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16. Abstract This implementation project supports streamlined project delivery, one of the goals outlined by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) leadership to achieve an efficient and effective transportation system in Texas. The project benefits TxDOT divisions, districts, and metropolitan planning organizations during the project development process. This project was developed to help TxDOT implement the findings of TxDOT Project 0-6758: Maintaining Project Consistency with Transportation Plans throughout the Project Life Cycle with an Emphasis on Maintaining Air Quality Conformity. The research team organized and conducted four training workshops in Houston, El Paso, and Dallas District offices; and at the 2014 TxDOT Environmental Conference in Galveston. In addition to the training slides, the participants received the <i>Project Consistency Guidebook</i> , which documents procedures, tools, and recommendations to prevent and address project inconsistencies throughout the project development process. The research team collected and documented feedback from the participants. Researchers then finalized the training materials based on workshop feedback. The research team submitted the final training materials to TxDOT's Human Resources Training Program for inclusion in the TxDOT employee training catalog and the TxDOT iWay training system.					
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PROJECT CONSISTENCY WITH TRANSPORTATION PLANS AND AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY WORKSHOPS: TECHNICAL REPORT

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DISCLAIMER

This research was performed in cooperation with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The contents of this report reflect the views of the authors, who are responsible for the facts and the accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official view or policies of the FHWA or TxDOT. This report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation. The United States Government and the State of Texas do not endorse products or manufacturers. Trade or manufacturers' names appear herein solely because they are considered essential to the object of this report.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the overall goals that the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has outlined is to streamline the project development process in order to achieve an efficient and effective transportation system in Texas. This implementation project was developed as a follow-up to TxDOT Project 0-6758: Maintaining Project Consistency with Transportation Plans throughout the Project Life Cycle with an Emphasis on Maintaining Air Quality Conformity. The research project identified causes leading to project inconsistency during the project development process and developed a guidebook and training materials for practitioners on how to maintain project consistency. Researchers developed a set of processes to assist TxDOT districts and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) on how to mitigate and prevent project inconsistencies from occurring. The implementation project's goal was to train TxDOT districts and MPOs on how to implement these processes.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The implementation project provided training workshops in Houston, El Paso, and Dallas District offices; and at the TxDOT Environmental Conference in Galveston. The workshops were completed on the following dates:

- Houston: September 3, 2014.
- Environmental Conference: September 18, 2014.
- El Paso: October 8, 2014.
- Dallas: October 22, 2014.

The training included participants from the MPOs, TxDOT divisions and districts, and consultants. The participants had diverse backgrounds and were involved in various stages of the project development process including environmental analysis, planning, and design.

Researchers provided the following training materials to the participants:

- Supplementary Background Information PowerPoint slides.
- Maintaining Project Consistency PowerPoint slides.
- *Project Consistency Guidebook*.
- Supplementary Information document.

Following each workshop, the following items were submitted to TxDOT:

- Sign-in sheets.
- Evaluation forms containing comments from participants.

During the workshops, the research team compiled participants' comments and suggestions, which are summarized in the following section. In coordination with the Project Monitoring Committee (PMC), the research team has addressed and updated the training materials based on the feedback received on the evaluation forms and during the workshops. The research team finalized all training materials with the PMC upon completion of all workshops.

WORKSHOP FEEDBACK

This section provides a summary of the participants' feedback from the four workshops.

HOUSTON

- Two attendees: environmental consultants.
- Environmental work is completed mainly by consultants. Consultants do not have access to TxDOT resources such as Design and Construction Information System (DCIS) and Environmental Compliance Oversight System (ECOS).

TXDOT ENVIRONMENTAL CONFERENCE IN GALVESTON

- 38 attendees: mainly environmental coordinators.
- It was suggested to roll the access control section into facility type on the checklist.

EL PASO WORKSHOP COMMENTS

- 28 attendees: a diverse group from planning, environmental, and design.

Session 1

- The environmental and right-of-way (ROW) process should begin later in the planning process and be moved from the plan phase to the develop phase. TxDOT is pushing for the environmental process to begin earlier in the project development process (PDP), but this needs to wait until the project has completed design.
- Formal statewide transportation improvement program (STIP) and unified transportation program (UTP) revision cycles are not at the same time, and it can be challenging for MPOs to decide when a revision should begin before another program revision cycle.
- Revision cycles can cause delays because of limits and cost inconsistencies in planning or programming documents.
- In El Paso, if a project is not in the transportation improvement program (TIP) and there is no funding, the district has to stop developing the project. If funding becomes available, the project is still not in the TIP. Supplementary Plan Authority (SPA) has the authority to do the

schematic and the environmental, but when a project is not included the STIP or TIP, it will still need to be added to the planning and programming documents.

- SPA contains priority projects that should be in the metropolitan transportation plan (MTP). The projects' funding is unknown, as is when the funding will become available.

Session 2

- For phased projects, funding needs to be addressed in the planning and programming documents and in the correct year for the phased projects.
- There was an inconsistency in El Paso when all phases of the project were not in the MTP and the environmental document, or the MTP had to be updated to meet consistency. El Paso has many times decided on updating the MTP to avoid fiscal constraints.
- Participants recommended educating politicians on the complexity of the PDP and difficulty of moving projects forward. Participants requested clarification on the 50 percent rule on total project costs. Adding a federally funded project or changing the major source of funding of an existing project is a situation that mandates amendments to the TIP. An amendment to the TIP is also required when changes in an estimated federal cost exceeds 50 percent and results in a revised total cost exceeding \$1,499,000. An STIP revision is not required when a change in estimated federal cost results in a total project cost of under \$1,500,000. *Note that the 50 percent rule applies only to the federal-aid share of the project cost, while the greater than \$1,499,000 rule applies to the total cost of the increase of the project revision.*
- It is challenging to estimate project costs accurately for future projects because it depends on inflation and economies of scale. It is important to update cost estimates as the project moves forward in the PDP; changes would not be difficult, but things move forward quickly.
- Maintaining fiscal constraint is difficult if the project cost increases and the project manager is able to find funds but the estimates in the MTP are not consistent. Furthermore, if cost estimates are inconsistent, the environmental document will need to be redone.
- DCIS does not show all costs, only the construction cost, and does not show projection costs. Districts request having DCIS show the total project costs.

DALLAS WORKSHOP COMMENTS

- 32 attendees: a diverse group from planning, environmental, and design.

Session 1

- Participants noted there is a new Rail Freight Plan, which has to be consistent with the UTP.
- Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) regulations note requirements for freight.
- The TIP and STIP are programs that contain committed funding and cover 4 years. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) states that there has to be funding for the project in order to meet consistency.
- Dallas uses Appendix D in the MTP, which is year 5 and beyond, i.e., not eligible to be included in the TIP yet. Appendix D is used when a project is not funded but the agency wants to get the project's environmental document cleared.

Session 2

- Excluded projects should also mention grouped control section jobs, which are rehabilitation, pedestrian/bike, and bridge projects.
- An example mentioned was a district that wanted two extra lanes acquired for ROW for a four-lane road. However, FHWA said that it was inconsistent with the MTP.
- FHWA has been reviewing the region's travel demand models and the MTP for consistency. FHWA is looking at very detailed, specific items in the MTP and the staging tables.
- Should district planners be added to the Project Consistency Responsibility list?
- The Dallas District has an MTP and TIP team, along with an Air Quality team that has to coordinate; the teams have established clear channels of communication.
- District staff stated that they have conference calls with FHWA early in the PDP.
- SPA has a parallel list to the UTP and is not fiscally constrained, but the projects cannot be cleared because they do not have committed funding.
- Participants recommended a change on the Project Checklist: changing *Estimated Year of Completion* to *Year Open to Traffic*.

INTEGRATED TXDOT TRAINING

In coordination with the PMC, the research team submitted the updated training materials to TxDOT's Human Resources (HR) Training Program. The HR training coordinator will upload the materials, which include the training PowerPoint files and the *Project Consistency Guidebook*, for inclusion in the TxDOT employee training catalog and the TxDOT iWay training system.

