

PEL Process and Intent

The PEL process is a collaborative and integrated approach to transportation planning and project implementation. The purposes of this PEL process are to improve planning-level and project-level decision-making; minimize duplication of effort during project-level environmental compliance efforts; enhance relationships with resource and regulatory agencies, stakeholders, and the public; and streamline project delivery timeframes. The PEL process will achieve these purposes by incorporating consideration of the natural and human environment, coordination with agencies and the public, and clear documentation of decisions and rationales into the planning process. The planning process will be linked through incorporation of planning information, analysis, and products into future project-level environmental reviews. In addition, findings from this study can be used to make preliminary determinations regarding the appropriate level of National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation (i.e., categorical exclusion, environmental assessment, or environmental impact statement) required for future projects.

The outcomes of this PEL study will be to:

- Identify existing and future transportation needs and problem areas along the I-85 study corridor that will inform future project Need and Purpose and project limits
- Develop and prioritize a range of improvement alternatives to address the identified transportation needs along the corridor
- Conduct a preliminary assessment of environmental concerns and important issues from the proposed improvements that will need to be studied further in future NEPA processes
- Involve the public/stakeholders and local, state, and federal resource agencies throughout the planning process, including early identification of their concerns and interests
- Integrate solutions with input from stakeholder and public engagement
- Develop an implementation plan for the proposed improvements, including potential funding options that provide the context for how projects will advance in the future
- Document the planning process and decisions providing the foundation for future NEPA scoping to support future project-level environmental reviews, reduce duplication of efforts, and streamline delivery
- Encourage environmental stewardship by incorporating environmental screening analysis in the planning process

Study Corridor Vision, Goals, and Objectives

The study's vision and goals are instrumental to screening and analysis throughout the life of the study. A **vision** is a clear, inspirational, and concise definition of a future position. It is intended to serve as a guide for choosing current and future courses of action. **Goals** identify the purpose toward which an endeavor is directed and typically are not directly quantifiable. Goals are a further refinement, clarification, and definition of the vision. An **objective** can be considered an intermediate step to reaching a goal and is more focused and easily measured in quantitative terms. Objectives will be used in this study to measure how well potential projects meet the study corridor goals and screen the list of potential projects to determine which projects should be advanced for further analysis.

Stakeholders play a critical role in identifying the study's vision and goals. Stakeholder Committees for the I-85 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study, referred to within this document as the "I-85 PEL Study" include representatives from relevant agencies, organizations, community groups within and along the study corridor and the surrounding area. Each Committee provides diverse institutional knowledge, experience, and insight into the study process. The I-85 PEL Study Stakeholder Committees are listed below:

- Project Management Team (PMT)
- Executive Committee
- GDOT Internal Review Committee
- PEL Committee
- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
- Key Organization Committee

A Vision Meeting was held on May 7, 2019 with representatives from various stakeholder groups. Based on feedback from the stakeholders, the study team developed the I-85 PEL Study vision, goals, and objectives.

Study Corridor Vision

The vision of the I-85 study corridor is:

I-85 will provide safe, reliable interstate travel for people and goods as part of a connected, efficient transportation network while creating value for surrounding communities.

Study Corridor Goals & Objectives

The following goals and accompanying objectives were outlined for the I-85 PEL Study:

Goal: Improve Safety

- Reduce crashes along the corridor for both personal and commercial vehicles
- Improve incident response and support safe driving enforcement
- Leverage innovative technology to promote safety
- Consider driver expectations
- Improve reliability through safety enhancements

Goal: Improve Vehicular Mobility

- Reduce peak hour congestion to improve peak hour travel speeds and times
- Maximize vehicular throughput
- Update geometric design
- Separate regional and local travel where possible
- Review and modify interchange operations to decrease travel times and to improve the interface between systems
- Leverage innovative technology to improve vehicular mobility
- Improve reliability of vehicular travel

Goal: Facilitate Commercial Travel

- Provide better access to local freight activity centers
- Increase efficiency of long-haul freight movement
- Leverage innovative technology to facilitate commercial travel
- Improve reliability of commercial trips

Goal: Evaluate Multimodal Options

- Consider local transit plans/recommendations and facilitate logical connections
- Evaluate multimodal connections that intersect or cross the corridor
- Leverage innovative technology to accommodate multimodal options
- Improve reliability across all modes

Goal: Support Georgia's Economy

- Develop solutions with positive economic benefits that outweigh costs
- Benefit state and local economy
- Minimize impacts to traveling public during construction
- Leverage public-private partnerships for successful infrastructure development and maintenance

Goal: Support the Corridor's Communities

- Enhance local access
- Promote community connectivity
- Provide consistency with local and regional land use and transportation plans
- Minimize environmental (natural, social, and cultural) impacts
- Minimize adverse air quality impacts