebook will serve as a tool for practitioners and will illustrate multiple, flexible approaches for using PEL.
- » **NHI PEL Training Course.** A two-day training. The NHI training course will cover what PEL is and how you can use the PEL approach in your state. Coming fall 2019.

Funding Flexibility

PEL offers flexibility in funding. Planning funds (Metropolitan Planning [PL]/State Planning and Research [SPR] and Surface Transportation Program Block Grant [STPBG]) can be used for aspects of PEL studies, including corridor and feasibility studies, which can be used to accelerate project delivery. For more information on funding options and verifying funding eligibility, please visit www.fhwa.dot.gov/federalaid/projects.pdf

The FAST Act & PEL

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) continues efforts to streamline project delivery:

- » Efficient environmental reviews for project decisionmaking (Section 1304),
 - » Integration of planning and environmental review (Section 1305), and
 - » Development of programmatic mitigation plans (Section 1306)
- » Learn more about the FAST Act at environment.fhwa.dot.gov/legislation/authorizations/FASTact.aspx

One Federal Decision & PEL

In accordance with Executive Order 13807, USDOT and other Federal departments signed a memorandum of understanding in April 2018 to implement a process that delivers environmental reviews and authorization decisions for major infrastructure projects as One Federal Decision (OFD).

A key goal of OFD is to reduce the average time to complete environmental review processes to two years. Using a PEL approach can facilitate this accelerated review process timeline.

- » Learn more about OFD at environment.fhwa.dot.gov/nepa/oneFederal_decision.aspx



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Want more information?

If you are interested in learning more about the PEL program and would like to discuss opportunities for your agency to accelerate project delivery, you can submit a request online at:

environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env_initiatives/pel/request_pel_info.aspx