

Appendix B
PEL Questionnaire



Federal Highway Administration

Planning/Environmental Linkages Questionnaire

This questionnaire is intended to act as a summary of the Planning process and ease the transition from planning to a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis. Often, there is no overlap in personnel between the planning and NEPA phases of a project, so consequently much (or all) of the history of decisions made in the planning phase is lost. Different planning processes take projects through analysis at different levels of detail. Without knowing how far, or in how much detail a planning study provided, NEPA project teams are not aware of and may often re-do work that has already been done. This questionnaire is consistent with the 23 CFR 450 (Planning regulations) and other FHWA policy on Planning and Environmental Linkage (PEL) process.

The Planning and Environmental Linkages study (PEL Study) is used in this questionnaire as a generic term to mean any type of planning study conducted at the corridor or subarea level which is more focused than studies at the regional or system planning levels. Many states may use other terminology to define studies of this type and are considered to have the same meaning as a PEL study.

At the inception of the PEL study, the study team must decide how the work will later be incorporated into subsequent NEPA efforts. A key consideration is whether the PEL study will meet standards established by NEPA regulations and guidance. One example is the use of terminology consistent with NEPA vocabulary (e.g. purpose and need, alternatives, affected environment, environmental consequences).

Instructions: These questions should be used as a guide throughout the planning process, not just answered near completion of the process. When a PEL 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 a PEL 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.

1. Background:

- a. Who is the sponsor of the PEL study? (state DOT, Local Agency, Other)
The City of Fort Collins is the sponsor of this study.
- b. What is the name of the PEL study document and other identifying project information (e.g. sub-account or STIP numbers, long-range plan or transportation improvement program years)?



- Harmony Road ETC Corridor Understanding Report (August 2012)
 - Harmony Road ETC Master Plan (2013)
- c. Who was included on the study team (Name and title of agency representatives, consultants, etc.)?
Please see the **Acknowledgements** section immediately preceding the Executive Summary in the Harmony Road ETC Master Plan for a detailed list of study team participants.
- d. Provide a description of the existing transportation facility within the corridor, including project limits, modes, functional classification, number of lanes, shoulder width, access control and type of surrounding environment (urban vs. rural, residential vs. commercial, etc.)
Harmony Road is one of six Enhanced Travel Corridors (ETC) identified in the Fort Collins *Transportation Master Plan* which are defined as “uniquely designed corridors that are planned to incorporate high frequency transit, bicycling, and walking as part of the corridor.”
- The Harmony Road ETC extends from Shields Street to I-25 (approximately 5 ½ miles) and currently serves automobile, bus, bicycle and pedestrian travel modes. Harmony Road is classified as a Minor Arterial from Shields Street to College Avenue, and a Major Arterial from College Avenue to I-25. The section from Shields Street to Boardwalk Drive is currently 4 lanes, and Boardwalk Drive to I-25 is 6 lanes. The corridor land uses range from residential backing the street on the west end to suburban-type commercial development through the central portion, and large campus employment bases on the east end. Some agricultural lane exists in the eastern portion of the corridor.
- e. Provide a brief chronology of the planning activities (PEL study) including the year(s) the studies were completed.
A chronology of the planning activities is included in **Chapter 1, Figure 2** of this report.
- f. Are there recent, current or near future planning studies or projects in the vicinity? What is the relationship of this project to those studies/projects?
A variety of plans have been completed by the City of Fort Collins and other agencies that address transportation, access, and other issues along Harmony Road. **Appendix A** of this report lists the plans and provides a description and relevance to the Harmony Road corridor. A description of the near term projects that will affect the Harmony Road corridor is also included in **Appendix A** of this report.



2. Methodology used:

- a. What was the scope of the PEL study and the reason for completing it?
The Harmony Road ETC Master Plan study is not considered a PEL; however, several NEPA process principles were followed for this study:
- Preparation of a purpose and need statement
 - Evaluation of alternatives and identification of a Preferred Alternative
 - Identification of potential environmental impacts and conceptual mitigation strategies
 - Public involvement

Although not required, this questionnaire was also completed, which is consistent with a typical FHWA PEL process.

- b. Did you use NEPA-like language? Why or why not?
Yes, NEPA-like language was used to streamline the environmental process for transportation projects along the corridor.
- c. What were the actual terms used and how did you define them? (Provide examples or list)
- A Purpose and Need Statement was prepared for the study (refer to **Chapter 2** of the report)
 - Identified a Locally Preferred Alternative – used for the alternative selected for analysis to move forward into NEPA
 - Identified a No Action Alternative, which would leave Harmony Road as it currently is and would not provide any major capacity or multimodal improvements
 - Identified Next Steps/Mitigation Strategies – Describes the next steps necessary for the environmental resources analyzed and mitigation measures that have been identified to address adverse impacts that would be expected with the Locally Preferred Alternative
- d. How do you see these terms being used in NEPA documents?
The terms used in this study are easily transferable to any future NEPA process.
- e. 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 state DOT and the local agency, with buy-in from FHWA, the USACE, and USFWS and other resource/regulatory agencies.



Key decision-makers in the study process included:

- A Project Management Team (PMT) with Fort Collins staff and the consultant team was formed and met or conversed approximately bi-weekly over the course of the study.
- A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was formed and met six times during the study process. The TAC consisted of representatives from various City Departments as well as the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Larimer County, the North Front Range MPO, the Town of Timnath, and the University of Colorado Health Systems
- Presentations and workshops were held with several Fort Collins Boards and Commissions including the Transportation Board, the Air Quality Advisory Board, the Bicycle Advisory Committee, and the City Council.

f. How should the PEL information be presented in NEPA?

The study reports were prepared consistent with NEPA language and allow any future NEPA process/study effort to readily extract data from the report.

3. Agency coordination:

a. 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.

Coordination with environmental resource agencies outside of the City of Fort Collins did not occur as part of this study.

b. What transportation agencies (e.g. for adjacent jurisdictions) did you coordinate with or were involved during the PEL study?

The study was conducted in a manner consistent with the Federal Transit Administration's (FTA) Alternatives Analysis (AA) study process.

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

NEPA scoping requirements for site-specific projects in the corridor will involve agency coordination to initiate the environmental review process per FTA guidelines.

4. Public coordination:

a. Provide a synopsis of your coordination efforts with the public and stakeholders. Yes. A variety of public outreach activities were designed and conducted for the study to solicit input from residents, business owners, employees, and travelers of the Harmony Road corridor and from the community at large. Public outreach activities included virtual public open houses, presentations to City Boards and City Council, booths at City events and other public meetings, and stakeholder



meetings with neighborhood groups, business associations, and major employers in the corridor. **Appendix C** of this report provides a summary the public input that occurred during the course of this study.

The study was guided by a Project Management Team (PMT), which was comprised of FC Moves transportation planners and a Transfort transit planner. The PMT and consultant team held monthly or semi-monthly conference call throughout the study process to discuss findings and preliminary recommendations and to prepare for meetings with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC was involved in each step in the alternative evaluation process, as well as during the development and refinement of the LPA. Coordination with other City staff and with neighboring agencies largely occurred through the TAC, which met six times from March 2102 through the conclusion of the study to provide input about the analysis of technical data for the City's decision making purposes. A list of TAC members is included in **Chapter 1** of this report.

5. Purpose and Need for the PEL study:

- a. What was the scope of the PEL study and the reason for completing it?
The reason for completing this study was to develop a vision for the future of the Harmony Road ETC including specific recommendations on multimodal improvements to achieve the vision. The scope of this study involved a thorough inventory of existing conditions along the corridor, development of a Purpose and Need Statement, goals and objectives, a two-tiered alternatives development and evaluation process, selection and refinement of the Locally Preferred Alternative, including conceptual plans and cost estimates, and stakeholder and public outreach efforts.
- b. Provide the purpose and need statement, or the corridor vision and transportation goals and objectives to realize that vision.
The purpose of the study is to implement multimodal improvements that enhance mobility and safety along the Harmony Road Corridor. Improvements will support local and regional travel needs, land uses, economic health and environmental stewardship goals. The purpose and need for the project is provided in detail in **Chapter 2** of this report
- c. What steps will need to be taken during the NEPA process to make this a project-level purpose and need statement?
The purpose and need developed for this study is intended to be directly transferable to any future project-level purpose and need statement.



6. Range of alternatives: 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. Detail the range of alternatives considered, screening criteria and screening process, including:

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

The range of alternatives considered is summarized in **Chapter 3, Table 2.**

b. How did you select the screening criteria and screening process?

The criteria were selected in direct response to the established goals and objectives, which tie directly to the stated transportation problems, as described in **Chapter 2.**

c. For alternative(s) that were screened out, briefly summarize the reasons for eliminating the alternative(s). (During the initial screenings, this generally will focus on fatal flaws)

As described in **Chapter 2**, Tier 1 Alternatives were eliminated because they did not meet the Purpose and Need or because they did not perform as well as other alternatives in the qualitative evaluation. In Tier 2, Alternatives were compared against each other, and those alternatives that were deemed not to perform as well based on the established evaluation criteria were eliminated.

d. Which alternatives should be brought forward into NEPA and why?

At a minimum, the No Action Alternative and the Locally Preferred Alternative should be brought forward into NEPA. **Chapter 4** of this report describes the Locally Preferred Alternative in detail.

e. Did the public, stakeholders, and agencies have an opportunity to comment during this process?

Yes. Refer to **Chapter 1** of the study for a description of the outreach process.

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

There were no unresolved issues with the public, stakeholders, and/or agencies regarding this study.



7. Planning assumptions and analytical methods:

- a. What is the forecast year used in the PEL study?
The study used 2035 as the forecast year.
- b. What method was used for forecasting traffic volumes?
The North Front Range MPO travel demand model (as refined by the City of Fort Collins) was used to forecast traffic.
- c. Are the planning assumptions and the corridor vision/purpose and need statement consistent with the long-range transportation plan?
Yes.
- d. 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?
The future year assumptions are based on the Fiscally Constrained Regional Transportation Plan and the City of Fort Collins' future land use forecasts.

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

- a. In the PEL study, at what level of detail was the resource reviewed and what was the method of review?

Resource	Level of Detail/Method of Review
Noise	Identification of noise sensitive receptors per FTA guidelines.
Air Quality	Includes a qualitative discussion of air quality considerations.
Historic Resources	Inventory included the identification of designated historic resources and the resources potentially eligible for historic designation along the study corridor based on a windshield survey. Analysis included a review of aerial photography and overlay with the widest potential project footprint.
Parks and Recreational Resources	Inventory included the identification through existing GIS information and individual property websites. Analysis included a review of aerial photography and overlay with the widest potential project footprint.



Resource	Level of Detail/Method of Review
Hazardous Materials	Inventory included a review of readily available local, state, tribal, and federal environmental agency databases. Analysis included a review of aerial photography and overlay with the widest potential project footprint.
Wetlands/Other Waters of the US	Inventory included a review of available GIS mapping data from the City. Analysis included a review of aerial photography and overlay with the widest potential project footprint.
Biological Resources - Threatened/Endangered Species and Migratory Birds	Inventory included collecting data from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information, Planning, and Conservation System (IPac) to identify any potential species within the corridor. No field survey was conducted to identify migratory bird activity or nests.
Right-of-Way	Review of City's parcel data.
Water Resources	Preparation of a Drainage Report to identify existing water resources in the study corridor. Consideration of stormwater quality management.

- b. Is this resource present in the area and what is the existing environmental condition for this resource?
 The **Environmental** section of the **Existing Conditions Chapter 3** of the Harmony Road ETC Corridor Understanding Report (August 2012) and **Appendix F** of this report document the environmental resources in the corridor, including historic properties, parks, trails, and open space resources, hazardous materials, biological resources (threatened/endangered species, vegetation/noxious weeds), and wetlands/other waters of the US.
- c. What are the issues that need to be considered during NEPA, including potential resource impacts and potential mitigation requirements (if known)?
 For issues that need to be considered during the NEPA process, please see **Appendix F** of this report. The following priority resources have been identified: noise, air quality, historic resources, park and recreation/Section 4(f) resources, hazardous materials, and wetlands/other waters of the US.



- d. How will the data provided need to be supplemented during NEPA?

The environmental resource analysis for this study was conducted by performing a desktop survey (no field confirmation), referencing available agency electronic files, and utilizing existing GIS base mapping data. Therefore, most of the environmental resources will require additional assessment that will require a field verification of the existing conditions within the corridor. Also, depending on the timeframe of any future NEPA process, some resources could require additional assessment due to new regulations, additional federally-listed endangered/threatened species, etc. **Appendix F** of this report identifies the “next steps” that are recommended for each resource during any future NEPA process.

9. List environmental resources you are aware of 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.

Consultation with and concurrence from resource agencies (e.g., US Fish and Wildlife Service) was not conducted as a part of this study and will need to be performed in subsequent NEPA processes/studies.

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

Cumulative impacts were not considered in this study.

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

During the conceptual design process, the design team included two specific avoidance/minimization design elements to help reduce environmental impacts throughout the corridor. These design elements are discussed in **Chapter 4** of this report.

The detailed mitigation strategy for each potentially impacted resource (e.g., wetland banking, hazardous materials management/worker health and safety plans, vegetation replacement, noxious weed management) will need to be analyzed during the NEPA process.



12. 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?

Relevant planning products that are readily available to the subsequent NEPA process include:

- This report (Harmony Road ETC Master Plan [2013])
- Harmony Road ETC Corridor Understanding Report (August 2012)

All documentation will be posted on the City of Fort Collins website and will also be readily available to the public through the City of Fort Collins office located at: 281 North College Avenue, Fort Collins, CO 80522

13. Are there any other issues a future project team should be aware of?
- a. Examples: Controversy, utility problems, access or ROW issues, encroachments into ROW, problematic land owners and/or groups, contact information for stakeholders, special or unique resources in the area, etc.
There are no other issues that have arisen that the project team is aware of at this point in time (June 2013).