

The FDOT, FHWA, and participating resource and regulatory agencies set out to develop a “new way of doing business.” The ETDM Process is that new way of doing business for transportation and environmental review.

The purpose of the ETDM Process is to focus on earlier recognition of the potential impacts that a proposed project might have on both the natural, cultural and human environment, and what the associated costs might be. This early information helps guide the transportation decision-making process (e.g. deciding which projects should move forward in the planning process, modifying a project to avoid or mitigation potential impacts).

The ETDM process is a technology-based project review process. The project reviews are conducted at two critical time-frames in the project development process: during the development of long range transportation plans; and prior to adding projects FDOT’s Five Year Work Program.

Transportation project maps and detailed project information are entered into a web-based program that allows resource agencies to review projects and provide comments on the potential impacts of a transportation project on surrounding resources. The web-based tool captures agency comments, summarizes the comments in a project summary, and rates the potential effects of the project. Project impacts are rated on a scale from “no degree of effect” to “substantial”. This information is retained as a permanent, continuous record of the project that is available for public viewing. The project history and review information is then used later to guide and streamline the Project Development and Environmental (PD&E) Study designed to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

Projects are evaluated based on their potential effects on a variety of environmental and community resources and issues, including: wetlands, floodplains, water quality and quantity, air quality, wildlife and habitat, coastal and marine, social and cultural, historical and archaeological, recreation areas, land use, contaminated sites, farmlands, navigation, and special designations. Climate change considerations could be added to the issues evaluated during the screening of transportation projects.

The ETDM Process has fostered a team approach to transportation solutions. The reviewing agencies are comprised of representatives from environmental and community resource agencies which have statutory responsibility for issuing permits or regulatory review under NEPA. These review agencies are identified in Table 1. Additionally, these agencies participate in regularly schedule Environmental Technical Advisory Team meetings with the FDOT Districts and metropolitan planning organizations to identify, discuss and resolve potential project issues.

The interaction and information sharing that occurs from the Planning phase through the Project Delivery phase, assists in developing, designing, and delivering, better and more efficient transportation projects. The resulting projects not only improve mobility, but provide a better fit within a fragile natural and human environment.

Table 1 - ETDM Resource Agencies

- Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
- Federal Highway Administration
- Federal Transit Administration
- Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
- Florida Department of Community Affairs
- Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources
- Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)
- Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
- Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council
- The Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida
- Northwest Florida Water Management District
- The Seminole Tribe of Florida
- South Florida Water Management District
- Southwest Florida Water Management District
- St. Johns River Water Management District
- Suwannee River Water Management District
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- U.S. Forest Service
- U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service
- U.S. National Park Service
- U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service