**WSDOT PEL Questionnaire**

***The following information is consistent with the applicable PEL authorities (23 USC 168 and 23 CFR 450) and other FHWA policy on PEL process.***

**This questionnaire is intended to act as a summary of the Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) process and ease the transition from the PEL study to a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis. Often, there is no overlap in personnel between the planning and NEPA project phases, so consequently much (or all) of the history of decisions, etc., is not passed along. Analysis details may differ between planning processes and NEPA project teams often inadvertently re-do work that was completed during the planning process.**

**Planning teams should be cautious during the alternative screening process, focusing on purpose and need, fatal flaw analysis, and possibly mode selection, to minimize problems during resource agency coordination. Alternatives that have fatal flaws or do not meet the purpose and need cannot be considered viable alternatives, even if they reduce impacts to a particular resource.**

**At the inception of the PEL study, the study team should decide how the work may 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: This questionnaire is a beneficial tool to keep leadership and program managers updated on a study’s progress. PEL study teams should review this questionnaire before starting a PEL, use it as a guide throughout the planning process, complete it as the study progresses, and attach it to the final PEL study as an executive summary, chapter, or appendix. Some of the basic questions to consider are: “What did you do?”, “What didn't you do?”, and “Why?”. PEL teams will include the completed questionnaire along with the PEL study submittal for FHWA review. FHWA will use this questionnaire to assist in determining if the results of the PEL can be incorporated into the NEPA process.**

1. **Background:**
   1. What is the name of the PEL document and other identifying project information (e.g., sub-account or STIP numbers)?
   2. Who is the lead agency for the study? (FHWA, FTA, WSDOT, Local Agency)
   3. Provide a brief chronology of the planning activities (PEL study) including the year(s) the studies were completed.
   4. Provide a description of the existing transportation corridor, including project limits, length of study corridor, modes, functional classification number of lanes, shoulder, access control and type of surrounding environment (urban vs. rural, residential vs. commercial, etc.)
   5. Who was included on the study team (Name and title of agency representatives, consultants, etc.)?
   6. List the recent, current, or near future planning studies or projects in the vicinity? What is the relationship of this study to those studies/projects?
2. **Methodology used:**
   1. 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.
   2. How did the Study meet each of the PEL Concurrence Points[[1]](#footnote-1) identified in 23 USC 168?
   3. Did you use NEPA-like language? Why or why not?
   4. If NEPA language was not used, what were the actual terms used and how did you define them? (Provide examples or table to compare with standard NEPA language
   5. What were the key steps and Concurrence 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.
   6. How should the PEL information be presented in NEPA?
3. **Agency coordination:**
   1. 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.
   2. What transportation agencies (e.g., for adjacent jurisdictions) did you coordinate with or were involved during 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.
   3. What steps will need to be taken with each agency during NEPA scoping?
4. **Public coordination:**
   1. Provide a synopsis and table of your coordination efforts with the public and stakeholders.
5. **Purpose & Need:**
   1. What was the scope of the PEL study and the reason for completing it?
   2. What is the vision for the corridor?
   3. What were the goals and objectives?
   4. What is the PEL Purpose & Need statement?
   5. What steps will need to be taken during the NEPA process to make this a project-level purpose and need statement?
6. **Range of alternatives considered, screening criteria, and screening process:**
   1. What types of alternatives were looked at? (Provide a one or two sentence summary and reference document.)
   2. How did you select the screening criteria and screening process?
   3. 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.)
   4. How did the team develop Alternatives? Was each alternative screened consistently?
   5. Which alternatives were recommended? Which should be brought forward into NEPA and why?
   6. Did the public, stakeholders, and agencies have an opportunity to comment during this process? Summarize the amount of public interest in the PEL Study.
   7. Were there unresolved issues with the public, stakeholders, and/or agencies?
7. **Planning assumptions and analytical methods:**
   1. What is the forecast year used in the PEL study?
   2. What method was used for forecasting traffic volumes?
   3. Are the planning assumptions and the corridor vision/purpose and need statement consistent with the long-range transportation plan?
   4. 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?
8. **What pieces of the PEL can transfer directly to the NEPA phase of a project?**
9. **Resources (wetlands, cultural, etc.) reviewed. For each resource or group of resources reviewed, provide the following:**
   1. In the PEL study, at what level of detail were the resources reviewed and what was the method of review?
   2. Is this resource present in the area and what is the existing environmental condition for this resource?
   3. What are the issues that need to be considered during NEPA, including potential resource impacts and potential mitigation requirements (if known)?
   4. How will the data provided need to be supplemented during NEPA?
10. **List resources that were not reviewed in the PEL study and why? Indicate whether they will need to be reviewed in NEPA and explain why.**
11. **Were cumulative impacts considered in the PEL study? If yes, provide the information or reference where the analysis can be found.**
12. **Describe any mitigation strategies discussed at the planning level that should be analyzed during NEPA.**
13. **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?**
14. **Are there any other issues a future project team should be aware of?**
    1. 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.
15. **Provide a table of identified projects and/or a proposed phasing plan for corridor build out.**
16. **Provide a list of what funding sources have been identified to fund projects from this PEL?**

1. Concurrence Points and coordination points can be used interchangeably. However, WSDOT tends to use “concurrence” for 23 USC 168 formal PEL and “coordination” for 23 CFR 450 PEL studies and processes. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)