
FLORIDA'S STRATEGIC INTERMODAL SYSTEM

OVERVIEW

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), in cooperation with its partners and other stakeholders, is developing for the first time a statewide Strategic Intermodal System (SIS). This was a new feature of the 2020 Florida Transportation Plan that was adopted in 2000 following an 18 month facilitated stakeholder consensus building initiative.

The SIS represents a shift in the way the state views the development of and investment in Florida's transportation system. Once established, the system will be used to target expenditures aimed at enhancing Florida's economic competitiveness and will include an increased corridor emphasis in planning and funding projects. The system will be composed of facilities and services of statewide and regional significance for aviation, highway, intermodal rail, seaport, space and transit systems, and accommodations for bicycles and pedestrians.

The overall goal in Phase I was to reach consensus with the Strategic Intermodal System Steering Committee on recommendations to the FDOT Secretary, as well as the Florida Transportation Commission, regarding:

- Policies to guide decisions related to the SIS;
- Designation criteria and the facilities and services to be included in the system; and
- Guidance on project prioritization methods and funding options to implement the system.

In Phase II, FDOT and its partners will determine needs based on criteria established during system development, determine how to best address those needs, and establish priorities for funding them.

Facility and service providers of every transportation mode and other stakeholders worked together to reach consensus on what facilities and services should be included in the system. The Committee worked in plenary and in committees focusing on infrastructure, economic competitiveness, and community and environment issues and recommendations.

THE COLLABORATION

The Players

The Secretary of FDOT and the Assistant Secretary of Transportation Policy initiated the process. The Secretary served as the Steering Committee Chair and the Assistant Secretary served as Vice-Chair. Both participated directly

in the substantive process of seeking agreement on recommendations. In recognition of the many "owners" of the facilities to be included in this system, and the diverse stakeholders with an interest in how the system will enhance or impact Florida's economy, communities, and the environment, FDOT invited a wide range of representatives to the table.

The Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium served as neutral third-party facilitators. Cambridge Systematics was hired as an outside technical consultant.

The Process

The consensus building process was conducted in three stages: an organizational stage, an education and initial development of recommendations stage, and a consensus building and report adoption stage. Between February and December 2002 there were eight one- or two-day SIS Steering Committee meetings. In addition, three SIS member-drafting groups held a total of 23 facilitated meetings, with 15 public workshops convened around the state to review draft recommendations.

1. Getting Organized

The initial organizational stage began with a series of preliminary meetings between the Chair, FDOT staff, the consultants and the facilitators to organize the first Steering committee meeting and meeting process. The Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium produced a situation assessment and an initial process design in cooperation with the State Transportation Planner, FDOT's Office of Policy Planning staff, and consultants that included Cambridge Systematics—retained by FDOT to serve as technical advisors. The preliminary planning meetings were key to developing effective working relationships among the team and agency by establishing a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities during the consensus building process and how those respective roles could best compliment each other.

Prior to the first meeting, the facilitators, in consultation with staff and consultants, developed and sent to members a survey to identify perspectives on the current plan, issues and concerns to be addressed in the update process, and information needed to develop consensus on those issues. The organizational stage concluded with a one-day organizational meeting of the Committee in February, at which members reviewed and suggested refinements to the draft process goals, principles, roles

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and decision making guidelines¹, and prioritized key issues identified by members in their pre-meeting surveys.

2. Education and Initial Development of Recommendations

The Steering Committee met in April, June, and August to hear informational briefings on the key issue areas of economic competitiveness, infrastructure, and community and environment, and to develop initial recommendations. Following each presentation, members worked in facilitated small groups to review the trends and issues identified, and to discuss potential initial policy statements. In plenary sessions and ad hoc task groups, members worked to review, refine, and adopt the goal statement, principles and assumptions, roles and responsibilities, and consensus-building guidelines.

During the third committee meeting, three drafting groups, chairs and vice chairs were appointed by the SIS Steering Committee and asked to develop draft SIS designation criteria from the three key issue areas. Between the June and August Committee meetings, these facilitated groups met almost weekly either by teleconference or in person.

At the August meeting, a panel of the three drafting group chairs provided background on their groups' draft criteria and maps, and identified unique and crosscutting issues. Consultants from Cambridge Systematic presented a preliminary draft on integrated designation criteria.¹ Drafting groups then met on the second day to address identified concerns and respond to any assignments from the plenary discussion, and to provide technical staff with guidance for the next draft.

3. Consensus Building and Report Adoption

The Steering Committee met monthly in one- or two-day sessions from September, through December to refine and adopt a final consensus report.

In September the committee reviewed, refined, and adopted draft workshop materials for presentation at 15 public workshops conducted around the state.

Between the September and October meetings, staff, and consultants conducted extensive public outreach

through the workshops, meetings, an SIS website, and a toll-free comment line. They also conducted a mail-in survey to gather public input on the SIS goal and principles, the draft designation criteria and thresholds, and the facilities that met those criteria and thresholds.

At a two-day meeting in late October, the SIS Steering Committee meeting reviewed comments from the public workshops. By the conclusion of the second day, the Committee unanimously adopted a single text format to serve as the basis for an "amendatory" draft report, which would allow members to submit changes to sections of the text. The primary focus of the November meeting was to refine and adopt the amendatory text. Facilitators used a series of straw polls to gauge the initial support of the committee members for respective sections of the draft report. The poll identified concerns that required further discussion among the members in order to clarify and build consensus before the final vote for adoption. The discussions resulted in refinements that were presented to and unanimously accepted by the Steering Committee. The final amended text was adopted, as revised, with only one member voting no. The amendatory text incorporating November's comments and suggestions, along with change amendment forms, were mailed to members in November. Proposed amendments were then compiled and made available to members for their review four days prior to the final meeting in December.

At that meeting, members reviewed the 28 proposed substantive amendments and seven editorial amendments to the draft report. Both voting and ex officio members participated in discussions of the proposed amendments, but only voting members could approve amendments for inclusion and for final adoption of the report. Final decisions required a favorable vote from at least 80% of present and voting members. If any key issue or package of issues received more than 50% but less than 80% support, documentation of the differences and the options that were considered were to be included in the final report.

The final vote for adoption of the report as amended was 21 in favor, one opposing. The opposing member had attended only the first organizational meeting and the final adoption meeting. Though staff kept that member updated on the progress of the Steering Committee throughout the process, the member had not participated directly in Steering Committee or Drafting Group discussions and the consensus building process.

¹ Following each section of the presentation of the draft an initial poll was taken, using a four-point consensus acceptability scale, to assess members' level of comfort with the approach presented and to guide discussion toward addressing the most serious concerns.

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The Agreement

The final recommendations submitted to the FDOT Secretary contained a detailed list of the designation criteria and thresholds, the facilities that meet these criteria and thresholds, and accompanying maps. The Steering Committee also developed initial guidance on institutional and financial issues related to SIS designation and implementation, but determined it would be more appropriate to consider these issues during the subsequent implementation phase.²

OUTCOMES

Designation of the Strategic Intermodal System in Phase I will be followed by development of a Strategic Plan in Phase II during 2003-04 that will guide future investment in and management of the SIS. The Strategic Plan will include detailed facility maps, identified needs, prioritized improvements, financing strategies, and related policies.

LESSONS LEARNED

- ✓ **Leadership is critical** to successful consensus building. The fact that the Secretary of Transportation called the parties together with the support of the Governor's office and then served as the Steering Committee Chair was key to ensuring the participation of key partners in designing a new system that would fundamentally shift in the way Florida views development and investment in its transportation system. Participation by these partners was necessary because there will be many "owners" of the facilities on this system.
- ✓ **Consensus building requires time and resources.** By allocating adequate time and resources for this consensus building process, FDOT allowed members to work out their disagreements, engage in substantive dialogue, and find better solutions. Early engagement of

facilitators resulted in an appropriately designed consensus process, and in a collaborative working relationship among the facilitators, staff, and consultants throughout the 11-month process. Facilitators, staff, and consultants held frequent coordination meetings throughout the process and briefed the chair and vice-chair prior to each Steering Committee meeting.

- ✓ **A well designed process is essential.** The FDOT process created a framework for members to develop ownership and to sort out and order the issues so they could understand and discuss them fully. A survey of issues and concerns prior to the first meeting helped educate members about the number and range of issues to be considered during the process. Presentations were made on key issue areas, followed by small group and plenary discussions. Drafting groups that formed around three key issue areas allowed for development of draft criteria that could be refined by the larger group. . Members came to support the process for developing the criteria and expressed strong concerns when new criteria regarding highways were introduced without going through the same process.
- ✓ **Flexibility in the process is important.** Because the FDOT framework allowed for adjustments, the role of the drafting groups could be expanded to include review and revision of criteria to address concerns expressed in plenary sessions and during the 15 public workshops.

This case study was developed by Robert M. Jones and Hal Beardall of the Florida Conflict Resolution Consortium <<http://consensus.fsu.edu>>, who designed and facilitated the SIS process. For a copy of the SIS Steering Committee's adopted consensus guidelines see <http://www11.myflorida.com/planning/sis/steering/consensusguide_adopted.pdf>.

² See the final report at <<http://www11.myflorida.com/planning/sis/steering/report/default.htm#final>>.