# PEL Questionnaire

This questionnaire is intended to act as a summary of the Planning process and ease the transition from the planning study to a NEPA analysis. Often, there is no overlap in personnel between the planning and NEPA phases of a project, and much (or all) of the history of decisions, etc., is not passed along. Different planning processes take projects through analysis at different levels of detail. Without knowing how far, or in how much detail a planning study went, NEPA project teams often re-do work that has already been done.

Planning teams need to be cautious during the alternative screen process; alternative screening should focus on purpose and need/corridor vision, fatal flaw analysis and possibly mode selection. This may help minimize problems during discussions with resource agencies. Alternatives that have fatal flaws or do not meet the purpose and need/corridor vision cannot be considered viable alternatives, even if they reduce impacts to a particular resource. This questionnaire is consistent with 23 CFR 450 (Planning regulations) and other FHWA policy on Planning and Environmental Linkage process.

## Instructions:

These questions should be used as a guide throughout the planning process. The questionnaire should be filled out as the study progresses. It is a beneficial tool to keep leadership and program managers up to date on a study’s progress. When a PEL study (i.e. corridor study) is started, this questionnaire will be given to the project team. Some of the basic questions to consider are: "What did you do?", "What didn't you do?" and "Why?". When the team submits the study to FHWA for review, the completed questionnaire will be included with the submittal. FHWA will use this questionnaire to assist in determining if an effective PEL process has been applied before NEPA processes are authorized to begin. The questionnaire should be included in the planning document as an executive summary, chapter, or appendix.

## Background:

### What is the name of the PEL document and other identifying project information (e.g., subaccount or STIP numbers)?

### Who is the lead agency for the study? (FHWA, FTA, CDOT, Local Agency)

### Provide a brief chronology of the planning activities (PEL study) including the year(s) the studies were conducted. (Include project start date and end date).

### Provide a description of the existing transportation corridor, including project limits, length of study corridor, modes, number of lanes, shoulder, access control and surrounding environment (urban vs. rural, residential vs. commercial, etc.)

### Who was the sponsor of the PEL study? (CDOT, Local Agency [name the local agency], Other)

### Who was included on the study team (Name and title of agency representatives, PMT, TWG, consultants, etc.)?

### List the recent, current or near future planning studies or projects in the vicinity? What is the relationship of this project to those studies/projects?

## Methodology used:

### Did the Study follow the FHWA PEL Process? If the Study was conducted by another US DOT Agency, provide a crosswalk table to demonstrate how the FHWA Process was utilized.

### How did the Study meet each of the PEL Coordination Points identified in 23 USC 168?

### What NEPA terminology/language was used and how did you define them? (Provide examples or list)

### How do you see these terms being used in NEPA documents?

### What were the key steps and coordination points in the PEL decision-making process? Who were the decision-makers and who else participated in those key steps? For example, for the corridor vision, the decision was made by CDOT and the local agency, with buy-in from FHWA, USACE, and USFWS.

### How should the PEL information below be presented in NEPA?

## Agency coordination:

### Provide a synopsis of coordination with federal, tribal, state and local environmental, regulatory and resource agencies. Describe their level of participation and how you coordinated with them.

### What transportation agencies (e.g., for adjacent jurisdictions) did you coordinate with or were involved in the PEL study? This includes all federal agencies if the study is being led by a local agency or transit-oriented study seeking to utilize the FHWA PEL Process.

### What steps will need to be taken with each agency during NEPA scoping?

## Public coordination:

### Provide a synopsis and table of your coordination efforts with the public and stakeholders.

## Corridor Vision/Purpose and Need:

### What was the scope of the PEL study and the reason for doing it?

### What is the vision for the corridor?

### What were the goals and objectives?

### What is the PEL Purpose and Need statement?

### What steps will need to be taken during the NEPA process to make this a project-level purpose and need statement?

## Range of alternatives considered, screening criteria, and screening process:

### What types of alternatives were looked at? (Provide a one or two sentence summary and reference document.)

### How did you select the screening criteria and screening process?

### For alternative(s) that were screened out, briefly summarize the reasons for eliminating or not recommending the alternative(s). (During the initial screenings, this generally will focus on fatal flaws)

### How did the team develop Alternatives? Was each alternative screened consistently?

### Which alternatives were recommended? Which should be brought forward into NEPA and why?

### Did the public, stakeholders, and agencies have an opportunity to comment during this process? Summarize the amount of public interest in the PEL Study.

### Were there unresolved issues with the public, stakeholders and/or agencies?

## Planning assumptions and analytical methods:

### What is the forecast year used in the PEL study?

### What method was used for forecasting traffic volumes?

### Are the planning assumptions and the corridor vision/purpose and need statement consistent with the long-range transportation plan?

### What were the future year policy and/or data assumptions used in the transportation planning process related to land use, economic development, transportation costs and network expansion?

## What pieces of the PEL can transfer directly to the NEPA phase of a project?

## Resources (wetlands, cultural, etc.) reviewed. For each resource or group of resources reviewed, provide the following:

### In the PEL study, at what level of detail were the resources reviewed and what was the method of review?

### Is this resource present in the area and what is the existing environmental condition for this resource?

### What are the issues that need to be considered during NEPA, including potential resource impacts and potential mitigation requirements (if known)?

### How will the data provided need to be supplemented during NEPA?

## List resources that were not reviewed in the PEL study and why? Indicate whether or not they will need to be reviewed in NEPA and explain why.

## Were cumulative impacts considered in the PEL study? If yes, provide the information or reference where it can be found.

## Describe any mitigation strategies discussed at the planning level that should be analyzed during NEPA.

## What needs to be done during NEPA to make information from the PEL study available to the agencies and the public? Are there PEL study products which can be used or provided to agencies or the public during the NEPA scoping process?

## Are there any other issues a future project team should be aware of?

### Examples: Utility problems, access or ROW issues, encroachments into ROW, problematic landowners and/or groups, contact information for stakeholders, special or unique resources in the area, etc.

## Provide a table of identified projects and/or a proposed phasing plan for corridor build out.

## Provide a list of what funding sources have been identified to fund projects from this PEL?