

APPENDIX O

LINKING PLANNING AND NEPA

During the preparation of this the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), certain aspects of the principles reflected in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) were considered and applied to the Plan. A number of the environmental factors, or categories, and types of analyses contained in NEPA were incorporated into the transportation planning process, such as project purpose and need, safety and security, economic development, land use, alternatives analysis, and core system performance measures. The Plan's projects were generally evaluated for their potential impact on the environment, including air quality, noise, wetlands, water bodies and flood plains, land use, and other impacts.

Integration Of NEPA Into The RTP Process

In August and September of 2004, the National Highway Institute (NHI) held two workshops on linking planning and NEPA. The first one was oriented for upper level executives of the participating entities, and the latter one was for the "practitioners," or managers, which lasted for three days. The managers workshop, which included participants from Utah Department of Transportation (UDOT), Utah Transit Authority, the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (Wasatch Front Regional Council, Mountainland Association of Governments, Dixie, and Cache), Federal Highway Administration, Environmental Protection Agency, Army Corps of Engineers, and other resource agencies, produced recommendations and a short-term work, or Action Plan. In cooperation with UTA, a "Coordinating Committee" was organized, which was comprised of UDOT, WFRC, FHWA, and UTA, for the purpose of managing and monitoring the implementation process. Several meeting of the Executive Committee met several time during 2005 and 2006.

The executives and other staff members of UDOT, FHWA, MPOs, held a follow up meeting on May 25, 2005, to review the status of the Action Plan that resulted from the Linking Planning and NEPA Managers Workshop of September, 2004. At this meeting, it was reported that substantial progress on nearly all the short-term action items with over half listed as complete, or nearly complete. Some remaining key action items were summarized and prioritized as follows:

- (1) Geographic Information System (GIS) - Develop the tool to compile and share transportation planning and environmental data layers.
- (2) Collaboration - Develop a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on planning and project development linkage that includes environmental resource agency participation and the framework for interagency collaboration.
- (3) Land Use and Transportation - Complete the visioning process (Wasatch Choices 2040), evaluate planning alternatives (scenarios) as well as secondary and cumulative impacts.

The various Action Plan provisions, or action items resulting from the NTI / NHI Linking Planning and NEPA Managers Workshop, along with the status of their implementation, are summarized below:

- (1) Establish a task force to develop a more structured long-range planning and pre-stip process. Reconvene the participants of the Executive Workshop to present the "Action Plan" and obtain for input.



Status: A task force or Coordinating Committee has been organized and is functioning. It has been meeting for the past several months since the course. Representatives from UDOT, UTA, WFRC, MAG, and FHWA comprise the Committee. The purpose of the Committee is to manage the coordination of the participants and the implementation process. The Action Plan was presented to the executives on May 25, 2005.

(2) Establish a Memorandum of Agreement between the transportation and resource agency “communities” detailing how they will work with each other.

Status: A rough draft Memorandum of Agreement has been prepared by one of the members of the Coordinating Committee. Each of the Coordinating Committee members has received a copy of the MOA, for review. Revisions to the draft document are still being made. The resource agencies have, as of this date, not been contacted about the MOA.

(3) Integrate planning and environmental staffs at UDOT and FHWA, and involve UDOT’s Regions in the discussions dealing with linking planning and NEPA.

Status: As of this writing, no progress has been made on this action plan task.

(4) Use various land use scenarios and analyze their impacts to develop transportation planning alternatives.

Status: As a part of the visioning process, which the WFRC, MAG, and Envision Utah have partnered in to conduct, various visioning growth scenarios have been developed and tested for use in developing the alternatives for the Regional Transportation Plan. Three transportation systems alternatives have been developed and tested based on the scenarios resulting from the visioning process. As part of the transportation planning process, alternatives based on those developed during the Wasatch Choices 2040 process were developed and tested.

(5) Determine relevant data availability. Involve resource agencies.

Status: Part of this task is being accomplished through the UDOT grant to enhance GIS for environmental and planning purposes. In addition, contact has been made with the research agencies by the WFRC relative to types of information that is available. Recently, letters were sent to about 50 agencies requesting that they become involved in our transportation planning process. The letter was signed by the executives of the following organizations: UDOT, UTA, WFRC, FHWA (Division Office), MAG, Cache MPO, and Dixie MPO. We have requested information on needs, concerns, issues, and data sharing. Thus far, two formal meetings were held involving the resources agencies throughout the region and transportation planners to discuss data, environmental, and mitigation and other issues.

(6) Use Envision Utah’s visioning process to advance dialogue on transportation and land use relationships.

Status: This has and is currently taking places as a consequence of the Wasatch Choices 2040 visioning process, which was collaboratively conducted between the WFRC, MAG, and Envision Utah. A report has been written about the visioning process, which contains the methodology used, development of the growth principles and vision, and implementation strategies for local government. In addition, a self-assessment tool is being prepared whereby the local governments can evaluate themselves as to how they are doing relative to the implementation of the regional growth principles and vision. Meetings with many local governments have been held and will continue to be held on the Wasatch Choices 2040 results. Workshops are being planned for the local government planners and other officials to provide them with information on how the growth principles and vision can be implemented.



(7) Use advisory committees to involve local governments in corridor studies with land use issues.

Status: In all cases, advisory committees are established when corridor studies are conducted. A corridor study will be conducted this fiscal year on the North Legacy Transportation Corridor in Weber County, Utah. The establishment of an advisory committee comprised of those who have a stake in the corridor is a part of the project's scope of work.

(8) Convene the resource agencies to determine data needs, how best to work together during the planning process.

Status: The WFRC has contacted the resource agencies and two formal meetings between their representatives and the transportation planners have been held. These meetings included the discussion of what data is available and how best to work with each other.

(9) Research other transportation agencies relative to their funding of resource agency positions dedicated to transportation projects.

Status: UDOT has done some research on this and is familiar with the practice. UDOT has done this in the past, but currently is not funding any positions at the resource agencies.

(10) Investigate ways for FHWA to act as FTA's agent.

Status: The Division Office of FHWA coordinates with FTA when FTA can personally not be available for meetings and the like in order to represent the views of the agency.

(11) Use the Central Utah Project as a model for interagency collaboration and cooperation.

Status: As of this writing, no progress has been made on this action plan task.

(12) Use a pilot corridor to test and develop ways collaboration / cooperation could be improved between the transportation and resource agency "communities." Identify lessons learned from the "Southern Corridor", SR-10, and other corridors.

Status: As of this writing, no progress has been made on this action plan task. There is a possibility that a test of this kind could be accomplished with the supplement to the North Legacy Transportation Corridor Study. The resource agencies will be contacted and given an opportunity to participate in the corridor study process.

(13) Use UDOT's funding grant to test the feasibility of merging planning and environmental GIS layers. Coordinate with other similar efforts.

Status: UDOT's grant from FHWA to upgrade GIS capabilities is currently underway and is looking into the feasibility of merging as well as enhancing the GIS layers for environmental and planning work. Progress is being made on this project, which is anticipated to be completed sometime in 2007.

(14) Provide training opportunities for planners to be trained in NEPA. The "404 / SA Group" could be used to facilitate a dialogue on common issues.

Status: As of this writing, no progress has been made on this action plan task.

(15) Utilize UDOT's paper on purpose and need.

Status: The Coordinating Committee has considered UDOT's paper on purpose and need at one of its most recent meetings. It was concluded that it serves as a good guideline for developing purpose and need statements for significant projects in the Regional Transportation Plan. The paper will be used as a guide in developing the section of the 2030 RTP dealing with "purpose and need."



(16) Develop an approach for analyzing secondary impacts.

Status: As of this writing, no progress has been made on this action plan task. Dialogue on the subject should take place between the WFRC and the transportation planning community in the future.

(17) Develop an approach for analyzing cumulative impacts.

Status: As of this writing, no progress has been made on this action plan task. Dialogue on the subject should take place between the WFRC and the transportation planning community in the future.

