



## OVERVIEW

As a project moves through the transportation planning process and sociocultural effects are identified, the community analyst develops potential solutions to address the adverse effects. The community analyst actively participates in the role of problem solving through ongoing interaction with the community to ensure that identified community effects are documented and addressed in a manner consistent with community values and desires, as well as FDOT standards and resources (Figure 5-1).

Public involvement will assist the community analyst in identifying solutions to potential effects based on community goals and preferences. The public can provide input to:

- Identify ways the project could be altered to avoid the effects;
- Identify ways the project could be modified to minimize the severity of the effect;
- Identify actions that could be taken to lessen an effect or replace an appropriated resource; and
- Identify ways the project could be enhanced to address the effect.

For example, the City of Lakeland conducted an SCE evaluation during a PD&E study to determine the best alternative for an east-west connector between two major north/south arterial highways. Community members were asked to draw the best alternative for an east-west connector on a basic map. Results were summarized and the alternatives presented in a subsequent workshop. Refer to the FDOT *Public Involvement Handbook* located at [www.dot.state.fl.us/emo](http://www.dot.state.fl.us/emo) for additional public involvement techniques to assist the community analyst in resolving issues.

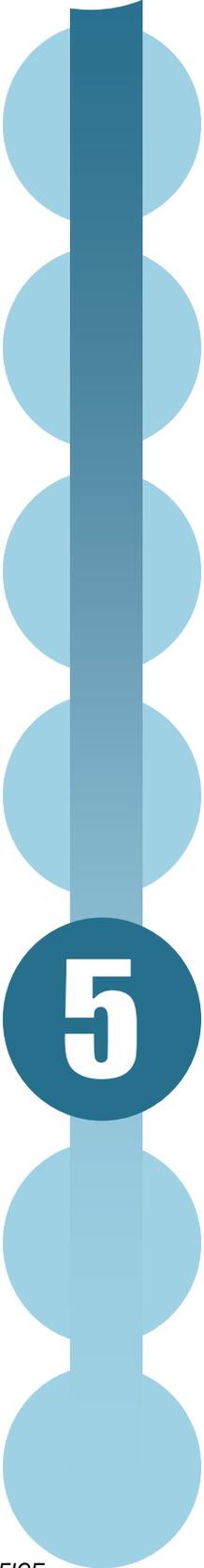
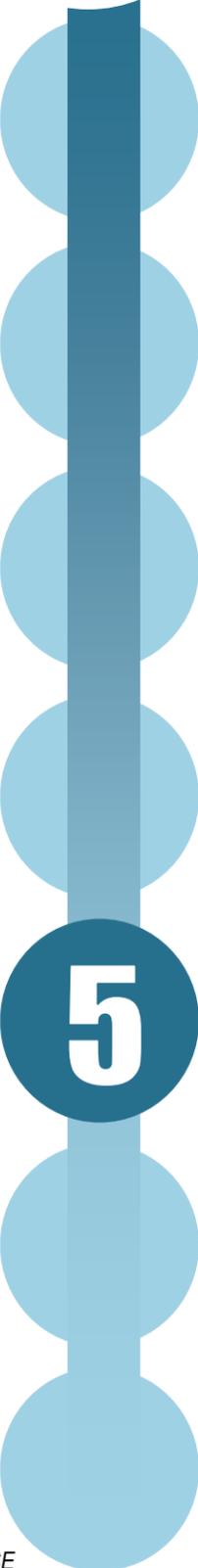
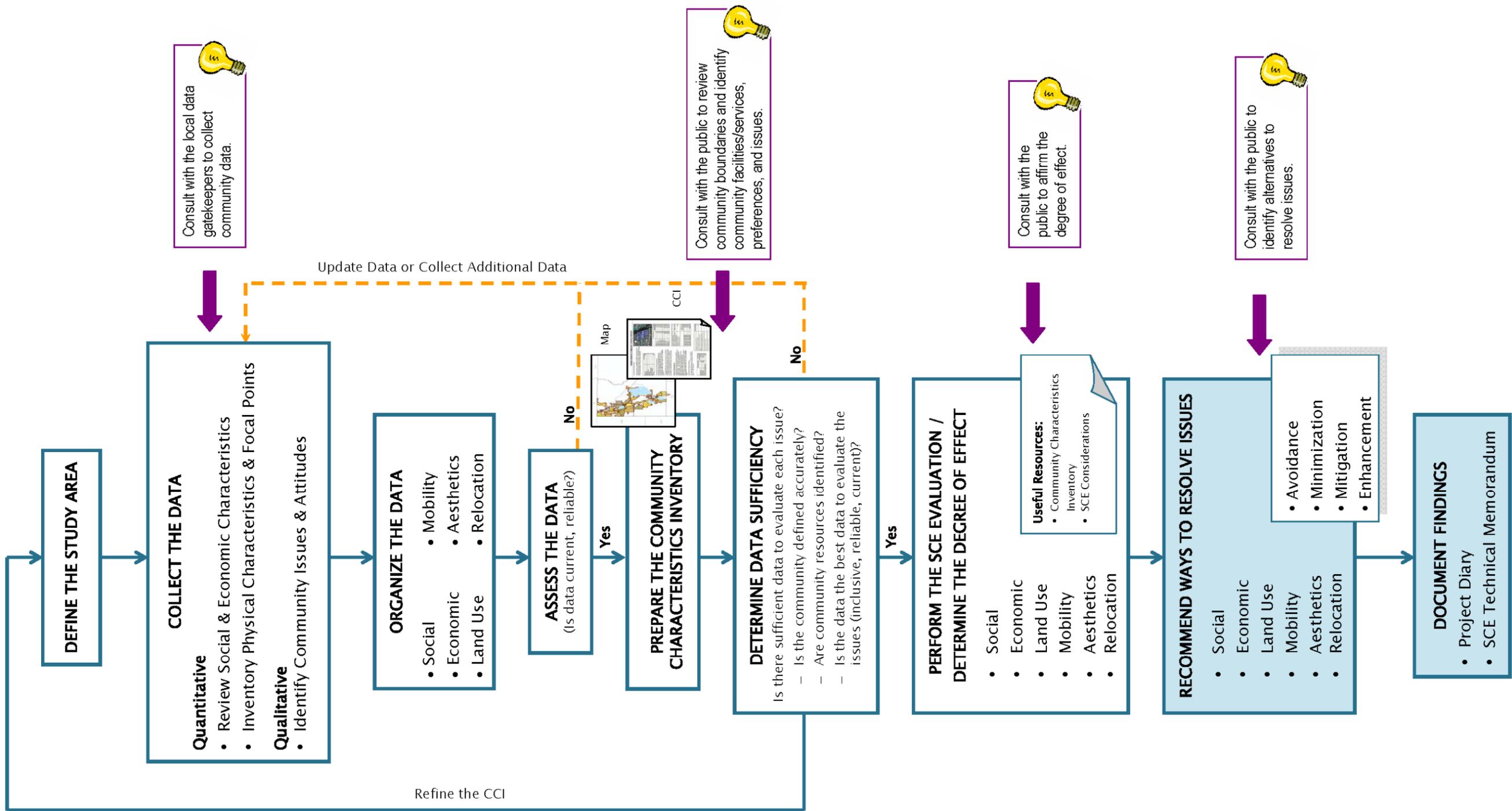




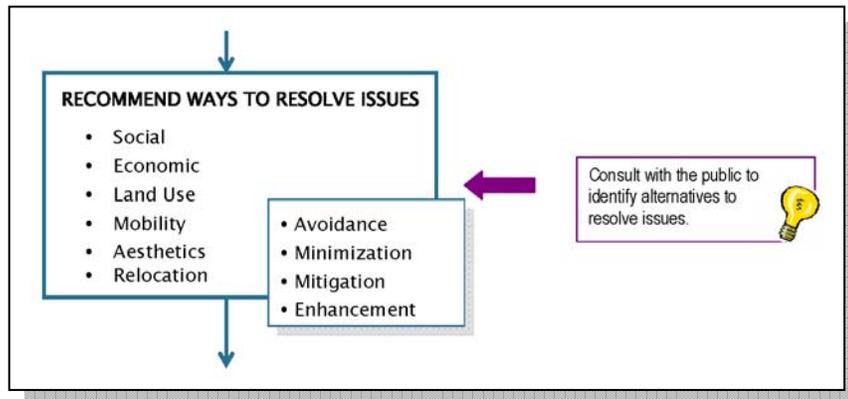
Figure 5-1 SCE Evaluation Process





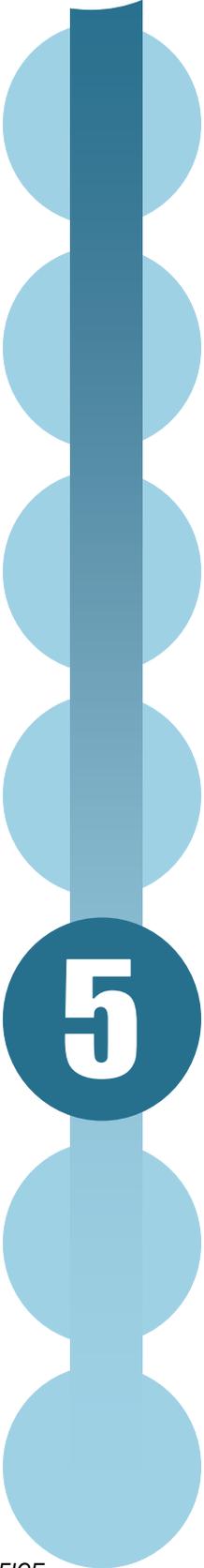
## 5.1 RECOMMEND WAYS TO RESOLVE ISSUES

Four strategies have emerged as methods for resolving adverse sociocultural effects of a transportation project: avoidance, minimization, mitigation, and enhancement.



Some of the solutions address short-term effects (during construction) and others are implemented to address long-term effects. Additionally, solutions to resolve one effect may create another adverse effect.

The community analyst should consider the potential effects of these measures on the affected community and confirm that the approach supports the project purpose and need. Additionally, the community analyst should review potential solutions with others prior to making a commitment, especially during the early stages of a project. There may be engineering or financial reasons that make a potential solution not feasible. A best practice for dealing with these issues is to commit to further study of the particular issue during subsequent stages. This often satisfies the public without creating a promise that may not be able to be fulfilled.





## 5.1.1 Avoidance

Avoidance measures are alterations to the project so that an effect does not occur. This may include re-defining the project description. Examples of avoidance include:

- Bridging over a roadway segment to avoid cutting off the main access to a community focal point;
- Shifting a project to avoid displacing a church that serves as the focal point of neighborhood activities;
- Shifting a project to avoid creating a barrier through a cohesive neighborhood; or
- Shifting a project to avoid separating a community facility like a park or a senior center from a cohesive neighborhood.

**Sample Economic Issue:**

Widening an existing road threatens business activities by eliminating parking.

**Potential Solution:**

Shift alignment to avoid taking parking areas.

## 5.1.2 Minimization

Minimization involves modifications to the project to reduce the severity of the effect. Examples of minimization include:

- Providing on-street parking instead of additional travel lanes in a Main Street area;
- Realigning a project from the interior of a tract of land to the perimeter to minimize the effect on productive farmland;
- Locating a transit facility so that vacant land is utilized instead of taking a valued neighborhood business; or
- Realigning a project to limit effects to one side of the roadway and not to both sides to minimize community effects.

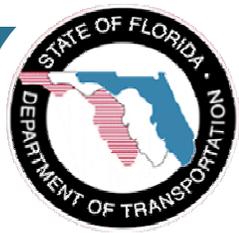
**Sample Social Issue:**

Additional travel lanes threaten community cohesion.

**Potential Solution:**

Reduce the design speed to allow narrower traffic lanes.

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## 5.1.3 Mitigation

Mitigation actions are taken to alleviate or offset an effect or replace a protected resource. Examples of mitigation include:

- Creating an access management system to facilitate access to businesses where driveways were closed;
- Constructing a parking structure to compensate for lost private parking;
- Relocating an affected community facility in a new, easily accessible location within the neighborhood;
- Improving crosswalks, adding traffic calming devices and increasing pedestrian crossing times in areas with high levels of pedestrian traffic;
- Replacing all trees removed as a result of a project on nearby park land;
- Erecting sound or visual buffers to the facility; or
- Eliminating incompatible land uses.

**Sample Mobility Issue:**

A noise wall threatens mobility by blocking a major pedestrian/bicycle route.

**Potential Solution:**

Modify the barrier to allow pedestrian/bicycle passage.

## 5.1.4 Enhancement

Enhancement is the addition of desirable or attractive features to the project to make it fit more harmoniously into the community. However, the feature should not be designed to replace lost resources or alleviate effects caused by the project. Examples of enhancement include:

- Providing textured pedestrian crossings in downtown areas;
- Adding landscaping and other amenities to the facility design;
- Incorporating landscaping and street furniture into a project design;

**Sample Social Issue:**

A new median threatens emergency response times.

**Potential Solution:**

Provide a median opening with emergency signals.

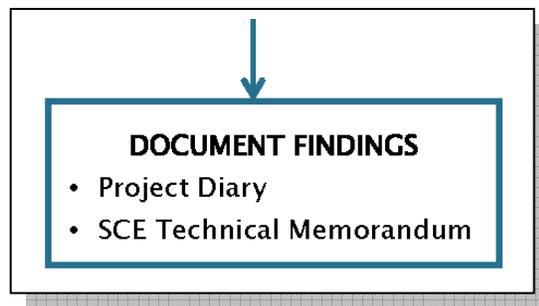
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- Providing a small park or recreational use (e.g., fishing pier) along a causeway or under a bridge;
- Providing scenic or rest areas;
- Adding public artwork to a structure;
- Providing bicycle crossings or paths;
- Painting a mural on a sound barrier wall used for mitigation; or
- Providing special amenities to a neighborhood.

## 5.2 DOCUMENT FINDINGS

The SCE evaluation results are used for decision making throughout the project development process. It is important to preserve this information in a clear and concise manner for reference during Project Development & Environment (PD&E) and future project phases.

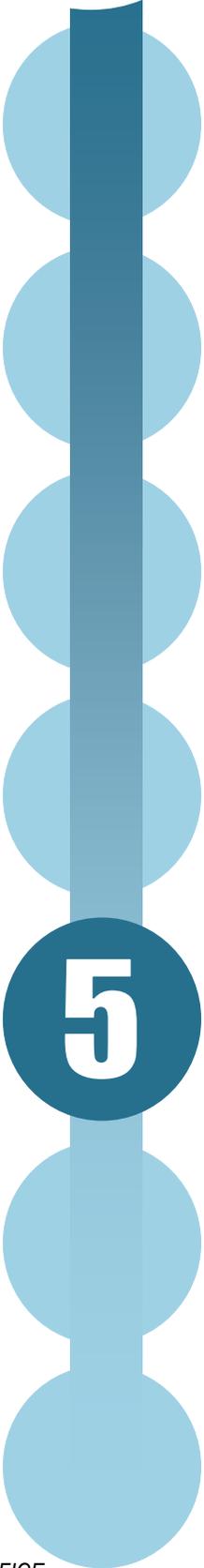


Proper documentation of the public involvement process and SCE evaluation findings ensures accountability. Appropriate and complete documentation provides the guidance for the next project phase and should contain the reasons for commitments along with a description of any assurances given to the community during public involvement activities. Access to the documentation allows the public to see that their input was heard and incorporated.

### 5.2.1 Project Diary

A project diary or portfolio is an excellent way to document public involvement activities as proposed transportation projects are identified and moved forward to the work program and project development.

The project diary should contain all the project components presented to agencies, elected officials and the public. It should contain the project purpose and need statement, the public involvement plan, contact lists,





schedule of activities, materials, maps, invitations, flyers, and photos of any community interaction relating to the proposed project from planning to construction. A project diary documents data gathered at public involvement activities and provides a repository for meaningful information that accurately assesses the issues and concerns of a community.

Prepare the project diary by:

- Compiling outreach activity results such as charts, graphs, summary documents – including photographs, newspaper articles, video clips and other materials; and
- Summarizing and presenting the findings clearly and in non-technical language.

The project diary should be accessible to the public. The information should be clear and easy to understand.

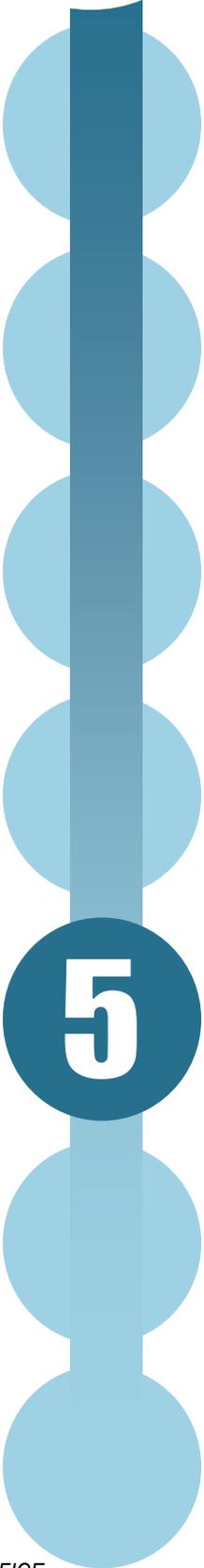
The components of a project diary include:

- The Project History  
This section should define the affected community. It should include a geographic description of the study area utilizing maps, as well as any demographic information. If a windshield survey or other technique was necessary to provide a clearer understanding of the study area, include any observations made.
- The Public Involvement Plan (PIP)  
This section includes the public involvement plan and information to define community attitudes and preferences:
  - The community's level of understanding of a transportation project;
  - The community's attitude toward a transportation project;
  - Feedback from the community on an alternative that has been selected;



- Ongoing status of plan/project decisions as it becomes more defined; and
  - Maps, diagrams and typical sections.
  - The Notification process
  - This section should include the Master Contact List detailing all methods of notification to invite the public to activities. Include any flyers, posters, letters of invitation, press releases, or legal ads.
- Description of All the Outreach Activities  
This section should include the date, time and location of public involvement activities, as well as photographs and samples of all the mailing lists, sign-in sheets, maps, graphs, boards, comment forms, log and summary, meeting notifications, evaluation forms, requests for presentations, meeting minutes (if applicable), etc. Describe the flow and sequence of the activity, i.e., what happened first, second, third, etc. If workstations were utilized, describe each one and what data was gathered. Show any exhibits used. If the activity entailed participating in a local community event by setting up a booth and conducting a survey, include a copy of the survey questions.
  - The Results  
Document the event by using percentages and numbers to reflect the number of people invited to the event and the number of people who attended. Compile the issues or concerns. It is not unusual for the data collected at an activity to be completely different from what was expected. If that is the case, it is important to document that information carefully.

When properly maintained, the project diary is a valuable resource for preparing the SCE Technical Memorandum in which the community analyst documents the SCE evaluation findings.





### 5.2.2 SCE Technical Memorandum

The SCE evaluation findings will be included or referenced in the NEPA documentation. It may also be necessary to prepare a separate technical memorandum if the complexity of the project, severity of the effects, or quality of data justify a specialized technical section. Since environmental documents are usually prepared to comply with NEPA, the community analyst should use a compatible format when developing a separate technical memorandum.

General guidelines for documenting findings include:

1. Keeping a written record of all findings:
  - a. Begin with potential effects suggested by the community characteristic inventory and proceeding to more detailed evaluation as alternatives are refined and evaluated.
  - b. Maintain all SCE evaluation activities and information collected in the project diary for the life of the project.
2. Summarizing all public involvement activities, as well as public concerns and comments.
3. Preparing an executive summary of key findings including public concerns, conclusions of various evaluations, strategies for addressing effects, and any commitments made to the public.
4. Using clear, non-technical language and graphics to help explain evaluation results.

*Figure 5-2 Sample Technical Memorandum Format* is a sample format for the sociocultural effects evaluation documentation. For specific guidance in preparing NEPA documentation, refer to the *PD&E Manual*.

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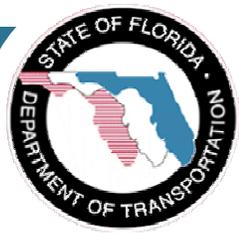


Figure 5-2 SCE Technical Memorandum

- I. Introduction
  - A. Project Summary
    - Project Purpose and Need
    - Conceptual Alternatives
- II. Community Characteristics Inventory/Map
- III. Potential Effects
  - A. Social Issues
    - Demographics
    - Community Cohesion
    - Safety
    - Community Goals/Quality of Life
  - B. Economic Issues
    - Commerce
    - Tax Base
  - C. Land Use Issues
    - Land Use Patterns
    - Plan Consistency
    - Growth Trends and Issues (past and present)
  - D. Mobility Issues
    - Accessibility
    - Connectivity
    - Traffic Circulation
    - Public Parking
  - E. Aesthetic Issues
    - Noise/Vibration
    - Viewshed
    - Compatibility
    - Visual Project Fit
  - F. Relocation Issues
    - Residential
    - Non-Residential
    - Unique Facilities
- III. Conclusion and Recommendations
  - A. Recommendations for Resolving Issues
  - B. Project Commitments
- IV. Appendices
  - A. Data Sources
  - B. Public Involvement



SCE evaluations have become a tool to create projects that fit community needs. Appendix F includes the following case study presentations that exemplify the role of public involvement and SCE evaluation in the transportation process.

- *Indian Street Bridge PD&E Study.* Steve Braun, P.E., FDOT District 4.
- *Strings and Ribbons ~ A Public Involvement Success Story.* Karl Welzenbach, Volusia County MPO.
- *Highlands County Sociocultural Data Collection Effort ~ A Practical Application of SCE Data Collection Principles.* Gwen Pipkin, FDOT District 1.
- *Bridge of Lions Rehabilitation Project.* Bill Henderson, FDOT District 2.
- *Integrating Cultural Resources Into SCE Evaluation.* Ken Hardin, Janus Research.
- *Brickell Avenue Bridge Widening ~ Native American Consultation.* Cathy Owen, FDOT District 6.
- *Overtown ~ An Unfortunate Woman.* Cathy Owen, FDOT District 6.

As FDOT continues to adapt and implement the Sociocultural Effects (SCE) Evaluation process, the decision making process for transportation professionals and all affected communities will be enhanced.