



Environmental Streamlining & TxDOT

Environmental Streamlining Summit January 27-28, 2000

Texas held its second streamlining meeting Jan. 27-28 to outline an action plan for developing and implementing streamlining initiatives for the state. The meeting, hosted by FHWA and TxDOT, was a follow-up to an initial agency director-level meeting held in September of last year.

Initially, the group heard from Dan Reagan, FHWA Texas division office director, and Mr. David Laney, Texas Transportation Commissioner, outline their support of Section 1309 and agency efforts to comply with the intent of Congress. Lucy Garliauskas, FHWA Washington, presented what Congressional intent was in passing Section 1309 and what FHWA Washington is doing to assist states with this effort. Ms. Garliauskas is a member of the committee that is made up of representatives of the various federal agencies that are co-signers of the national MOU on Section 1309. The committee is charged with implementing the MOU commitments.

Each agency was given an opportunity to talk openly about their role in transportation project development, their relationship with TxDOT and FHWA, and what opportunities their agency could offer to streamline the environmental process.

The group then broke up into five work groups to explore specific issues/areas of concern and possible solutions that will streamline the process. The group identified several items that could be done now, such as ensuring environmental commitments were included in the PS&E and carried out, agency cross-training, improved communication and conflict resolution. The primary areas of concern were:

- Communication, including cross-training and across-the-board knowledge of environmental commitments made for projects
- Interagency coordination and collaboration, including early involvement in transportation planning and project development process
- Programmatic Agreement and/or MOUs between TxDOT and resource agencies, including review of existing and possible development of new agreements
- Eliminate duplication of efforts among the many agencies involved in the project development process
- Build trust among agencies involved

- Lack of resources for resource agencies to participate in the project development process earlier and continuously throughout

The participants of the meeting will be provided with a summary of the meeting and will be asked to choose from the items of primary concerns which to target first. From there, a steering committee, made up of one representative from each agency at the meeting, will develop an action plan for addressing the issue(s), and choose a pilot project to implement it. Additional action plans and pilot projects will be developed as results from the first pilot project unfold.

The steering committee will oversee the streamlining efforts, including the pilot project's progress. The committee will also develop a conflict resolution process to be implemented as soon as possible.

In addition to TxDOT and FHWA, other agencies attending the meeting were U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Corps of Engineers, Federal Transit Authority, Environmental Protection Agency, Texas Natural Resource Conservation Commission, Texas General Land Office, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, Texas Historical Commission, and local MPOs.

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