

Appendix C: FHWA Acceptance Letter and Questionnaire



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Wyoming Division

January 22, 2014

2617 E. Lincolnway, Suite D
Cheyenne, WY 82001-5671

Mr. John F. Cox
Director
Wyoming Department of Transportation
5300 Bishop Boulevard
Cheyenne, Wyoming 82009-3340

SUBJECT: Planning Environmental Linkage Study for WYO-22 and WYO-390

Dear Mr. Cox:

This letter is to acknowledge the completion of the WYO-22 and WYO-390 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study by the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT). This corridor planning study was undertaken in a manner consistent with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) PEL guidance in Appendix A to Part 450, Linking the Transportation Planning and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Processes. The planning process incorporated the intent of NEPA through the consideration of natural, physical, and social effects, involved environmental resource agencies, documented the transportation planning process, and vetted the results through public involvement.

The PEL Questionnaire submitted to FHWA in January 2014, provides a good summary of the work completed in the PEL study and the information that will be needed once projects enter into the NEPA process. The PEL study establishes a corridor-wide framework that can be referenced in subsequent NEPA documents for individual projects, as provided for under 23 U.S.C. 168.

As individual projects are initiated, it will be necessary for FHWA and WYDOT to coordinate on a project-by-project basis to determine the scope of the NEPA study, including level of study required, purpose and need, logical termini, and the extent to which the corridor study can be used to supplement or replace certain milestones in the NEPA process.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 307-771-2942 or email Jeffrey.Purdy@dot.gov.

Sincerely yours,

Jeffrey R. Purdy, AICP, PTP
Planning and Right-of-Way Program Manager

cc:

Kevin Powell, Environmental Services, WYDOT
John Eddins, P.E., District 3 Engineer, WYDOT
Jim Clarke, AICP, Jacobs Engineering

Background

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

Wyoming Highways 22 and 390 Planning and Environmental Linkages Study
Teton County
WyDOT Project Number B129086

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

Study Period: June 2012 through Winter 2014
 Summer 2012: Project Kick-off
 October 2012: Visioning Stakeholder Workshop and Public Open House
 Fall 2012: Development of Purpose and Need
 Winter 2012 – 2013: Development of Alternatives
 Spring 2013: Evaluation of Alternatives
 Summer 2013: Public Open Houses
 Fall 2013: Recommended Alternatives and Project Prioritization
 Winter 2013 – 2014 : Final Report

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 Wyoming State Highway 22 (WYO 22) and Wyoming State Highway 390 (WYO 390) roadway corridors connect the Town of Jackson with the Jackson Hole Ski Resort at Teton Village and with the community of Wilson in southern Teton County, Wyoming.

See Section 1.3 for a description of the corridor characteristics.

Who was the sponsor of the PEL study? (DOT, Local Agency, Other)

FHWA and WYDOT

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

FHWA:
 Jeff Purdy, Planning and Right-of-Way Program Manager
 Randy Strang, Environmental Program Engineer

WYDOT:
 Jeff Brown, Assistant State Traffic Engineer
 John Eddins, District Engineer
 Bob Hammond, Resident Engineer
 Stephanie Harsha, District 3 Public Relations Specialist
 Kevin Powell, Environmental Manager
 Ted Wells, District Construction Engineers
 Mark Wingate, Systems Planning Engineer

Jacobs:
 Jim Clarke, Project Manager
 Chris Primus, Deputy Project Manager
 Keith Borsheim, Transportation Planner
 Patti Steinholtz, Environmental Planner

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?

The context for studying the transportation needs and developing a vision for the WYO 22 and 390 corridors occurs within the framework of other transportation plans, studies, and projects within the study area. See Section 1.7 for a summary list of these activities, and Chapter 6 for a list of references.

Methodology

Did you use NEPA-like language? Why or why not?

Yes; NEPA-like language was appropriate since the study team followed a NEPA-like process for activities such as Scoping, Purpose and Need and Alternatives development, and impact assessment. Use of NEPA terms also will facilitate use of the PEL in future NEPA project(s) on the corridor.

What were the actual terms used and how did you define them? (Provide examples or list)

Example NEPA terms included:

Logical Termini. The termini identified for the study represent rational starting and stopping points for evaluating transportation improvements. In determining limits of the study, the study team also considered end points that would provide sufficient length to address corridor issues on a broad scope.

Purpose and Need. The Purpose and Need statement describes the transportation needs that exist and the problems to be addressed. It serves as the basis for the identification of reasonable alternatives.

No Action Alternative. The No Action Alternative includes reasonably foreseeable and programmed projects near the study area.

Public Involvement. The public and agency involvement program provided opportunities for interested parties to participate in and contribute to the PEL study. The intent was to solicit information, ideas, and opinions from the public and agencies.

Environmental Resources. Similar to many NEPA documents, this chapter describes 'Existing Conditions' for various resources to establish baseline conditions, and then discusses 'Environmental Consequences' from study alternatives. .

Mitigation. Mitigation measures should seek to avoid, minimize, and mitigate adverse environmental effects.

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

It is expected that these terms will be used in future NEPA projects in the corridor. Minor modifications to the terms may be needed based on NEPA class of action or other consideration.

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? For example, for the corridor vision, the decision was made by CDOT and the local agency, with buy-in from FHWA, the Corps, and USFWS.

The study team conducted an extensive public and agency involvement program to provide opportunities for interested parties to participate in and contribute to the PEL study. The intent was to solicit information, ideas, and opinions from the public and agencies. See Chapter 4 for a summary and results of those efforts.

The Transportation Advisory Committee for southern Teton County served as a significant stakeholder body for coordination on issues. The TAC is composed of staff representatives from Teton County, the Town of Jackson, START, Jackson Hole Community Pathways, and WYDOT.

How should the PEL information below be presented in NEPA?

This PEL completes the early planning stages for future NEPA projects.

Agency Coordination

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.

At the onset of the study, WYDOT sent scoping letters to the following state and federal agencies: Environmental Protection Agency, US Army Corps of Engineers, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service (Grand Teton National Park), Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Teton County Conservation District, Wyoming Office of State Lands, Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office and Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality. The purpose of these letters was to conduct scoping, collect data, and obtain technical direction and input.

On March 8, 2013, an update was provided to the agencies regarding major developments that had occurred since release of the scoping letters.

See Section 4.3.1 for details.

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

Transportation agencies were comprised of the Town of Jackson, Teton County, START, Jackson Hole Community Pathways, and WYDOT. See Section 4.3 for a list of all state and federal agencies that were involved.

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

The agencies will be contacted at the initiation of a NEPA project on the corridor, with a reference to their previous involvement on this PEL study. Steps to be taken with the agencies will vary and depend on the potential resources and impacts from the particular NEPA project. However, future steps during NEPA scoping likely will include activities such as informal consultation with US Fish and Wildlife Service on federally protected species, coordination with the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office on Areas of Potential Effect, and coordination with the National Park on transportation and wildlife issues.

Public Coordination

<p>Provide a synopsis of your coordination efforts with the public and stakeholders.</p>	<p>WYDOT conducted an extensive public involvement program to provide opportunities for interested parties to participate in and contribute to the PEL study. The intent was to solicit information, ideas, and opinions from the public and stakeholders. See Chapter 4 for a description of this engagement process.</p>
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Corridor Vision/Purpose and Need

<p>What was the scope of the PEL study and the reason for doing it?</p>	<p>The project scope was to engage the stakeholders in a collaborative manner to identify a long term vision for the WYO 22 and 390 corridors, and identifying projects for initial phasing that are consistent with the long-term corridor goal.</p>
<p>Provide the corridor vision, objectives, or purpose and need statement.</p>	<p>See Section 1.4 for the corridor vision statement, and Section 1.5 for the Purpose and Need statement. Study goals are provided in Section 1.6.</p>
<p>What steps will need to be taken during the NEPA process to make this a project-level purpose and need statement?</p>	<p>This Purpose and Need statement will provide the basis for future project-specific Purpose and Need statements on the corridor, but these statements may need to be tailored for the specific study area. Also, some data may need to be updated.</p>

Range of Alternatives Considered, Screening Criteria and Screening Process

<p>What types of alternatives were looked at? (Provide a one or two sentence summary and reference document.)</p>	<p>The study team developed a broad range of alternatives to address the purpose and need. Current transportation problems of the WYO 22 and WYO 390 corridors within the study area drove the development of these alternatives. The types of alternatives included cross-sections, intersections, and multimodal alternatives. See Chapter 2 for the description of alternatives.</p>
<p>How did you select the screening criteria and screening process?</p>	<p>Through input gathered from the website, public comments, coordination with local officials and stakeholders, previous studies, and local and regional plans, all with input and approval from FHWA, WYDOT, and the TAC.</p>
<p>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)</p>	<p>Some alternatives were eliminated because of their lack of ability to meet the identified Purpose and Need. Details regarding the elimination of alternatives are provided in Chapter 2.</p>
<p>Which alternatives should be brought forward into NEPA and why?</p>	<p>The study recommended several alternatives for further detailed evaluation in future NEPA project(s). See Section 2.6 for a summary of the recommended alternatives.</p>
<p>Did the public, stakeholders, and agencies have an opportunity to comment during this process?</p>	<p>WYDOT conducted an extensive public involvement program to provide opportunities for interested parties to participate in and contribute to the PEL study, including the development and evaluation of alternatives. The intent was to solicit information, ideas, and opinions from the public and stakeholders. See Chapter 4 for a description of this engagement process.</p>
<p>Were there unresolved issues with the public, stakeholders and/or agencies?</p>	<p>There are no major unresolved issues with the public, stakeholders, or agencies. However, opposition from some stakeholders to several build alternatives (e.g. highway widening to four lanes on Segment 1) likely will reemerge during future</p>

NEPA studies.

Planning Assumptions and Analytical Methods

What is the forecast year used in the PEL study?	2035
What method was used for forecasting traffic volumes?	See Section 3.5.1 for a description of the traffic forecasting process and method.
Are the planning assumptions and the corridor vision/purpose and need statement consistent with the long-range transportation plan?	WYO 22 is identified as a Regional Corridor and WYO 390 is identified as a Local Corridor in the Statewide Long Range Transportation Plan. The corridor vision and Purpose and Need statement are consistent with the planning factors identified in the Long Range Transportation Plan.
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?	See Section 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 for a description of future transportation network assumptions. Section 3.5.1 discusses future data assumptions regarding traffic forecasting. See Section 3.2 for a discussion of future land use.

Resources

In the PEL study, at what level of detail was the resource reviewed and what was the method of review?	Levels of detail for the study of environmental resources varied. Generally, resources having the most potential to influence alternative development and evaluation were evaluated in greater detail. These resources include wetlands, historic resources, and Section 4(f) properties. The study did not evaluate some resources that likely would not influence the screening of alternatives (see below). Chapter 3 provides details on evaluation methods for each resource studied.
Is this resource present in the area and what is the existing environmental condition for this resource?	Chapter 3 describes resources present in the study area and existing environmental conditions for each.
What are the issues that need to be considered during NEPA, including potential resource impacts and potential mitigation requirements (if known)?	Issues to be considered during NEPA will depend on the future NEPA project being initiated. For example, bridge replacement over the Snake River will present issues related to wetlands and aquatic species that will not be a concern for future intersection improvements at WYO 22 and Broadway. In general, issues of concern along the corridor include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wildlife and vehicle conflicts • wetlands • historic properties • Section 4(f) properties • access changes • business relocations at WYO 22 and Broadway intersection Mitigation requirements will vary depending on impacts. However, compensatory wetland mitigation may be needed for some future projects. Wildlife crossing mitigation measures identified in the study will be needed and warrant further study. Effects to historic properties may require mitigation.

<p>How will the data provided need to be supplemented during NEPA?</p>	<p>Each environmental resource evaluated includes a subsection entitled 'Future NEPA Considerations' that described future data needs and considerations. Notable resource information that will or may updating or supplementing includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • updating traffic data • updating wildlife impact data • verifying wetland boundaries for changed conditions • updating protected species lists • updating land use information, including information on land trusts, new or pending developments, and land use planning updates.
<p>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.</p>	<p>The study did not evaluate some resources that likely would not influence the screening of alternatives. These resources include: Noise, Hazardous Materials, Utilities, Social and Economic Conditions, Air Quality, and Vegetation.</p> <p>Resources not evaluated should be revisited during the NEPA process to determine if their analysis is required.</p>
<p>Were cumulative impacts considered in the PEL study? If yes, provide the information or reference where it can be found.</p>	<p>Yes, see Section 3.1.2 for details.</p>
<p>Describe any mitigation strategies discussed at the planning level that should be analyzed during NEPA.</p>	<p>Each environmental resource evaluated includes a subsection entitled 'Mitigation' that described future mitigation needs and considerations. See Chapter 3.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>FHWA and WYDOT will make this PEL study available to the agencies and public during future NEPA scoping processes along the corridor before adopting planning products from the PEL into future NEPA studies. This PEL does have planning products that can be used in future NEPA studies.</p>
<p>Are there any other issues a future project team should be aware of? Examples: Utility problems, access or ROW issues, encroachments into ROW, problematic land owners and/or groups, contact information for stakeholders, special or unique resources in the area, etc.</p>	<p>Through coordination with the TAC, it was recognized in this PEL that as specific projects are proposed, more detailed traffic analyses should be conducted by a future project team using the most recent traffic count data available and a review of new forecasts should be conducted with stakeholders at that point in time. This will in particular further inform the future need for either two or four lanes on Segments 2 and 5. Utilities also are a concern, as discussed in Section 3.1.</p>