

FHWA PEER EXCHANGE

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Florida Department of Transportation

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State Community Resources/Public Involvement Coordinator

DOT Context

The Florida Department of Transportation is a decentralized state agency that reports directly to the Governor. Each of our eight districts is managed by a District Secretary. They vary in organizational structure, but in general each has major divisions for Administration, Planning, Production and Operations. Also, each district has a Public Information Office that reports to the District Secretary and a District Chief Counsel who reports to the DOT General Counsel in Tallahassee. FDOT has primary jurisdiction over the State Highway System, which carries over half of all traffic within Florida. This system includes major roads such as interstates and highways with U.S. or state road numbers.



About Rusty

Rusty Ennemoser, PhD, is the State Community Resources and Public Involvement Coordinator for the Florida Department of Transportation.

She has a Bachelor of Science in Journalism and Communications from Florida International University in Miami, a Master of Science in Multilingual/Multicultural Education from Florida State University, and a PhD from FSU in Sociocultural and International Development Studies. She has worked for FDOT since 1999, formerly with the Public Information Office and the Office of Environmental Management, and currently with the Office of Policy Planning.

DOT Public Outreach Highlights

FDOT's Public Involvement activities are conducted by planners, environmental and design project managers, consultants and consultant project managers, with input and assistance from District Public Information Officers. The bulk of public involvement work is done by consultants with oversight from District staff. The Department's public involvement processes are guided by state and federal law, as well as internal procedures, including the FDOT Project Development and Environment Manual, the FDOT Public Involvement Handbook, the Florida Design Manual, Work Program Instructions, and regular training provided in the Districts and Central Office. Public Involvement Plans are required for all environmental studies and Community Awareness Plans for all design projects. FDOT promotes public involvement through all phases of transportation project development.

Biggest Public Engagement Challenges

Two major public engagement challenges are educating the public about the transportation process and educating senior management about the public involvement process. But decentralization is probably the biggest challenge we have in Florida. Even when operating within our specific guidelines, results can depend on the individual project managers and their approach. Some are very aware of the need to build relationships early, while others may have more of a "charge ahead" approach that then becomes problematic when there is controversy. Our guidelines do offer a lot of flexibility, which is welcomed by the Districts but then can create issues of control and consistency. So much depends on the individual project manager.

Contact

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