ACCESS PERMIT STAKEHOLDER REVIEW GROUP FINAL RECOMMENDATION REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Making it easier for business to do business in Maryland means ensuring permitting processes are timely, consistent, predictable and transparent. Businesses of all sizes frequently interface with government on a variety of complex issues, including approval of permits and regulatory compliance. Although these processes are critical to ensure the safety and sustainability of our State, we must also foster a favorable climate for economic development. That is why the Governor tasked the Department of Business and Economic Development (DBED) and the Department of Transportation (MDOT) to convene a group of expert stakeholders to streamline the State Highway Access Permit process, a critical step for most major commercial developments. While this report is the result of a focused and targeted effort to improve a specific process, it also serves as a model to streamline and improve other processes throughout State government.

The State Highway Administration (SHA) issues Access Permits to commercial developers that need to provide access from development projects to a State Highway. The purpose of Access Permits is to ensure that the developments maintain the safety and capacity of the highway system. Over time, changes in federal, state, and local regulations have added complexities to the process, though a comprehensive evaluation of the process has not been conducted for many years. As a result, an increasing level of concern has been expressed by the development community that the SHA access permitting process has become too long and cumbersome. Developers often do not know how long the access permitting process will take, where they stand in the process and what improvements they will ultimately be required to make. The recommendations contained in this report aim to improve the timeliness, transparency, consistency and predictability of the access permitting process.

The Access Permit Stakeholder Review Group was chaired by Christian Johansson, Secretary of DBED, with support from Beverley Swaim-Staley, Secretary of MDOT. The membership of the review group consisted of a broad spectrum of individuals from both the private and public sectors who have experience with the Access Permit process. The group was divided into three workgroups focused on Customer Service, Coordination with Local Governments/Other State Agencies, and the Permit/Traffic Impact Study (TIS) Review Process.

There are 14 recommendations in this report to improve the timeliness, predictability, consistency, and transparency of the Access Permit process. Recommendations include:
  – **Expand database tracking**
  – **Establish efficient communications**
  – **Triage approach and use checklists**
  – **Create flow chart model**
  – **Develop Web-based reporting**
  – **Designate single point of contact**
  – **Distribute better information**
  – **Utilize customer satisfaction surveys**

A chart summarizing the recommendations follows.

Some recommendations are currently being implemented, while others will be fully implemented over the next 24 months, as we work to modernize and streamline outdated processes and procedures. The Stakeholder Review Group has agreed to continue to participate, evaluate, provide feedback, and assist SHA throughout the implementation process. DBED and SHA will continue to use this group as a valuable resource throughout the implementation process, and to provide input for the continued areas of improvement. Quarterly updates on the progress made in implementing each of these recommendations will be provided on SHA's website.

Recommendations	description	Benefits
Improved use of technology & automation		
	Develop a comprehensive data base system to track & report progress on submissions	• Timeliness • Transparency
	Web based status reporting	• Transparency • Predictability
	Development of electronic permitting system	• Timeliness • Transparency
Improved communications/customer service		
	Submission Review "triage" process	• Timeliness • Predictability • Consistency
	Improved County Coordination	• Timeliness • Transparency • Predictability
	Improved developer coordination – standing developer project scoping/technical review meetings	• Timeliness • Predictability • Consistency
	Facilitation with other State/federal agencies	• Timeliness
	Education & training	• Timeliness • Transparency • Predictability • Consistency
	Customer service performance measurement	• Transparency
	Single Point of contact for applications	• Predictability
Improved Process Efficiency		
	Flow chart development	• Timeliness • Transparency • Predictability • Consistency
	"How-to" manuals	• Timeliness • Transparency • Predictability • Consistency
	Permit related checklists	• Timeliness • Transparency • Predictability • Consistency
	Formalized discussions	• Timeliness • Predictability

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The State Highway Administration's (SHA) access permit process has evolved over the last 50+ years to address development coordination with counties and local municipalities covering a range of key elements associated with the growth of Maryland's built community. Considerations include traffic impacts, access type and location, roadway improvement plan reviews, stormwater management, right of way dedication, and other related factors that warrant review in connection with proposed new or modified access points along a state highway. While some changes have occurred over time, there has not been a comprehensive evaluation of the process for many years.

As a result of input from several stakeholders involved in SHA's access permit process at present, a Governor appointed Access Permit Stakeholder Group was convened to evaluate the current process and identify opportunities to improve timeliness, predictability, consistency, and transparency. The Stakeholder Review Group was chaired by Christian Johansson, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Business and Economic Development, in partnership with Beverley Swaim-Staley, Secretary of the Maryland Department of Transportation, and included a broad spectrum of public and private interests.

Members of the Stakeholder Group included:
- Secretary Johansson (DBED) - Chair
- Ed Adams – Director, Baltimore County Department of Public Works
- Greg Africa – Deputy Director, Anne Arundel County Bureau of Highways
- Douglas Austin – President and CEO, Urban Policy Development, LLC
- Tom Ballentine - Vice President of Policy, National Association of Industrial & Office Properties
- Ramon Benitez – Senior Project Manager, RB Estates, LLC
- Gregory Bowen - Director, Calvert County Department of Planning and Zoning
- Glenn Cook - Vice President, The Traffic Group
- Stuart Foard - Land Development Team, Merritt Properties
- Kathleen Maloney - Principal, Maloney and Associates, representing of the Home Builders Association of Maryland
- Ken Miller (representing Elliot Schlanger)– Maryland Department of Information Technology (DOIT)
- Kim Morgan - Vice President of Land Development, The Tech Group, Inc.
- Ken Pensyl - Program Manager, Sediment, Stormwater and Dam Safety, Maryland Department of the Environment
- Torrence Pierce - Vice President, Frederick Ward & Associates
- Tom Pilon - Vice President/Development, St. John Properties, Inc.
- Fern Piret - Director, Department of Planning, Prince George's County
- John Reardon - Chief Operating Officer, Facchina Development, LLC
- Cole Schnorf - Senior Vice President and Director of Development, Manekin, LLC
- Andy Scott - Special Assistant to the Secretary, Maryland Department of Transportation
- Nancy Slepicka - Principal, O'Malley, Miles, Nylen & Gilmore

- Duncan Slidell (representing Tom Bozzuto) – Vice President & Director of Operations, Bozzuto Development Company
- Larry Twele - Director, Department of Economic Development, Carroll County

The following representatives from the Maryland State Highway Administration also participated in the Stakeholder Review meetings:
- Norie Calvert – Deputy Director, SHA Office of Highway Development
- Steve Foster – Division Chief, SHA Engineering Access Permits Division
- Barb Solberg – Assistant Division Chief, SHA Engineering Access Permits Division

Prior to the initiation of stakeholder meetings, SHA had already begun implementing some interim steps to address customer service and timeliness issues that had been raised. Below are some steps that are being undertaken in addition to the stakeholder recommendations presented herein.

1. Internal SHA Directives were issued to all EAPD staff from Kirk McClelland, Director of the Office of Highway Development, and to all SHA Senior Managers from Gregory Welker and Doug Simmons, SHA Deputy Administrators, reinforcing the 21-day turnaround time for all permit related review submissions and permit issuance.

2. SHA is now leading the coordination efforts with the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Commission (CAC) on projects within the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area that require an Access Permit. This ensures that the CAC is made aware of all projects requiring CAC approval at the earliest possible stage, allows SHA to incorporate CAC comments with SHA comments on submission packages, and avoids costly delays resulting from CAC coordination occurring too late in the process or being overlooked entirely.

3. SHA has begun efforts to evaluate and revise the existing Traffic Impact Study (TIS) guidelines from 1994, and update individual county specific TIS manuals from 1997. These updated guidelines are being developed using SHA staff along with traffic engineering consultants who are volunteering substantial time to this effort at no cost to state.

4. SHA will continue to consult with the Stakeholder Group and development community to look into possible Access Permit Fee Adjustments that would be necessary to make changes to enhance customer service and provide expedited delivery of Access Permit submissions.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Improved Use of Technology and Automation
- Database Management
  A comprehensive database system should be developed to track and report on the progress of a permit submission, track review times for each office responsible for providing review comments and/or approvals, and to identify specific problem areas where delays are frequently occurring so that systemic corrective actions can be taken. A new system would provide real time compliance with customer service delivery goals, and would allow proactive intervention by SHA management to easily identify delays, and proactively address issues that the system identifies as consistent or recurring problem areas.
- Web Based Status Reporting
  A real time web-based reporting system should be developed that will allow permit applicants to track the status of permit submissions and anticipated completion dates over the internet.
- Electronic Permitting System
  An electronic permitting system should be evaluated and recommendations made for implementing a system that will allow all permit data submissions, payment of fees, and final permits to be completed electronically.

Improved Communication/Customer Service
- Application Review Process
  A pre-review "triage" process should be implemented for project submissions, to review and identify deficiencies in the traffic impact study, engineering plans, and/or permit application submissions. This process should also include discussions and meetings, if necessary, with the applicant team. The goal would be to clarify requirements, coordinate when and/or if the submission package will proceed, and identify if additional information is necessary to complete a comprehensive review.
- Improved County Coordination
  Regularly scheduled coordination meetings should be held with each County (quarterly, bi-annually, annually etc.) as needed, to discuss status of permit submissions, any outstanding issues, and schedules along with a discussion of process issues. The agenda should be set up in advance to ensure that the necessary staff from both SHA and the County is in attendance to be able to resolve most issues at this level. The use of web/video conferencing should be investigated and encouraged so that the meetings are more readily accessible, travel expenses are minimized, and to ensure the most efficient use of resources for all involved.

- Improved Developer Coordination
  Standing Developer Project Scoping/Technical Review meetings should be held. The purpose of the meetings would be to discuss issues such as project scoping or to discuss/resolve technical issues early in the permitting process. The Stakeholder Group identified this item as a potential best practice. The use of web/video conferencing should be investigated and encouraged so that the meetings are more readily accessible, travel expenses are minimized, and to ensure the most efficient use of resources for all involved.
- Facilitation with Other State/Federal Agencies
  An issues resolution process should be developed to resolve delays in permit issuance that result from required state or federal agency approvals outside of MDOT. SHA executives should take the lead in coordinating and resolving issues with executives of other State/Federal Agencies.
- Education and Training
  Comprehensive education and training materials should be developed to provide detailed information on SHA's Access Permit Approval Process for both external customers and internal staff.
- Customer Service Performance Measurement
  Customer service satisfaction measurements should be developed for all components of the access plan review and permit process, and the results should be made publicly available on SHA's web site.
- Single Point of Contact
  Process changes should be implemented to provide a single point of contact within SHA for all inquiries regarding a specific development and/or permit application. This single point of contact should be responsible for coordinating with and responding on behalf of all other SHA offices involved in the review process.

Improved Process Efficiency
- Flow Chart Development
  Comprehensive process flow charts and narratives should be developed for the various steps in the development review and permit process for each type of permit submission. The process should also be reviewed to identify opportunities for improved efficiency and timeliness. Flow charts should be customized for each county, as necessary, to identify how the access permit approval process ties in with the county development review and building permit approval processes. Each flow chart should have a narrative describing each step of the process and associated time frames.
- "How To" Manuals
  Comprehensive county specific "How To" manuals should be developed for internal staff and external customers that thoroughly explain the permitting process and requirements. This information should be made available on SHA's web site and regularly updated.

- Permit Submission Checklists
  Checklists should be developed to identify all elements and items that are required for an acceptable Traffic Impacts Study, pre-permit engineering submission, and final permit submission. These checklists should be made available on SHA's web site and regularly updated.
- Formalized Discussions
  Discussions should take place between SHA and the permit applicant prior to the Traffic Impact Study (TIS) submittal and at the earliest stages of the pre-permit engineering review process prior to written comments being provided on a submission to ensure that there is a mutual understanding and concurrence of the changes being requested. The owner/developer should receive a copy of the final written comments at appropriate milestones.
- Priority Project Process
  An expedited delivery system to accelerate review and processing of Access Permits on high priority projects (either identified by the state or potentially the local jurisdiction) should be evaluated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The panel was divided into three sub-teams (Customer Service, Permit/TIS Review Process, and Coordination with Local Governments/Other State Agencies) which met independently to develop recommendations for each of the respective study areas. Each sub-team was assigned a chair and had SHA staff representation. The discussions and recommendations for each sub-team were then presented and discussed at the larger Stakeholder Review Meetings, which met four times between May and early September.

Below is a list of the draft recommendations made by the group.

IMPROVED USE OF TECHNOLOGY AND AUTOMATION

Database Management

Findings:

SHA's current database tracks information only for final issuance of a permit and provides limited reporting of project submittals. There is currently no tracking for TIS reviews or pre-permit applications and submissions. Because a majority of the coordination efforts occur prior to the final permit submission, having this information available to both the SHA staff and the permit applicant is essential in providing enhanced customer service.

Recommendation:

Development of a comprehensive database system to allow SHA to track and report on the progress of a project and/or permit submission, track review times for each office within SHA responsible for providing review comments and/or approvals, and to identify specific problem areas where delays are frequently occurring so that systemic corrective action can be taken. The new system will provide real time compliance with customer service delivery goals, and will allow proactive intervention by SHA management to easily identify delays, and proactively address issues that the system identifies as consistent or recurring problem areas.

Strategy:

Identified enhancements that need to be made to SHA's existing database system to provide the necessary tracking and reporting information identified by the Stakeholder Review Group. The Stakeholders identified the need to track performance based measurements for review response times on all submissions by internal and external reviewers to ensure accountability to meet required time frames. These performance measurements should be tied directly to StateStat or business plan goals so that individuals/offices involved in the review/approval process can be held accountable for delays.

Benefits:

Creating a system that provides a more robust tracking system for project by project reporting of progress and status of all types of permit submissions will result in improved timeliness and transparency.

Status:

Additional data fields to track TIS and pre-permit application submissions have been identified and changes are underway to SHA's current database. Once the new database system is finalized, it will go through a testing and evaluation period, which may necessitate some additional minor changes. The database will be used for reporting adherence to mandated review turn around times by all offices to SHA Senior management.

Schedule:

It is anticipated that the database enhancements will be completed by Winter 2010/2011, and that a working version of the new database system will be operational by Spring 2011. Identification and recommendations of specific measures related to Access Permit reviews and issuance that will be made a part of SHA's business Fiscal Year 2012 plan (potentially reported through StateStat) will be made by the start of the Business Plan cycle.

Web Based Status Reporting

Findings:

Currently SHA has no system to report on the progress or expected completion dates for TIS or pre-permit submissions. Development of a web based reporting system will allow SHA the ability to track this information and utilize this information to better allocate staffing and will allow SHA to make the information available and searchable on the web so that permit applicants can see the status of permit submissions and anticipated completion dates at any time without having to make inquiries to SHA staff.

Recommendation:

Development of a web based reporting system that will allow permit applicants to track the status of permit submissions and anticipated completion dates over the internet.

Strategy:

Once the database enhancements have been completed, data elements will be identified that can be exported and shared over an internet web page. The Stakeholder Review Group will be consulted regarding the specific status information that would be most beneficial to provide and the types of search features that should be included to make the system user friendly (i.e. SHA contact, anticipated response date, current review milestone). DBED has expressed a willingness to host meetings with the stakeholders to review the content and reporting features as they are being developed. SHA will also investigate inclusion of a mapping or GIS component for data reporting.

Benefits:

A web-based reporting system will improve the transparency and predictability of the process. Applicants will benefit from having the most up to date information immediately available to make decisions about their projects. Public reporting of projects and permit status along with turn around times will provide the customer with a higher level of comfort that due dates will be met.

Status:

As part of the database enhancements that are currently underway, the necessary data fields for both internal tracking and external reporting are being identified and incorporated. Once the database enhancements have been completed, SHA will begin the effort to pull the necessary fields from the database to report through a web based interface.

Schedule:

It is anticipated that a web based reporting system for Access Permits will be completed through a phased approach by Summer 2011 and fully functional by Summer 2012.

Electronic Permitting System

Findings:

The administration of SHA's Access Permit Process has changed little over the past decades and currently under-utilizes available technology. SHA needs to evaluate how technology can be better utilized and incorporated into the current process to improve timeliness by allowing electronic submissions of permit data, issuance of permits electronically, and electronic payment of permit fees and/or bonding.

Recommendation:

Development of an electronic permitting system that will allow all permit data submissions, payment of fees, and final permits to be completed electronically.

Strategy:

This will first require a complete evaluation for implementation of a new IT system. SHA will first need to complete a requirements analysis to determine the minimum functionality that would be required for the system to meet the needs of SHA and SHA's customers. SHA will work closely with DBED to incorporate the evaluation of an electronic access permitting system with their existing efforts to develop a statewide on-line business licensing and permitting system. SHA will evaluate whether commercially available software currently exists, whether there are any statewide IT systems in place that could be modified, or whether a new IT system would need to be developed. Once all options have been considered, SHA will make further recommendations for moving forward with this recommendation.

Benefits:

An electronic permitting system would address timeliness and transparency in the Access Permits process. It would improve overall efficiency, improve customer service, and benefit the environment by reducing both paper and fuel usage.

Status:

SHA is beginning the process of performing the requirements analysis.

Schedule:

It is anticipated that the requirements analysis and software evaluations would be complete with recommendations for moving forward with any system by Summer 2012. The schedule for a system will depend upon the availability of resources and funding that would need to be allocated through the departmental Consolidated Transportation Information Processing Plan (CTIP). The availability of funding and implementation time frame would be dependent on the ultimate cost of the system, the available budget based on statewide prioritization of needs, and the time required for development and implementation of the system.

IMPROVED COMMUNICATION/CUSTOMER SERVICE
Application Review Process

Findings:

Often permit submissions (especially at the earlier stages of development) are incomplete or are not of an acceptable quality for SHA to perform an adequate review. Typically SHA proceeds with the review, and the resubmissions which address SHA first set of comments, spur additional comments. This creates substantial uncertainty on the part of the permit applicant as to how many cycles of submission and comments will be necessary to achieve permit approval, and the associated time frame.

Recommendation:

Implement a pre-review "triage" process for project submissions to identify any deficiencies in the traffic impact study, engineering plans, and/or permit application submissions. This process should also include discussions and a meeting, if necessary, with the applicant team. The goal is to clarify requirements and coordinate when and/or if the submission package will proceed or what additional information is necessary in cases of an incomplete submittal package.

Strategy:

This recommendation will be implemented, but will require some structural changes within the Engineering Access Permits Division and has already been incorporated into the TIS and pre-permit review process flow charts. This will require allocation of sufficient knowledgeable and well-trained staff to be able to quickly evaluate the adequacy of the submission and identify any critical issues/omissions that would prevent the package from moving forward for immediate review. Development of guidance and checklists for all types of submittals will also need to be completed in order to ensure consistent and predictable feedback on all submissions by all staff. The timeframe for completing this initial review will be no more than 5 business days, with a goal of completing these reviews within 3 business days of submission.

Benefits:

> This recommendation will improve the timeliness and predictability of the process. The initiative is intended to eliminate misunderstandings about submission requirements, which can delay the approval of plan submittals and final approvals for permit issuance. In some cases, it may identify submissions that are not necessary. It will also identify complex project issues that will require a more significant level of review.

Status:

> This recommendation will be made a part of the normal access permit review processes as soon as the appropriate guidance and checklists have been finalized and the appropriate internal structure changes have been put in place.

Schedule:

> It is anticipated that a triage process will be implemented by Fall 2011.

Improved County Coordination

Finding:

> Currently SHA has staff from the Engineering Access Permits Division attend county development review meetings, but often this staff does not have the necessary expertise to discuss technical issues/requirements or resolve process related issues that arise

Recommendation:

> Have SHA conduct regularly scheduled meetings with each County (monthly, quarterly, etc.) as required to discuss status of permit submissions, issues, and schedules along with a discussion of process issues, with necessary staff from both SHA and the County in attendance to have the capability of resolving most issues at this level. SHA should pursue the use of web/video conferencing for these meetings to make the meetings more readily accessible, minimize travel expenses and ensure the most efficient use of resources for all involved.

Strategy:

> Have a regularly scheduled meeting with each county to discuss development plans, permitting, and/or process improvement issues. This will require having specific agenda items in advance of the meeting so that both the county and SHA would have appropriate staff available to discuss issues and identify solutions. Commitment by both county and SHA staff will have to be made to give sufficient priority to these meetings to ensure that all necessary personnel will be in attendance at these meetings.

Benefits:

> These meetings will improve coordination and communication with the counties and will provide an avenue for discussing differences in criteria, roadway needs and for resolving issues in a more timely, consistent and predictable manner.

Status:

> SHA will identify the necessary structural and staffing changes that need to occur within the Engineering Access Permits Division for the meetings, and will begin coordination with each county and the appropriate SHA staff to develop concurrence on the purpose, structure and required attendance for the meetings.

Schedule:
>It is anticipated that initial county meetings will be conducted with all 23 counties by the end of calendar year 2011.

Improved Developer Coordination

Finding:
>Often issues are not raised by the developer in the review process until after they have undergone numerous iterative cycles of submissions and comments. Once issues are raised, they are typically raised to very high levels of the organization or through elected officials for resolution, when many of the issues, especially concerning scoping issues and technical requirements, could have been and should have been resolved much more quickly at a much lower level.

Recommendation:
>Have SHA conduct standing Developer Project Scoping/Technical Review meetings. The Stakeholder Group identified this item as a Virginia DOT best practice. SHA should pursue the use of web/video conferencing for these meetings to make the meetings more readily accessible, minimize travel expenses and ensure the most efficient use of resources for all involved.

Strategy:
>SHA will schedule regular meetings whereby permit applicants can request to be placed on the agenda to discuss issues such as project scoping or to discuss/resolve technical issues early in the permitting process. By having a standing meeting, this will ensure that required staff can attend or send representatives who have the technical expertise and authority to provide direction and resolve issues. This will require the commitment by SHA to ensure that all necessary SHA staff are in attendance at these meetings so that most issues can be resolved without escalation.

Benefits:
>Developer Project Scoping/Technical Review meetings will provide enhanced communication and discussion of technical issues for direction to developer teams. This discussion is expected to reduce the number of submittals to arrive at an acceptable design and will provide an important avenue for resolving issues in a more timely, consistent and predictable manner.

Status:
>SHA will identify the necessary structural and staffing changes that need to occur within the Engineering Access Permits Division, and develop guidelines on the purpose and structure of the meetings. SHA will also conduct outreach to the development community to advertise the availability of these meetings and invite participation in these meetings.

Schedule:
>An initial pilot developer review meeting will scheduled before the end of calendar year 2010. Based upon the pilot meeting, SHA will determine the appropriate structure and format to set up regularly scheduled meetings starting in Spring 2011.

Facilitation with Other State/Federal Agencies

Findings:

In some cases, SHA approval of an access permit is dependent on approval from other State/Federal Agencies (i.e. Maryland Historic Trust, Federal Highway Administration). SHA is often cited as the reason for delays in permit issuance or review comments/approvals even if the reason is based on required input or approvals from these outside agencies.

Recommendation:

Develop issue resolution process when delays in permit issuance result from required state or federal agency approvals outside of MDOT.

Strategy:

Provide a process for SHA executives to take the lead in coordinating with executives of other State/Federal Agencies. The process would facilitate resolution of issues when delays in project review and/or permit issuance result from outside of MDOT. This would be a standing agenda item on SHA's weekly Development Review meeting with the SHA Administrator.

Benefits:

This process will improve customer service by allowing SHA to identify issues with other state agencies at high levels within the organizations and will facilitate timely approval of permits by all state agencies, and improve timeliness.

Status:

The weekly Development Review meeting with the SHA Administrator is already in place and will be used to identify and prioritize issues that involve state agencies outside of the Maryland Department of Transportation. No additional steps are necessary to implement.

Schedule:

This recommendation has been immediately implemented within SHA.

Education and Training

Findings:

SHA lacks any regular training on the requirements and process of the Access Permit Approval process. The availability of training would provide permit applicants with sufficient information to avoid many recurring and costly mistakes and provide a uniform documented approach for everyone to follow.

Recommendation:

Develop Education and Training on SHA's Access Permit Approval Process for both external customers and internal staff.

Strategy:

Once SHA has completed updating the process flow charts, Access Permits Manual and How To Guides for each county, SHA will develop training and education materials for both developers, consultants and internal staff. Ideally, the training for developers and consultants would be available on-line to minimize cost and make it convenient for the customer to access the training materials. SHA would also look for opportunities to provide additional training or workshops and conferences or events targeted at permitting of development projects in the state. Topics identified by the stakeholder group to be considered are:

1. Introduction to SHA.
2. Cover what an Access Permit is and why one is needed/important?
3. Provide examples by walking a typical (hypothetical) application through the process.
4. Identify each department involved in the Access Permit Approval Process and explain its role as a reviewer or decision maker.
5. Consider making this seminar required for consultants, and optional for anyone else.
6. Include Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.
7. Provide a checklist for engineers and stakeholders to use as a reference

Benefits:

Providing education and training will improve the timeliness, transparency, consistency and predictability of the Access Permit Application process. Applicants will benefit from gaining knowledge of the process and the various responsibilities within SHA's organizational structure. In addition, the training will more clearly define expectations for each type of submission so that far fewer incomplete or unacceptable packages will be submitted.

Status:

Work is currently underway at SHA and through the Stakeholder Review Group to update the permitting process flow charts, Access Permits Manual and County "How To" guides. Once this information is updated, training will be developed based on these materials.

Schedule:

SHA will continually identify opportunities for additional training, workshops, conferences or events related to the engineering plan review and permitting process.

Customer Service Performance Measurement

Finding:

The only SHA performance measure on issuance of Access Permits is related to the time from final permit submission to permit issuance, and this measure is not currently publicly available. No data regarding TIS or pre-permit submission reviews is collected. Therefore, there is no real accountability to everyone involved in the review and approval process.

Recommendation:

Develop customer service satisfaction measurements for all components of the Access Permit Process, and make the results of this information publicly available on SHA's web site.

Strategy:

Identify appropriate customer service satisfaction measurements to assess, over time, whether changes currently being implemented as a result of the Stakeholder Review Group recommendations are adequately addressing customer needs and expectations, and to identify any areas where the overall process needs continued improvement. This will be done through a quick survey at the beginning and end of each permit application process and should be integrated as part of the permitting process to encourage the largest possible response rate. The customer service satisfaction measurements will be tied directly to performance based output measurements. This customer service survey should ultimately be incorporated as part of any electronic permitting system adopted.

Benefits:

Developing customer service satisfaction measurements will improve overall customer service by providing SHA with timely feedback so that SHA can identify and make ongoing adjustments to the access permits process. This will improve transparency in SHA's process by collecting and publishing specific customer feedback.

Status:

SHA is in the process of developing short customer service feedback forms for each permitting process.

Schedule:

An initial benchmark survey will be sent out before the end of calendar year 2010. It is anticipated that SHA will begin administering regular customer feedback surveys with each phase of a project by Summer 2011.

Single Point of Contact

Findings:

SHA's current process requires that developers and/or their engineers coordinate with multiple staff in different offices as part of the review process.

Recommendations:

Process changes should be implemented to provide a single point of contact within SHA for all external inquiries regarding a specific project. This single point of contact should be responsible for coordinating with and responding on behalf of all other SHA offices involved in the review process. In addition, SHA will identify a single point of contact within each office to be responsible for coordinating all development related submissions within their respective areas.

Strategy:

The current organization and process will be evaluated as part of the Flow Chart updates to identify all areas where multiple offices are involved in the review and approval, and changes will be implemented to ensure that all information flows through and back to the single point of contact.

14

Benefits:

A single point of contact for all permit coordination will improve customer service by providing better consistency and predictability in the process. Having a single point of contact within each office responsible for coordinating all development related submissions will ensure that these submissions are given immediate attention by all staff to ensure meeting established review time frames and ensuring consistency and predictability within each office's review process.

Status:

The Access Permits Process Flow Charts are currently being modified, and potential changes to EAPD's current organizational structure are being evaluated to ensure that each Access Permit Submission is provided with a single point of contact for all submissions, coordination, comments and inquiries.

Schedule:

SHA will immediately identify as the single point of contact, the current Engineering Access Permits Division staff member assigned to each project submission. These staff will immediately be responsible for coordinating with all other SHA review offices.

IMPROVED PROCESS EFFICIENCY
Flow Chart Development

Findings:

SHA has no comprehensive flow chart to document the complete Access Permitting Process, the flow charts SHA currently has for the TIS review process, the pre-permitting process, and the permit issuance process are not linked together and were in need of review and updating. In addition, none of the flow chart information is currently available on SHA web site.

Recommendations:

Development of comprehensive process flow charts and narratives for the various steps in the development review and permit process and for different types of permit submissions. These charts are to be reviewed and improvements identified to improve efficiency and timeliness. These flow charts should be customized for each county, as necessary, to identify how the access permit approval process ties in with the county development review and building permit approval processes. Each flow chart should have a narrative describing each step of the process and associated time frames. The process should provide for a single point of contact at SHA for all information related to an access permit (currently contact is made to personnel in many different offices depending on the review and the information being requested). This information should be made available on SHA's web site and regularly updated. Part of the revised process will include sign-off by both the developer and SHA on the final permit.

Strategy**:**

Develop a typical flow chart for elements of the access permit process to provide guidance for customers and SHA staff involved in the review of development projects. The individual county flow charts will be modified to provide guidance where the county process requires adjustments to the typical process. SHA will identify a team of SHA staff with representation from the stakeholder review group to provide narratives of the various steps in the process and will publish this information on the SHA web site once completed and accepted. Additional education and direction to SHA staff will be necessary to implement the specific process changes recommended by the team.

Benefits:

Documentation and re-engineering of the current processes will improve timeliness, transparency, consistency, and predictability. This information will be a primary component of the education and training initiatives as well.

Status:

The SHA, along with members of the stakeholder review team have already developed typical flow charts for the existing process for 3 types of typical permit submissions. The flow charts have included recommendations for changes in the process to improve efficiency and timeliness. Narratives for specific portions of the flow charts are currently under development.

Schedule:

It is anticipated that SHA will implement and publish the new typical state-wide flow charts documenting the access permitting processes by the end of calendar year 2010. These flow charts will be provided to each county for review and the counties will be asked to provide any necessary changes to make the flow charts compatible with the county development approval processes and time frames. With county comments, flow charts for all 23 counties should be available by Summer 2011.

"How To" Manuals

Findings:

SHA currently has no documentation available to the development community defining and describing the permit approval process.

Recommendations:

Develop comprehensive "How To" manuals for each county to thoroughly explain the permitting process and requirements. This information should be made available on SHA's web site and regularly updated.

Strategy**:**

Review the existing "How To" manuals which document the access permit process for each county, developed for SHA staff, and make necessary revisions to provide guidance from the applicant's perspective. Develop a general "How To" manual for the typical SHA process, and make all publications available on SHA's web site.

Benefits:

Development and publishing of county "How To" manuals will improve timeliness, transparency, consistency, and predictability. This information will be a primary component of the education and training initiatives as well.

Status:

SHA is currently finalizing development of "How To" manuals for Districts 3, 4 and 5. Previously completed manuals for all other counties will be reviewed for necessary revisions.

Schedule:

It is anticipated that SHA completion of an internal "How To" manual will be completed by Summer 2011. This "How To" manual will be modified to document the process from the customer perspective and made available by the end of calendar year 2011.

Permit Related Submission Checklists

Findings:

Currently, SHA has no checklists outlining the information required for each type of permit related submission.

Recommendations:

Develop Submission Checklists of all items that should be included in an acceptable Traffic Impacts Study, pre-permit submission, and/or final permit submission. These checklists will be made available on SHA's web site and regularly updated.

Strategy:

Develop checklists for use by stakeholders to identify required information for submittals to be considered complete, acceptable and consistent with SHA policies, practices, and standards each portion of the process. Checklists will be developed based upon the final version of the flow charts for each process.

Benefits:

Development and publishing of permit submission checklists will improve timeliness, transparency, consistency, and predictability. This information will be a primary component of the education and training initiatives as well.

Status:

SHA is in the process of developing checklists as an integral component of the database development efforts.

Schedule:

It is anticipated that development of the checklist would be completed by Winter 2010/2011, and posted on the SHA website by Spring 2011.

Formalized Discussions

Finding:

Currently most formal communication between SHA staff and the developer/engineer (developer's engineering consultant) occurs through written comments on submission, without any opportunity for discussion of the comments with the developer/engineer.

Recommendation:

Improve communication at the earliest stages before the traffic impact study submittal and in pre-permit engineering review process by ensuring discussions take place with engineer prior to written comments being provided on submission. Ensure final written comments at appropriate milestones with a copy to the owner/developer.

Strategy:

Establish a Technical Review team with internal and external stakeholders to update SHA's Traffic Impact Study Guideline Policy along with individual county guideline manuals. Conduct traffic impact study scoping meetings and pre-permit scoping meetings to establish requirements and to enhance communication, reduce repeat submittals and provide opportunities for effectiveness, timeliness, and use of resources.

Benefits:

Incorporating a specific requirement for discussions prior to written comments will improve timeliness and predictability by providing an opportunity for developer's engineer and SHA to come to an agreement and understanding of the comments prior to SHA issuing them in writing. Including the developer/owner on all final comments will improve transparency in the process by ensuring that they are aware of all possible difficulties and provide them an opportunity to raise issues before the process proceeds too far to make corrections easily.

Status:

This effort will be implemented in conjunction with other process changes identified in the newly developed process flow charts.

Schedule:

This effort has already started on a project by project basis and will continue as new submissions are made.

Priority Project Process

Findings:

SHA currently has no process to expedite review of permits for high priority projects.

Recommendation:

SHA will develop an expedited permitting review process in accordance with the proposed state-wide executive order for expediting permitting and approvals on high priority projects. SHA will also evaluate potential opportunities for implementing an internal expedited review process for other priority projects (either identified by the state or local jurisdiction).

Strategy:

Assess the permit review and issuance processes to identify where, given sufficient resources, SHA could accelerate the permit delivery and give precedence to projects that are of a high priority. Identify what requirements a project would need to meet in order to qualify as a priority project and develop a separate streamlined permitting process with expedited time frames. Identify what additional resources would be required to provide expedited delivery.

Benefits:

Having a more streamlined process to ensure expedited delivery of high priority projects would provide improved customer service on these projects and allow high priority projects to move forward more quickly.

Status:

SHA is currently updating the current flow charts for TIS, Pre-Permit Review (for Type 1 and 2 Projects) and Final Permit Issuance, and assigning time frames for completion of each step in the process. Once these charts are complete, SHA will assess where, with sufficient dedicated resources, SHA could accelerate those time frames to provide a faster turn around time.

Schedule:

SHA will complete an assessment and make recommendations concerning an expedited review process in accordance with the prescribed time frames stipulated in the Governors Executive Order for Priority Projects (when issued) or will evaluate a separate SHA process and provide recommendations by the end of calendar year 2011.

Resource and Cost Implications

Local governments remain concerned about the cost implications of the recommendations given constrained local and State resources for transportation needs. When SHA more fully identifies the costs associated with implementation of the recommendations in this report, it should evaluate opportunities and potential mechanisms to offset these costs, such as reallocation of existing resources, adjustments to existing permit fees and exploration of public private partnerships.

Reallocation of existing staff and resources should be the first option evaluated in implementation of these recommendations. Additional staffing needs should be met, to the extent that positions are available, with existing positions within SHA. Additional staffing may continue to be supplemented using consultant resources.

Any future adjustments to fee structure should be governed by the following principles:
- Consultation with stakeholder groups is necessary – including the development community and local governments.
- Adjustments should be tied to improved service.
- A fee structure should be considered to account for the size and type of development. For instance, SHA currently collects a flat rate fee at permit issuance to grant access to the state highway right of way at $50.00 per access point. Permit reviews for large, complex developments require significantly more resources, than smaller projects. Fees should be based upon the size and type of development.
- If an electronic permitting system is implemented, the fee structure should incentivize electronic filings to further promote efficiency of the system.
- If an expedited review system is implemented, fees for projects undergoing that process should include any additional costs associated with that review.

Intergovernmental Partnerships and Public Private Partnerships should be explored. One example discussed by the group includes creating a system where developers could pay into a fund to finance the costs of IT systems, and allow those payments to be credited against future fee requirements.

The cost for development of IT systems should be justified with measurable estimates in improved efficiencies, customer service, timeliness and accountability in an open and transparent manner. Any IT system developed should support data sharing between the state and local governments using open, interoperable and standard protocols, and made available for local governments who do not have the resources to independently develop IT systems to meet their needs.

Conclusion

As many of these recommendations will take time over the next year or more to fully implement, the Stakeholder Review Group has agreed to continue to participate, evaluate, provide feedback, and assist SHA throughout the implementation process. The SHA will continue to use this group as a valuable resource throughout the implementation process, and to provide input for continued areas of improvement. Quarterly updates on the progress made in implementing each of these recommendations will be provided on SHA's web site.

Implementation Schedule Gantt Chart

HIGHWAY ACCESS PERMIT STAKEHOLDER RECOMMEDNATION

ID	Task Name
1	**ACCESS PERMIT STAKEHOLDER RECOMMENDATIONS**
2	ESTABLISH ACCESS PERMIT STAKEHOLDER TASK FORCE
3	COMMITTEES MEET TO IDENITFY & DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS
4	FINAL RECOMMENDATION REPORT SENT TO GOVERNOR
5	**IMPROVED USE OF TECHNOLOGY**
6	DATABASE MANAGEMENT
7	WEB BASED REPORTING SYSTEM
8	ELECTRONIC PERMIT SYSTEM
9	**IMPROVED COMMUNICATION/CUSTOMER SERVICE**
10	APPLICATION REVIEW TRIAGE PROCESS
11	IMPROVE COUNTY COORDINATION MEETINGS
12	IMPROVE DEVELOPER COORDINATION
13	FACILITATION WITH OTHER STATE AND FEDERAL AGENCIES
14	EDUCATION AND TRAINING
15	CUSTOMER SERVICE PERFORMANCE MEASURES
16	SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT
17	**IMPROVED PROCESS EFFICIENCY**
18	FLOW CHART DEVELOPMENT PROCESS
19	ADJUST FLOW CHARTS FOR COUNTY PROCESS
20	HOW TO MANUALS
21	CUSTOMER HOW TO MANUALS
22	TRAFFIC IMPACT STUDY GUIDELINES
23	PERMIT SUBMISSION CHECKLISTS
24	FORMALIZED DISCUSSIONS
25	PRIORITY PROJECT PROCESS
26	

Page 1