### **AASHTO** Webinar on

NCHRP 25-43: Navigating Multi-Agency NEPA Processes to Advance Multimodal Transportation Projects

March 1, 2016







## Today's Speakers

Donald J. Emerson, WSP | Parsons Brinckerhoff
 NCHRP 25-43 Objectives, Approach, and Findings

- Heather Wills, Federal Highway Administration (formerly Oregon DOT)
  - Columbia River Crossing

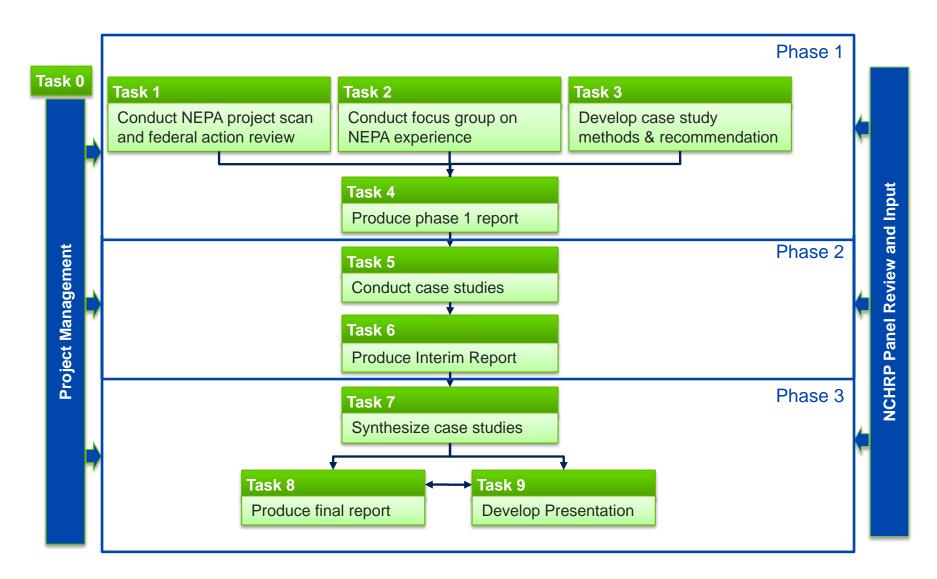
David Bricker, California Department of Transportation
 XpressWest

NCHRP 25-43 Objectives, Approach, and Findings

## Research Objectives

- 1. Characterize the challenges inherent in satisfying the NEPA requirements of more than one U.S. DOT agency
- 2. Identify strategies and tactics used to overcome these challenges
- 3. Suggest new and innovative strategies

## Research Approach



## Five Challenges of Multimodal NEPA

- Unique agency-specific program requirements under "NEPA umbrella"
- Differing agency interpretations of (or procedures for meeting) NEPA requirements
- Anticipating which U.S DOT agencies will have a major federal action
- 4. Efficient coordination among agencies
- 5. Securing funds for multimodal NEPA studies

## Case Study Selection Criteria

- →U.S. DOT agencies & modes involved
- → NEPA approach
- → NEPA class of action
- → Challenges faced
- →NEPA document within last 10 years













### Twelve Case Studies

and I-70 East



Chicago – CREATE

Cincinnati – Eastern Corridor

OH, PA, MD, WV – National Gateway Clearance

Northern VA – Rail to Dulles Airport

Miami – Port of Miami Tunnel

Dallas – DART to DFW Airport

## Case Study Diversity: U.S. DOT Agency Roles

	FAA	FHWA	FRA	FTA	STB	USCG
Dulles	Coop.			Lead		
Port of Miami		Lead				Coop.
Eastern Corridor		Lead		Coop.		
National Gateway		Jt. Lead	J. Lead			
CREATE (Chicago)		Lead	Coop.	Coop.		
T-REX (Denver)		Jt. Lead		Jt. Lead		
I-70 East	Coop.	Jt. Lead	Coop.	Jt. Lead		
Mountain View		Lead		Coop.		
XpressWest	Partic.	Coop.	Lead		Coop.	
Columbia River Crossing	Coop.	Jt. Lead		Jt. Lead		Coop.
East Link		Coop.		Lead		
DFW Airport	Coop.			Lead		

## Case Study Findings

- → First four challenges confirmed, strategies & lessons learned identified
- → Fifth challenge not encountered
  - Funds for multimodal NEPA tended to come from one mode
  - Criteria used to select cases may have screened out projects that could not assemble multimodal funding

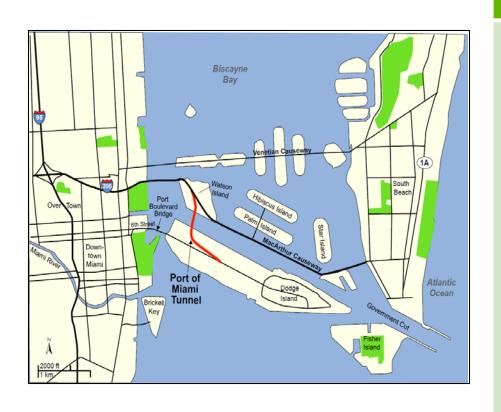
## Case Study Findings: Challenges Faced

	1. Unique Requirements	2. Differing Interpre- tations	3. Identifying Agency with Action	4. Efficient Coordin- ation
Dulles	X	X		X
Port of Miami			X	
Eastern Corridor			X	X
National Gateway	X	X	X	X
CREATE (Chicago)	X			X
T-REX (Denver)	X	X		X
I-70 East	X	X		X
Mountain View			X	X
XpressWest	X	X	X	X
Columbia River Crossing	X	X	X	X
East Link		X		X
DFW Airport	X	Χ		X

## Case Study Findings: Strategies

- → No single best approach to overcoming challenges
- → Twenty-three strategies identified, many related to coordination
- → Strategies include:
  - Committees, task forces, working groups
  - Joint project offices
  - Memoranda of agreement
  - Frequent in-person meetings and conference calls
  - Technical documents to address issues & record solutions

## Port of Miami Tunnel: New Highway Connection to Port

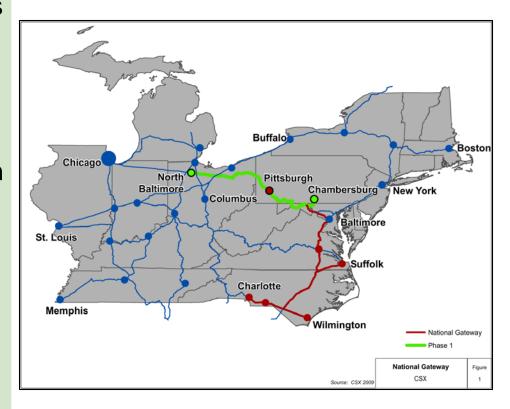


- FHWA was willing to be lead federal agency before source of funding was finalized.
- FDOT's Project Development & Environment (PD&E) process has same milestones as NEPA, facilitating transfer of environmental analyses should NEPA be triggered.
- MOU between FHWA and Coast Guard clarified roles and responsibilities.

National Gateway: Increasing Railroad

Clearances in 4 States

- FRA, FHWA and State DOTs had differing issues and procedures. FRA and FHWA agreed to apply most stringent procedures.
- High-level kick-off meeting in Washington highlighted timeline.
- Governors spoke regularly to resolve issues.
- Regular phone calls with all states.
- FHWA assigned NEPA expert to FRA.

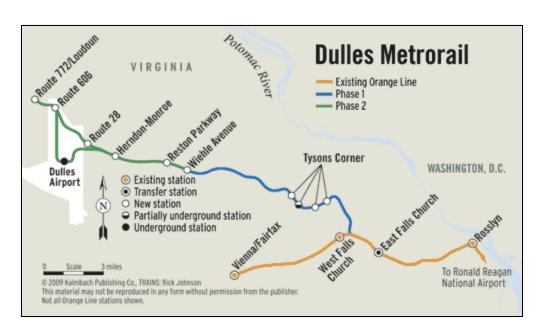


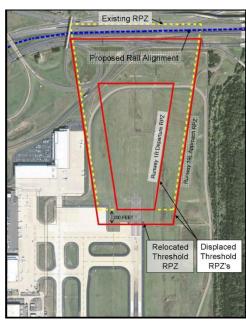
## T-REX: I-25 Widening and LRT



- FHWA and FTA entered into Interagency Agreement to outline agency requirements and reconcile differences.
- CDOT convened task forces for focused input on specific impacts.
- Technical memoranda prepared as a resource.

## Dulles Corridor: Rail Extension to Airport





- Established a joint project office, including staff familiar with FTA policies and procedures.
- MWAA was liaison with FAA on airport issues. FAA was engaged throughout, although its role was small in first phase.

## Cross-Cutting Themes & Lessons Learned

- → Maintain early & continuous coordination
- Make sure agencies have similar interest and commitment
- → Become familiar with other agency's processes, reconcile differences early
- Understand other agency's constraints & expectations
- → Budget adequate time & resources

Success depends on willingness and motivation of agencies to work together, find common ground, and work around and bridge procedural differences.

### Self-Assessment Tool

→ Contains 36 statements with 6 choices:

#### **Completely Agree**

Somewhat Agree

Somewhat Disagree

Completely Disagree

No Progress Made

Not Applicable

- → By applying the tool, respondents (or team) become aware of issues they are likely to encounter
- → Tool steers respondent(s) to case studies with similar issues

## Columbia River Crossing Project

Heather Wills (FHWA), Former CRC Environmental Manager



## Columbia River Crossing

### **Project Sponsors**





Project Leads



U.S. Department of Transportation

Federal Highway Administration Federal Transit Administration → Federal Oversight



City of Vancouver



City of Portland



SW Washington Regional Transportation Council



Metro



C-TRAN



**TriMet** 

Local Sponsor Agencies

## Columbia River Crossing Multi-Modal Solution

- → Replace I-5 **bridge**
- → Improve highway interchanges
- → Light rail extension to Vancouver
- → Pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements
- → Highway toll



## Columbia River Crossing

#### Multi-Modal Solution

#### **Challenges**

- Unique requirements for FTA vs FHWA NEPA compliance due to New Starts fund process
- Relationship between FHWA & state DOT and FTA & grantee were different
  - Delegation of authority
  - Level of involvement in agency coordination
  - Level of involvement in tribal coordination
- Developing trust between the ten agencies took a lot of time









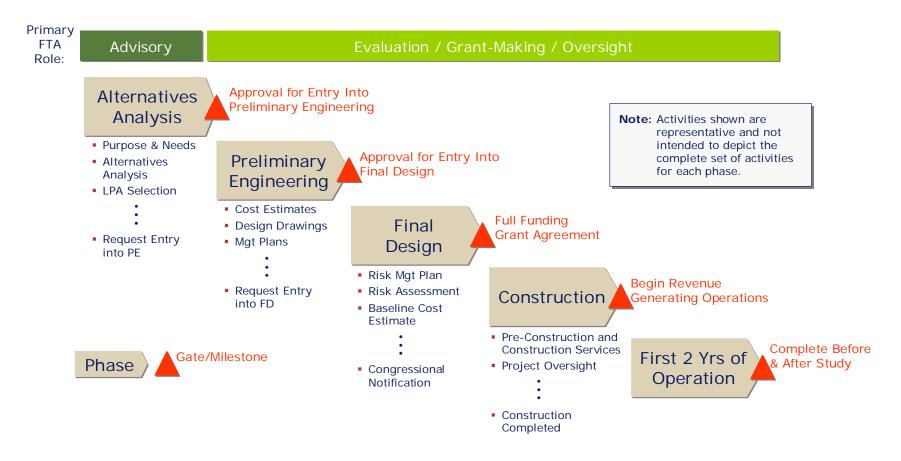


# Columbia River Crossing Multi-Modal Solution

#### **Lessons Learned and Strategies**

- Find ways to establish trust between agencies
- Determine what potential concerns might exist in establishing new relationships up front and develop mitigation strategies to address them
- Leverage existing relationships between agencies
- Identify differences in process early and clearly outline what process will be followed with the highest level agreement possible
- Ensure there is enough time at the beginning of a project to clearly define roles and responsibilities

# Columbia River Crossing FTA New Starts process informing NEPA

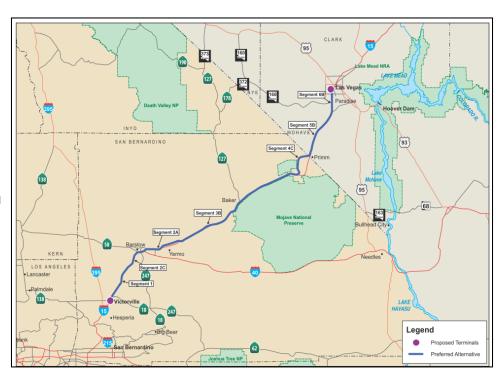


# XpressWest Project David Bricker, California DOT



# XPressWest Project Background

- Interstate, high-speed, private passenger rail project
- → Alignment along 200-mile corridor of Interstate 15 between Victorville, CA and Las Vegas, NV
- Passenger station and maintenance/operation facility in each city
- Multiple federal, state, and local agencies involved
- Federal Railroad Administration NEPA Lead agency
- → 2006 Notice of Intent
- → 2011 Received Record of Decision



## **XpressWest**

#### Challenges

- Unique agency-specific program requirements under the NEPA umbrella: safety concerns.
- Differing agency interpretations
   of NEPA process and
   requirements: design issues.

- Anticipating which agencies will have a major federal action: single NEPA document and multiple NEPA decisions.
- Efficient coordination among agencies: project development structure (executive group and working groups).



## **XpressWest**

#### **Lessons Learned**

- Perform thorough scoping process to identify issues and potential conflicts: risks, assumptions, and constraints.
- Anticipate participating agencies may have differing expectations: project schedule.
- Schedule regular meetings and ensure all appropriate parties are involved: effective communication and partnering.
- Enlist a mediator to facilitate meetings and work through challenging issues: build consensus.

Question and Answers