ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This handbook was prepared by the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) for the Environmental Management Office of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). It was developed to support the FDOT Community Impact Assessment Program.

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Acknowledgements

Appreciation is expressed to the following individuals for their helpful comments:

Larry D. Anderson, FHWA, Florida Division
Marjorie Bixby, Florida Department of Transportation
Leigh Blackman Lane, North Carolina Department of Transportation
David Blodgett, Florida Department of Transportation
Michael E. Burns, Maine Department of Transportation
Roberto Escalera, FHWA, Florida Division
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Michele Gallant, Carter & Burgess, Inc.
Michael Grant, Hagler Bailly Services, Inc.
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ABOUT THE HANDBOOK

Transportation projects can have major social and economic effects—both positive and negative. Analysis of community impacts provides insight into ways projects can be improved or redefined to reduce adverse impacts and increase overall project benefits. Historically, much of the attention in environmental impact assessment has been placed on the natural environment, rather than on how transportation projects affect people and communities. This handbook provides methods and indicators that practitioners can use to identify and evaluate the community impacts of transportation projects, and strategies for reducing adverse impacts. The handbook expands upon Community Impact Assessment: A Quick Reference for Transportation, which was produced by the Federal Highway Administration in 1996, and draws upon the Guidelines and Principles for Social Impact Assessment, produced by the U.S. Department of Commerce.

This handbook is intended to serve as a reference tool for the Florida Department of Transportation during planning and project development, to supplement the FDOT Project Development and Environment Manual (PD&E Manual). It is also intended as a resource guide for metropolitan planning organizations, local governments, and other agencies seeking more effective ways to integrate transportation projects into the fabric of our communities. The project was supported by a research grant from the Florida Department of Transportation, Environmental Management Office.

The handbook begins with an introduction to community impact assessment, how it relates to organizational objectives, and an overview of laws and requirements related to community impact assessment for transportation. It proceeds with a conceptual overview of the impact assessment process, and how that process relates to the various phases of transportation planning and project development. Conducting a community impact assessment requires a thorough understanding of the affected community. Part Two, Baseline Conditions, provides guidance on how to develop a community profile. Part Three sets forth techniques for assessing social and economic impacts, including community cohesion, community facilities and services, safety, mobility, economic impacts, land use, aesthetics, relocation and civil rights. Part Four includes Appendices that provide tools and information for various assessment activities.
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