PELs: 10 Years Later - A Colorado Perspective
What is a PEL?
What can and can’t be done with a PEL?
What are the benefits of a PEL?
How has PEL been used in Colorado?
FHWA defines PEL as:

“a voluntary approach to transportation decision-making that considers environmental, community, and economic goals early in the planning stage and carries them through project development, design, and construction.”

WHAT IS PEL?
WHERE DID PEL COME FROM?

- SAFETEA-LU
  - Incorporates Environmental Information into Long-Range Transportation Planning
- Every Day Counts Initiative
- MAP-21
  - Adoption of Planning Products into NEPA
- FAST Act

WHERE DID PEL COME FROM?
-can identify a transportation purpose and need for the study
- Have not identified construction funding
- Have incomplete funding
- Can initiate NEPA within 5 years
- Able to involve FHWA

**WHEN TO USE PEL?**
Streamline the NEPA process by setting priorities within the planning process

PEL Does
Replace NEPA
Reduce the level of documentation required for NEPA decision-making
Guarantee federal funding

PEL Does NOT
Developed first PEL project-specific guidance
- December 2012
- Updated January 2016

22 studies completed or in-progress (June 2016)
- Interstates, U.S. Highways, State Highways
- Interchanges
- Subarea Studies
- Other

PEL IN COLORADO: BY THE NUMBERS
PEL IN COLORADO: BY THE NUMBERS
PEL STUDIES BY SPONSOR
Development of Template EA and Documented CatEx

CDOT NEPA Tools

https://www.codot.gov/programs/environmental/nepa-program/cdot-nepa-tools

- Reduces the size of NEPA documents
- Improves readability for stakeholders, including agencies and the public

TRANSITION TO NEPA AND DESIGN
TRANSITION TO NEPA AND DESIGN

US 50 West
From PEL to EA to Construction

US 50 West Planning and Environmental Linkage Study
- PEL Established:
  - Regional Travel Demand
  - Purpose and Need
  - Traffic and Safety Studies
  - Alternatives Analysis
  - Environmental Studies
  - Recommended Preferred Alternative
  - Concept Design
  - Implementation Plan
- Agency and Public Involvement
  - Technical Advisory Team
  - PEL Community Meetings - April 2011
  - PEL Timeline 2009-2012

US 50 West Environmental Assessment
- Streamlined EA Preparation:
  - Logical Terminal for Proposed Action
  - Detailed Environmental Studies/Surveys
  - Impacts of the No Action Alternative and Proposed Action
- Mitigation Commitments
- Design
- Permitting
- Agency and Public Involvement
  - Comment Period - June 16 to July 15
  - Public Meeting - June 30
- Streamlined FONS
  - EA and Design Timeline - 2013 - 2014
  - EA Completed within 8 Months

Project Construction Proposed Action
- CDOT Will Implement:
  - Mitigation Commitments
  - Permitting Requirements
  - Public Information Outreach Program

Construction Timeline
2015-2017
TRANSITION TO NEPA: BY THE NUMBERS
**Construction**

- **13 projects** under final engineering design
- **Seven projects** under construction or in the right-of-way acquisition process
A PEL STUDY CAN…

- Develop a vision for a broad set of transportation improvements
- Encourage collaboration between entities
- Improve eligibility for funding opportunities
A PEL study can:

- Streamline the NEPA process
- Facilitate accelerated project delivery
- Reduce cost
CDOT Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Handbook (January 2016)


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QUESTIONS?

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A PEL study should...

- Involve FHWA
- Reach out to resource agencies
- Perform focused public involvement
- Identify key environmental resources and impacts
A PEL STUDY SHOULD...

- Document decisions and results
- Establish a NEPA framework
- Develop phasing/cost/funding plans