

APPENDIX B FHWA PLANNING/ENVIRONMENTAL LINKAGES QUESTIONNAIRE



This page intentionally left blank.

APPENDIX B 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 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 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 the 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, not just answered near completion of the process. 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.

1. Background:

- a. What is the name of the PEL document and other identifying project information (e.g. sub-account or STIP numbers)?

State Highway 7 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study

CDOT Project No. STA 007A-012 (16725)

- b. Provide a brief chronology of the planning activities (PEL study) including the year(s) the studies were conducted.

State Highway 7 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study was initiated in November 2011 and concluded in February 2014.

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

The study area extends approximately 16 miles along SH 7 from the intersection of Arapahoe Road/SH 7/US 287 (MP 60.68) in the City of Lafayette to US 85 (milepost [MP] 76.98) on the west side of the City of Brighton. East of I-25, the study area extends approximately two miles north of SH 7 to include 168th Avenue, with E-470 as the southern boundary. 168th Avenue was

included in the study area to consider it as an alternate east-west roadway east of I-25 that runs parallel to SH 7. West of I-25, the study area extends approximately one mile north of SH 7, with Northwest Parkway as the southern boundary.

A detailed description of the existing transportation system is included in Chapter 3 of the State Highway 7 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Corridor Conditions Assessment Report, which is included in Appendix A of the *State Highway 7 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study*.

- d. Who was the sponsor of the PEL study? (CDOT, Local Agency, Other)

Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT)

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

Monica Pavlik, FHWA

Toni Whitfield, FHWA

Neil Lacey, CDOT Region 6 Design

Dave Kosmiski, CDOT Region 6 Design

Leela Rajasekar, CDOT Region 6 Traffic

Kirk Webb, CDOT Region 6 Environmental

Danny Herrmann, CDOT Region 6 Planning

Vanessa Henderson, CDOT Environmental Programs Branch

Bob Felsburg, Felsburg Holt and Ullevig (FHU)

Kevin Maddoux, FHU

Jenny Young, FHU

Jeff Dankenbring, FHU

Jeff Kullman, Atkins

Jim Hanson, Atkins

Jamie Archambeau, Atkins

Karol Miodonski, Atkins

Andrea Meneghel, CDR

- 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?

Yes, refer to Sections 1.1 and 1.2 of the State Highway 7 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Corridor Conditions Assessment Report, which is included in Appendix A of the *State Highway 7 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study* for a discussion on the planning context and other transportation projects in the vicinity of the study. In addition, the North I-25 PEL was being conducted concurrently with the SH 7 PEL study.

2. Methodology use:

- a. 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.

b. 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 1 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*]
- Recommended Alternative – Used for the alternative selected for analysis and to move forward into NEPA.
- No-Action Alternative - Would leave SH 7 as it currently is and would not provide any major capacity improvements; however, the No-Action Alternative would include safety and maintenance activities that would be required to sustain an operational transportation system.
- Environmental Consequences – Discusses the impacts on the environmental and cultural resources that would be expected under the Recommended Alternative
- Next Steps/Mitigation Strategies – Describes the next steps necessary for the environmental and cultural resources analyzed and mitigation measures that have been identified to address adverse impacts that would be expected with the Recommended Alternative

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

These terms will be used in NEPA documents in a similar fashion as they were used in the PEL study.

d. 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?

A Project Management Team (PMT) with FHWA, CDOT, and the consultant team was formed and met monthly over the course of the project.

A Technical Working Group (TWG) was formed and met on a monthly to bi-monthly basis. The TWG consisted of Adams County, Boulder County, City of Boulder, City and County of Broomfield, City of Brighton, City of Lafayette, City of Thornton, Town of Erie, Weld County, Northwest Parkway, DRCOG, RTD, FHWA, CDOT Environmental Programs Branch, CDOT Planning, CDOT Office of Policy and Government Relations, CDOT Region 4, and CDOT Region 6.

US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), US Department of Interior Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), Colorado Department of Natural Resources Parks and Wildlife (CPW), and State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) were invited to a Natural Resources Agency Scoping Meeting on May 31, 2012. If the agency was unable to attend, they were invited to participate in one-on-one meetings regarding the existing conditions within the project area and the PEL process. Comments were received from USFWS, CPW, and USACE on the project.

e. How should the PEL information below be presented in NEPA?

The PEL information presented below should be presented in NEPA in a similar fashion as it was used in the PEL study.

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.

Refer to Chapter 6 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.



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

c. Refer to Section 6.1 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

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

The steps to be taken will depend on the type of future NEPA documentation prepared for the construction projects that will be developed for the corridor.

4 Public coordination:

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

Refer to Chapter 6 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

5 Corridor Vision/Purpose and Need:

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

Refer to Sections 1.2 and 1.3 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

b. Provide the corridor vision, objectives, or purpose and need statement.

Refer to Sections 1.2 and 1.3 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

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

This Purpose and Need Statement addresses the SH 7 corridor from US 85 to US 287. Depending on the specific project, the Purpose and Need Statement will need to be revised to address the specific needs at that location.

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

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

Refer to Chapter 2 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

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

Refer to Chapter 2 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

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)

Refer to Chapter 2 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

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

The Recommended Alternative should be brought forward into NEPA. Please refer to Chapter 3 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

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



Yes, Refer to Chapter 6 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

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

Long term alternative considerations were identified. Please refer to Chapter 2 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

Planning assumptions and analytical methods:

7. What is the forecast year used in the PEL study?
Year 2035

- a. What method was used for forecasting traffic volumes?

Refer to Chapter 4 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

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

Refer to Chapter 4 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

- c. 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?

Refer to Chapter 4 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

8. 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?

A detailed description of the environmental resources analyzed is included in Chapter 5 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Corridor Conditions Assessment Report*, which is included in Appendix A of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*, and Chapter 5 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

- b. Is this resource present in the area and what is the existing environmental condition for this resource?

The existing conditions of the environmental resources analyzed are included in Chapter 5 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Corridor Conditions Assessment Report*, which is included in Appendix A of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

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

Refer to Chapter 5 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

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

Refer to Chapter 5 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

- e. 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.

Refer to Chapter 5 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

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

Refer to Chapter 5 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

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

Refer to Chapter 5 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.

- h. 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?

This PEL study was intended to provide the framework for the long-term implementation of the Recommended Alternative as funding is available and to be used as a resource for future NEPA documentation.

- i. Are there any other issues a future project team should be aware of?

Long term alternative considerations were identified. Please refer to Chapter 3 of the *State Highway 7 PEL Study*.