

## LINKING PLANNING & NEPA

### early environmental consideration

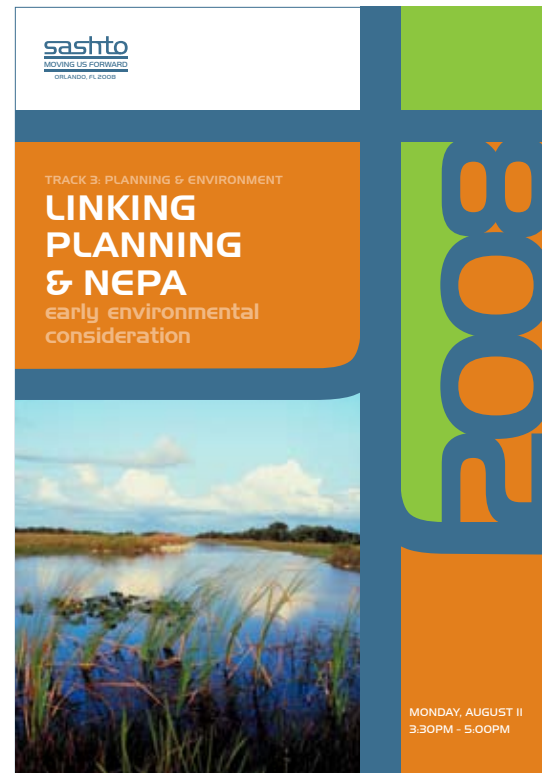
**Moderator: John Taylor, P.E.**  
Florida Department of Transportation

**Panel:**

**Lamar Smith**  
Federal Highway Administration

**Bob Crim, P.E.**  
Florida Department of Transportation

**Mike Bruff**  
North Carolina Department of Transportation



John Taylor, Florida DOT, welcomed the audience and introduced the panel.

**Lamar Smith, FHWA,** spoke about Planning Environmental Linkages (PEL). PEL provides efficiencies and ensures we are being responsible to the environment. We must first recognize we are working with multiple systems (natural systems, institutional systems, etc.). Sometimes the systems run contrary to each other and we need to find approaches by working together, complying with the laws, meeting public expectation, and providing safe, efficient travel for the public.

Linking transportation planning and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) laws and regulations is the right thing to do because there are a lot of good things in NEPA we aren't taking advantage of. There are challenges to this, including resistance to change and establishing interagency relationships. FHWA has been hosting conservation and transportation planning workshops around the country to build strong processes and interagency relationships. The next one is in October.

**Mike Bruff, North Carolina DOT,** spoke about the NCDOT Comprehensive Transportation Planning Process. The NCDOT integration process for linking planning and NEPA has four steps: initial scoping, identifying detailed systems planning processes, integration of the systems information, and implementation.

NCDOT's Comprehensive Transportation Planning Process involves developing a vision, conducting a needs assessment, analyzing alternatives, developing a final plan, and adopting final plan.

**Bob Crim, Florida DOT,** spoke about corridor planning and Florida's Efficient Transportation Decision-Making process (ETDM). Traditionally, project development and environmental processes did not involve early interagency involvement. ETDM helps the planning process by providing connectivity between FDOT and state and federal resource agencies, and the public for earlier project review. The Environmental Screening Tool used by FDOT is a web-based, GIS communication tool that allows information to be sent to multiple agencies easily and quickly.

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