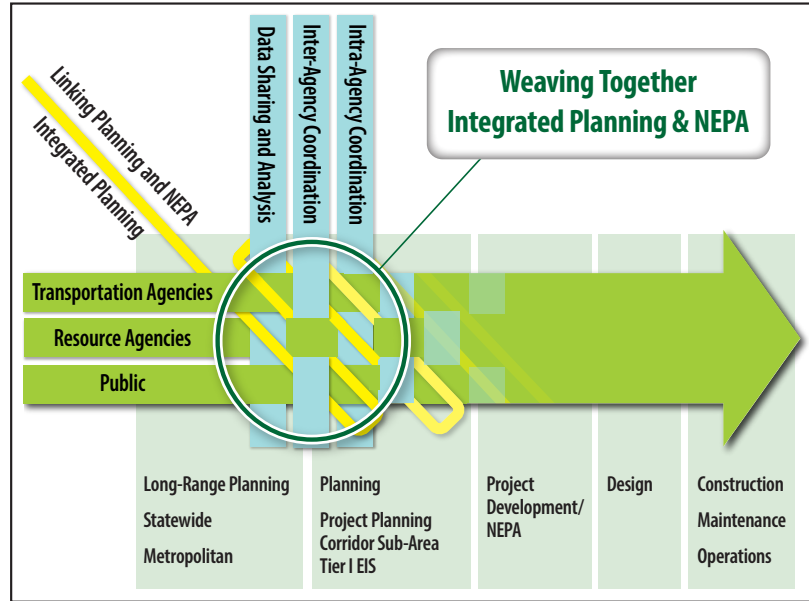


MPOs and LPAs are encouraged to incorporate PEL elements into planning studies. PEL may provide local transportation planners with analytical tools and funding options not otherwise available.

INDOT planning, environmental, and corridor planning division experts will screen local governmental PEL planning studies for inclusion into future pilot planning studies.



More information about PEL is available at:

INDOT:
<https://pelresources.indot.in.gov/>

Federal Highway Administration:
environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env_initiatives/pel/pel_quest.aspx
environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env_initiatives/PEL.aspx

The PEL process is community-focused and offers a streamlined way to determine which project alternatives may be acceptable to the local community, to identify funding, and to establish next steps. PEL often results in clearly defined projects that can advance into the NEPA review when funding becomes available.

PEL is:

- Simple to set up and plan precisely
- Public and stakeholder engagement
- A NEPA equivalent that reduces rework
- Fewer alternatives to evaluate in NEPA

PEL is not:

- A NEPA replacement
- Identifying the preferred alternative
- A planning study or extra requirement



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PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL LINKAGES



Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) is a collaborative and integrated approach to transportation decision-making that considers environmental, community, and economic goals early in the planning process. The PEL process carries the information, analysis, and products developed during planning forward into the environmental review process.



What is PEL?



PEL is a coordinated, systemic approach to transportation decision making that establishes early engagement between INDOT, governmental agencies, and the public when identifying possible problems throughout the project delivery process. PEL studies are limited to those plans or projects that are large scale or complex, or that are likely to lead to major capital investment.

The PEL process involves transportation planners, local and state government, resource agencies, and the public. PEL is only the first step in a much larger project planning and delivery process involving cities, towns, and counties.

The Goal of PEL

The goal of the PEL process is to take information and decisions from planning studies and carry them forward to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. Without PEL, this information or these decisions usually need to be revisited to be valid in NEPA. By utilizing PEL, governmental agencies can potentially shorten the planning required for major construction projects, thereby saving time and taxpayer money. The PEL study process can be used by any planning agency, including Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Local Public Agencies (LPAs).

NEPA requires governmental agencies to assess the environmental effects of their proposed actions prior to making decisions. Using the NEPA process, agencies evaluate the environmental, social, and economic effects of their proposed actions.

The Benefits of PEL

According to national case studies, besides early coordination and identifying possible problems throughout the project delivery process, additional PEL benefits are:

- Early identification of potential project issues and to help document unreasonable alternatives
- Initiate and coordinate early development of potential alternatives that address the purpose and need of a project
- Assist with identifying independent projects that address the stated purpose and need of an improvement or study area
- Improve comprehensive coordination with local project needs and activities, allowing for the bundling of state and local improvement contracts
- Lead to the development of shelf-ready projects that are used as leverage for additional funding and faster submittals for eligible grant applications

INDOT is now implementing PEL into some planning studies on a pilot basis.

When is PEL Appropriate?

PEL is appropriate for developing a transportation concept if it meets any of these criteria:

- Large geographic scale and/or regionally significant proposal could result in multiple independent projects with logical begin/end points
- Known or anticipated public opinion about scope, purpose, need, and/or potential alternatives
- Complex community impacts or environmental constraints
- Purpose and need is unclear, unstable, or requires additional definition
- Too many possible alternatives for an efficient NEPA process
- High cost and/or construction funding not programmed
- Even with a lot of initial work, NEPA process will not meet Environmental Analysis (EA) or Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) time limits

PEL is inappropriate for projects in which:

- Construction funding has been programmed or the project is small scale or routine
- Possible alternatives or potential community impacts are limited

Why Use PEL?

Seamless Decision-Making

- Minimizes duplication of planning & NEPA efforts
- Cohesive flow of information and sharing that builds support from stakeholders, including the public and resource agencies
- Reduces unexpected & costly project delivery delays

Develops Broad Consensus

- Establishes the core purpose, need, & project intent
- Identifies goals & desired outcomes
- Establishes priorities based on public opinion, community needs, & economic development
- Identifies practical solutions for project delivery

Evaluates a Wider Range of Alternative Strategies

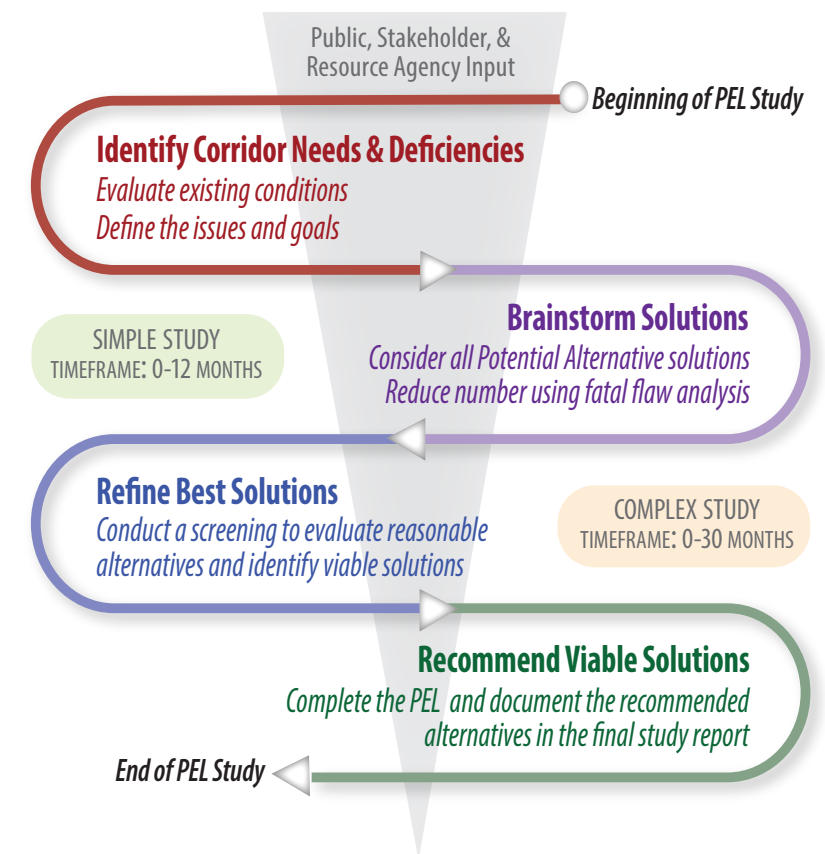
- Based on environmental impacts & performance
- Identifies programmatic-level mitigation for potential impacts
- Considers and compares costs & innovative financial measures
- Eliminates unreasonable alternatives early

Establishes Early Coordination:

- Documentation of discussions, concerns, issues, assumptions, & outreach activities
- Multi-jurisdiction/agency coordination & relationships building
- It is adaptable for incorporation in your existing process

State and local agencies can achieve significant benefits by incorporating environmental and community values into transportation decisions early in planning and carrying these considerations through project development and delivery.

PEL Timeline



The PEL Project Process

The primary goal of a comprehensive PEL study of potential improvements to roadways, such as U.S. 30 and U.S. 31, is to develop multiple high-level solutions for potential highway improvements by examining mobility and safety, while aligning with the economic development and land use development visions of cities, towns, and counties along these corridors.

As part of the study process, it is first essential to identify public, environmental, and resource concerns and opportunities, then expand upon that gathered data with public, stakeholder, and resource agency involvement. The information gathering leads to development of a purpose and need statement and solutions that address the purpose and need.

The outcome of a PEL study is to produce planning documents in a form that can be incorporated by reference, as appropriate, in subsequent environmental documents as projects move toward construction, thus potentially shortening the project development timeframe.