

community resources program

Practical Application Guides for SCE Evaluations

Introduction & Overview

April 23, 2013



Florida Department of Transportation
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www.dot.state.fl.us/emo



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How to Obtain Copies

You can electronically download copies of the guides from the FDOT Central Environmental Management Office web site at <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/emo/pubs/sce/sce1.shtm>.

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW
PRACTICAL APPLICATION GUIDES FOR SCE EVALUATIONS

Table of Contents

| | | |
|-----|---|---|
| 1.0 | Introduction to the SCE Evaluation Guides | 1 |
| 2.0 | SCE Evaluation Process Overview | 1 |
| 2.1 | Purpose..... | 3 |
| 2.2 | Application..... | 3 |
| 2.3 | SCE Issues and Considerations | 4 |
| 2.4 | Community Outreach | 5 |
| 2.5 | Process Steps..... | 5 |

List of Figures

| | | |
|----------|---|---|
| Figure 1 | Sociocultural Effects Evaluation Process Flow Diagram | 2 |
| Figure 2 | Degree of Effect Assignment Guide..... | 8 |

1.0 Introduction to the SCE Evaluation Guides

The *Practical Application Guides for Sociocultural Effects Evaluation* (SCE Evaluation Guides) provide step-by-step instructions for conducting sociocultural effects (SCE) evaluation during the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) Process—when projects undergo Planning or Programming screens as part of the ETDM Process—and during the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) phase.

The SCE Evaluation Guides include the following documents, each focusing on a specific aspect of the SCE evaluation process.

Introduction and Overview

- Introduces the SCE Evaluation Guides series and provides an overview and quick reference of the SCE evaluation process

ETDM Process

- Describes how to conduct a SCE evaluation for ETDM Planning and Programming screen projects

PD&E Phase

- Describes how to conduct a SCE evaluation for projects undergoing a PD&E study

Quality

- Describes evaluation and performance measurement methods for SCE evaluations

Community Outreach

- Identifies community outreach techniques for obtaining public input for SCE evaluations

Environmental Justice, Civil Rights and the SCE Evaluation Process

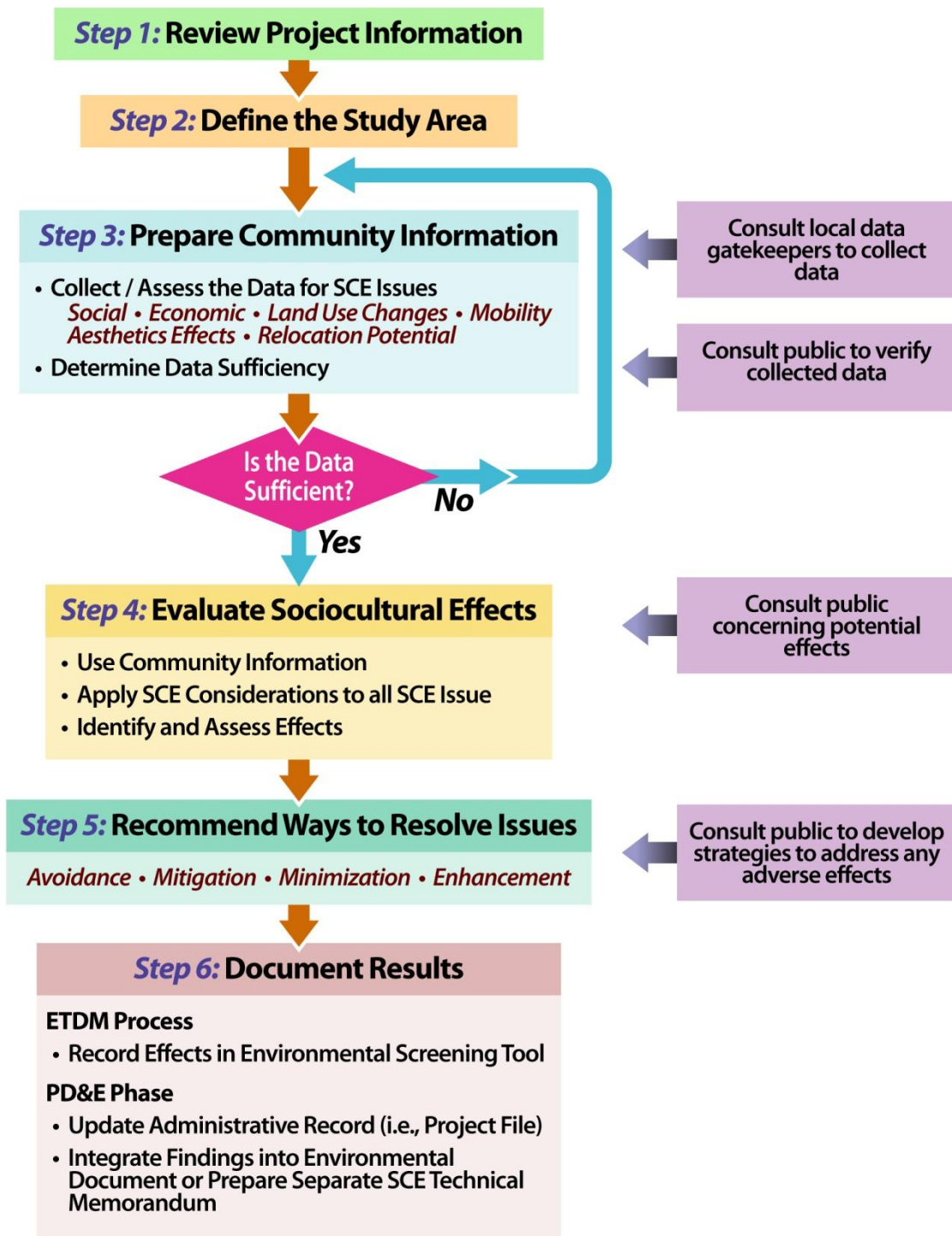
- Identifies best practices in addressing Environmental Justice, Civil Rights and related issues in the SCE evaluation process, including improving access to services for persons with limited English proficiency

The SCE Evaluation Guides and other resources to support the SCE evaluation process are available on the FDOT [SCE website](#). Website resources include the [Sociocultural Effects Evaluation Handbook](#) and [Glossary](#); [Sociocultural Effects Considerations](#); [Sociocultural Effects Issue Charts](#); annotated bibliography of guide reference and resource documents; SCE evaluation tools developed by FDOT District practitioners; website links; and other useful information for SCE evaluations.

2.0 SCE Evaluation Process Overview

The SCE evaluation process is a method to identify and address the potential sociocultural effects of transportation projects on communities and community resources. The process is a collaborative effort involving government agencies, the public and other stakeholders to ensure that community values and concerns receive adequate attention during project planning and development. Figure 1 shows a flow diagram of the SCE evaluation process.

FIGURE 1
SOCIOCULTURAL EFFECTS EVALUATION PROCESS



2.1 Purpose

The significance of potential project effects on communities and their quality of life must be determined through careful evaluation. The SCE evaluation process ensures that transportation projects comply with FDOT Policy Statement 000-650-015 (SCE Evaluation Policy), which states:

"It is the policy of the Florida Department of Transportation to work proactively with communities in implementing the principles, concepts and philosophy of Sociocultural Effects Evaluation throughout the transportation project development process. Transportation facilities and services make an important contribution to a community's economy and quality of life. Understanding the vision, goals and objectives, and the values of a community's citizenry is essential to providing effective, community-based solutions to transportation while addressing appropriate community concerns."

The SCE evaluation process devotes attention to potential issues associated with environmental justice, civil rights and other nondiscrimination laws. Potential project benefits and effects on all communities are assessed in SCE evaluations with special consideration for minority, low-income and other traditionally underserved populations.

2.2 Application

The SCE evaluation process starts at the earliest stages of a project in the ETDM Process and continues through the PD&E phase. Each successive SCE evaluation builds on the data, analysis, and findings of previous SCE evaluations to achieve the particular objectives of the project phase. The level of analysis required to determine potential project effects varies according to the project phase as well as the project nature and scope.

ETDM PROCESS

During the ETDM Process, projects are evaluated for sociocultural effects in conjunction with two project milestones: the Planning screen and Programming screen. Project types qualifying for ETDM screening are identified in Section 2-1, [Part 1, Chapter 2](#) of the FDOT PD&E Manual.

As discussed below, the appropriate Community Liaison Coordinator (CLC), in conjunction with the FDOT District ETDM Coordinator, analyzes potential community impacts during the Planning and Programming screens.

Planning Screen

The first project milestone is the Planning screen, the objective of which is to identify a project's potential fatal flaw issues. The Planning screen is performed for projects being considered for adoption in Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)/Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) or local government long range plans and for projects already cited in these plans but not previously screened. *Note:* Not all ETDM projects are Planning screen review.

The FDOT District CLC performs Planning screen SCE evaluations for bridge replacement projects and Strategic Intermodal System (SIS), State Highway System (SHS) and non-MPO/TPO projects. It is appropriate for the MPO/TPO CLC to perform SCE evaluations for MPO/TPO priority projects located within the MPO/TPO area, however, the District CLC may assume this responsibility.

Programming Screen

The Programming screen builds upon the Planning screen SCE evaluation (if conducted) to further understand project issues and inform project scoping prior to priority projects being considered for adoption in FDOT Five-Year Work Program or prior to initiation of the PD&E study. *Note:* Some Programming screen projects are not preceded by a Planning screen review. The Programming screen SCE evaluation is performed by the District CLC.

SCE evaluations generally occur within the 45-day agency review period. Preparatory tasks, such as the collection of community information, are performed in advance of the review period. Afterward, SCE evaluation results and recommendations are documented by the appropriate CLC in the Environmental Screening Tool (EST) during the ETAT review period and then summarized by the FDOT District ETDM Coordinator in the Planning or Programming Screen Summary Report. *Note:* Community outreach for the SCE evaluation process may occur at any time.

PD&E PHASE

SCE evaluations conducted during the PD&E phase inform the development of the PD&E study project concepts, Public Involvement Program, environmental document, and Conceptual Stage Relocation Plan. PD&E phase SCE evaluations are performed by a PD&E study team according to the project schedule.

For projects classified as Type 1 and Programmatic Categorical Exclusions (CEs) and Non-Major State Actions (NMSAs)—which do not qualify for ETDM screening—detailed SCE evaluations are generally not warranted since these projects are anticipated to have few or no impacts. SCE issues are considered in sufficient detail to verify that the potential for community impacts is not greater than initially estimated.

SCE evaluations for PD&E projects classified as Type 2 CEs, Environmental Assessments, Environmental Impact Statements, and State Environmental Impact Reports will include a more detailed SCE evaluation of the issues and methods to avoid, minimize, or mitigate potential project effects or enhance the project. The level of analysis and documentation will vary based on the project context and severity of the effects. For ETDM projects, the SCE evaluation builds on the analysis conducted during the ETDM Process. For more information on Class of Action refer to [Part 1, Chapter 2](#) of the PD&E Manual.

2.3 SCE Issues and Considerations

The SCE evaluation focuses on the six sociocultural issues and sub-issues listed below. The [SCE Evaluation Considerations](#) provide guidance for identifying potential sociocultural effects and ensuring that Class of Action conditions are met.

SOCIAL

Demographics
Community Cohesion
Safety/Emergency Response
Community Goals
Quality of Life
Special Community Designations
Community History & Character

MOBILITY

Modal Choices
- Pedestrian
- Bicycle
- Transit
- Motor vehicles
Transportation Disadvantaged
Connectivity
Traffic Circulation
Public Parking

ECONOMIC

Business & Employment
Tax Base
Travel Patterns
Business Access
Special Needs Patrons
Freight Movement

AESTHETIC EFFECTS

Noise*
Vibration
Viewshed
Compatibility

LAND USE CHANGES

Urban Form
Local Plan Consistency
Open Space
Sprawl
Focal Points

RELOCATION POTENTIAL

Residential
Non-Residential
Public Facilities

*Note: The SCE evaluation of aesthetic effects considers noise-related effects on communities and community resources. A more technical study of noise levels is conducted separately.

2.4 Community Outreach

Identification of potential sociocultural effects and evaluation of their significance in the community is supported by community outreach during the ETDM Process and PD&E phase. Project commentary from sources within the community and by those serving the community informs the SCE evaluation by revealing local concerns about potential project effects and preferences for ways to resolve impacts or enhance the project. Public commentary can come by way of previous public involvement efforts for a MPO/TPO a long range plan update or local government community plan.

2.5 Process Steps

The SCE evaluation process consists of the six steps, which are outlined by project phase on the following pages. Generally, as a project transitions from the ETDM Process to the PD&E phase, the SCE issues receive more detailed consideration. The process steps are customized to the project phase, nature, and scope as well as study area characteristics, including conditions that may have changed between project phases. A robust inventory of community data and information gained through field review of the project area and community outreach improves the quality and validity of the SCE evaluation. The SCE evaluation results are assigned a level of intensity. In the ETDM Process, the level of intensity is described as a degree of effect. The degrees of effect categories are identified in Figure 2 on page 8.

STEP 1 REVIEW PROJECT INFORMATION

ETDM PROCESS

Planning Screen:

- Review current data (e.g., EST project information)
- Perform community outreach (e.g., interview local planners, review prior public input)
- Conduct field review

Programming Screen:

- Review Planning Screen Summary Report/Issues and Commitments (if conducted)
- Review current data (e.g., EST project information)
- Identify/fill data gaps
- Perform community outreach (e.g., interview local planners/community leaders, review prior public input)
- Conduct field review

PD&E PHASE

PD&E Study:

- Review ETDM screening information:
 - Final Programming Screen Summary Report
 - Issues and Commitments
- Identify/fill data gaps
- Identify affected populations for Public Involvement Plan outreach
- Conduct field review

STEP 2 DEFINE STUDY AREA

ETDM PROCESS

Planning Screen:

- Review field notes
- Review EST buffers
- Review additional data
- Select appropriate study areas (EST buffers) to evaluate SCE issues

Programming Screen:

- Review field notes
- Review EST buffers focusing on project alternative(s)
- Review updated data
- Select appropriate study areas (EST buffers) to evaluate SCE issues

PD&E PHASE

PD&E Study:

- Review/update field review notes
- Review available project information
- Review study areas of ETDM screening(s)
- Refine study area to account for project alternative(s) moving forward

STEP 3 - ORGANIZE COMMUNITY INFORMATION

ETDM PROCESS

Planning Screen:

- Review compiled material
- Acquire additional community data

Programming Screen:

- Review data from previous SCE evaluation
- Acquire additional community data

PD&E PHASE

PD&E Study:

- Review data from previous SCE evaluation(s)
 - Verify community boundaries, community desired features and demographic data
 - Update the CCI as needed
- Generate CCI Report



STEP 4 - EVALUATE SOCIOCULTURAL EFFECTS

ETDM PROCESS

Planning Screen:

- Identify resources and level of importance
- Assess effects:
 - Direct effects
 - Indirect effects (*if applicable*)
 - Cumulative effects (*optional*)
- Assign Degrees of Effect

Programming Screen:

- Identify resources and level of importance
- Assess effects:
 - Direct effects
 - Indirect effects (*if applicable*)
 - Cumulative effects (*optional*)
- Assign Degrees of Effect
- Determine PD&E study scope

PD&E PHASE

PD&E Study:

- Identify resources and level of importance
- Evaluate feasible alternatives and no-build
- Review issues and public input from ETDM screening(s)
- Review PD&E phase public input
- Assess effects:
 - Direct effects
 - Indirect effects
 - Cumulative effects (*if applicable*)
- Assess severity of impacts

STEP 5 - RECOMMEND WAYS TO RESOLVE ISSUES

ETDM PROCESS

Planning Screen:

- Identify potential solutions to project effects or project enhancements
- Document any commitments to address potential effects

Programming Screen:

- Review potential solutions/enhancements identified in Planning Screen
- Identify potential solutions to project effects or project enhancements
- Document any commitments to address potential effects

PD&E PHASE

PD&E Study:

- Review potential solutions/enhancements from ETDM screening(s)
- Work with affected communities to identify viable solutions
- Focus outreach on most affected populations and neighborhoods
- Recommend methods to avoid, minimize or mitigate project effects or enhance the project

STEP 6 - DOCUMENT RESULTS

ETDM PROCESS

Planning Screen:

- Record effects in EST:
 - Direct effects
 - Indirect effects (*if applicable*)
 - Cumulative effects (*optional*)

Programming Screen:

- Record/update effects in EST:
 - Direct effects
 - Indirect effects (*if applicable*)
 - Cumulative effects (*optional*)

PD&E PHASE

PD&E Study:

- Document:
 - Project File
 - Environmental Document
 - Conceptual Stage Relocation Plan
 - Public Involvement Program



FIGURE 2
DEGREE OF EFFECT ASSIGNMENT GUIDE FOR ETDM PROJECTS

| DEGREE OF EFFECT | DESCRIPTION |
|--|--|
| Not Applicable / No Involvement | There is no presence of the issue in relationship to the project, or the issue is irrelevant in relationship to the proposed transportation action. |
| Enhanced | Project has positive effect on community. Affected community supports the proposed project. |
| None | Project has no adverse effect on the affected community. |
| Minimal | Project has little potential for negative effects on the community. Initial community outreach reveals little or no community concern about the alternative. |
| Moderate | The community is potentially affected by the proposed alternative, but acceptable avoidance, minimization, or mitigation options are available. |
| Substantial | Possible effects on the quality of the human environment are likely to be highly controversial. |
| Potential Dispute (Planning Screen) or Dispute Resolution (Programming Screen) | The proposed alternative is detrimental to public health and safety, or could violate federal, state, or local law. If the proposed alternative is not modified or eliminated, dispute resolution is required before the project proceeds to final design. |