

APPENDIX VII

**PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL LINKAGES
QUESTIONNAIRE**

PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL LINKAGES QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Background

- a. Who is the sponsor of the PEL study?

The Capital Region Transportation Council and the Town of East Greenbush were the sponsors for this study.

- b. What is the name of the PEL study document and other identifying project information (e.g. sub-account or STIP numbers, long-range plan, or transportation improvement program years)?

The study's name is the US Route 4 Corridor Study Inter-Municipal Update.

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

Individuals included on the study team can be found under the Acknowledgements section in the Final Report.

- d. Provide a description of the existing transportation facility within the corridor, including project limits, modes, functional classification, number of lanes, shoulder width, access control and type of surrounding environment (urban vs. rural, residential vs. commercial, etc.)

Existing transportation facility information can be found under Chapter 3: Existing Conditions Overview in the Final Report.

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

An overview of the past planning efforts prior to this study can be found under Chapter 2: Literature Review and Best Practices in the Final Report.

- 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?

An overview of the past planning efforts prior to this study can be found under Chapter 2: Literature Review and Best Practices in the Final Report.

2. Methodology

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

The scope and purpose of the study can be found under Chapter 1: Introduction in the Final Report.

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

NEPA language was not utilized within the report because it is not guaranteed that federal funding will be secured to implement the recommended

improvements.

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

N/A

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

N/A

- e. 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 state DOT and the local agency, with buy-in from FHWA, the USACE, and USFWS and other resource/regulatory agencies.

The study included an advisory committee with members from all affected agencies along the corridor. A list of these members can be found under the Acknowledgements section in the Final Report.

- f. How should the PEL information be presented in NEPA?

All coordinating and participating agencies should be provided with the study's Final Report during NEPA.

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.

A synopsis of all environmental coordination can be found under Chapter 3: Existing Conditions Overview in the Final Report.

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

A list of involved transportation agencies can be found under the Acknowledgements section in the Final Report.

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

All affected agencies will need to be given the opportunity to review the project during the design phase.

4. Public Coordination

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

A synopsis of the coordination efforts with the public and stakeholders can be found under Chapter 5: Public and Stakeholder Outreach Efforts in the Final Report.

5. Purpose and Need for the PEL Study

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

The scope and purpose of the study can be found under Chapter 1: Introduction in the Final Report.

- b. Provide the purpose and need statement, or the corridor vision and transportation goals and objectives to realize that vision.

The purpose and need statement, as well as the corridor vision and transportation goals and objectives of the study can be found under Chapter 1: Introduction in the Final Report.

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

Further coordination with cooperating and participating agencies will be required during the NEPA process.

- 6. Range of alternatives: 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 will not be considered reasonable alternatives, even if they reduce impacts to a particular resource. Detail the range of alternatives considered, screening criteria, and screening process, including:

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

The proposed recommendations can be found under Chapter 6: Proposed Recommendations in the Final Report.

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

Each concept presented was evaluated using traffic simulation software Synchro © to assess the improvements provided by each layout.

- 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.

Concept No. 4 was dismissed due to the right-of-way impacts and the inadequate performance of a two-lane roundabout at the intersection of US Route 4 and NY Route 43.

Concept No. 5 was dismissed due to the additional cost and right-of-way impacts in exchange for minimal improvements when compared to Concept No. 3. Concept No. 3 has significantly less right-of-way impacts.

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

Concept Nos. 1, 2 and 3 addressed the goals set forth in the study by alleviating congestion on US Route 4 throughout the study area. Concept Nos. 1 and 3 require less environmental and ROW impacts than the concepts dismissed from consideration. Concept No. 2 has varying degrees of impacts based on the

service road configuration selected.

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

The public, stakeholders, and agencies were given several opportunities to comment over the life of the study.

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

As with all projects, the outcome does not always satisfy everyone involved, but the final report addresses as many concerns as possible and presents solutions that are an overall benefit to the community.

7. Planning Assumptions and Analytical Methods

- a. What is the forecast year used in the PEL study?

2045 was identified in the REI as the forecast (horizon) year.

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

The Capital Region Transportation Council used their Systematic Traffic and Evaluation and Planning (STEP) model to develop future traffic volumes. This model bases the traffic projections on observed growth over the past 20 years.

- c. Are the planning assumptions and the corridor vision/purpose and need statement consistent with each other and with the long-range transportation plan? Are the assumptions still valid?

All plans for the corridor are consistent with regional plans for the corridor and surrounding area. No major planning changes are anticipated, supporting the retention of the assumption of a growth rate based on historical data.

- d. 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?

It was assumed that regional growth would continue at the same rate as observed over the past 20 years.

8. Environmental 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 desktop-level review of the environmental resources was completed for this study. Available online resources were utilized to complete this review.

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

All resources present within the study area are discussed under Chapter 3: Existing Conditions Overview in the Final Report.

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

The potential presence of wetlands and endangered species should be considered during NEPA.

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

Coordination with agencies of the potential resources will be required during NEPA.

9. List environmental resources you are aware of 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.

Historic resources and parkland, farmlands, air quality / greenhouse gases, and hazardous / contaminated materials will need to be reviewed in NEPA. A re-review of the resources listed in the Final Report will also need to be completed in NEPA.

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

No.

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

None.

12. 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?

All coordinating and participating agencies should be provided with the study's Final Report during NEPA.

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

- a. Examples: Controversy, 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.

The topography of the project area necessitates right-of-way acquisitions for any modification to US Route 4 or adjacent roads.