



## Florida Department of Transportation Research

### The Relationship of Title VI Requirements to Florida's Transportation Planning Process

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Beginning in the 1960s, awareness of the disproportionate exposure of poor, migrant, and minority communities to environmental hazards founded the concept of environmental justice. With Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act as its basis, environmental justice has led to policies and regulations in many areas of government. Transportation is not the least of these, with its power to transform the landscape of entire communities.

The U.S. Department of Transportation laid out three principles of environmental justice. The principles require transportation planning to minimize adverse effects on minority and low-income populations, to ensure full participation of all communities affected by transportation plans, and to ensure equitable and timely delivery of benefits of transportation infrastructure. In this project, researchers from the University of South Florida documented the current state of practice regarding incorporation of environmental justice into transportation planning processes.

The researchers began with a review of laws, executive orders, and regulations that establish the framework for responding to environmental justice requirements. Many of these requirements are conditions for receiving federal transportation funds. These requirements are fulfilled through two processes: a long-range transportation plan, which examines needs at least 20 years into the future, and a State Transportation Improvement Program, which includes projects that will be built within four years.

A subset of Florida documents relating to civil rights in planning was also selectively reviewed for further insights. These included selected MPO joint certification reviews, MPO quadrennial federal certification reviews, FDOT handbooks, and a sampling of monitoring documents from the Title VI office, such as Quality Assurance Reports (QARs).



*Using building blocks and maps of Miami-Dade county, residents get a hands-on understanding of the area's future growth patterns and its transportation needs.*

In the project's second phase, researchers interviewed transportation planning officials within FDOT and in Florida's metropolitan planning organizations (MPO). MPOs are policy boards composed largely of local government elected officials, required by federal law for urbanized areas of 50,000 or more people. MPOs are intended to ensure a planning process that allocates federal funds appropriately within a shared vision of the region's future.

Interviews were conducted with six of FDOT's seven districts. Several FDOT staff members participated in each interview. FDOT district staff were asked 26 questions organized into five subject areas: personnel, planning activities, data, public involvement, and EDTM (Efficient Transportation Decision Making, a state of Florida effort to balance efficiency and quality in transportation planning processes). Interviews were also conducted with seven of Florida's 26 MPOs. MPOs were selected for interviews based on two criteria: 1) one from each geographic FDOT District, and 2) MPOs with varying population sizes and different organizational structures.