This guidance is intended for Department of Transportation staff and consultants and describes the purpose and processes of the Interagency Coordination Meeting (ICM).

**Background:**

It has been widely recognized that the acquisition of environmental permits can adversely affect project delivery. The Department of Transportation (DOT), Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) hold monthly screening meetings together on individual projects early in the design process. These meetings offer the opportunity to evaluate environmental concerns, provide a recurring forum for engineers to resolve environmentally related issues, promote better and more continuous communication between the agencies, and document the discussions and decisions made.

**What is the Interagency Coordination Meeting?**

Interagency meetings are generally held on the third Thursday of each month. The meeting is a project-oriented dialogue between DOT engineering/environmental staff and regulatory agency staff.  It is an open forum which gives engineers the opportunity to discuss projects early in the design phase, specifically those projects with permitting/environmental issues, alternative-impact tradeoffs, or those with unique challenges, and gives the regulatory agencies early introduction to the projects that will ultimately require permits.  Discussions at these meetings often balance environmental constraints, site constraints, engineering design, and project delivery issues covering a wide variety of topics that may affect projects (mitigation, safety, schedule, best management practices, constructability, Maintenance & Protection of Traffic, construction cost, “permitability”, local concerns, etc.). The intent is to have a full and complete vetting of all issues, based on available information, in an attempt to deliver the transportation capital improvement program while making the best environmental recommendations and then documenting the decisions.

**Who is at the meeting?**

Interagency meetings are attended by staff from the various regulating agencies: DEEP, USACE, EPA), and sometimes others, as well as DOT staff from Engineering, the Office of Environmental Planning (OEP), Engineering Project Coordination (EPC). Hydraulics & Drainage (H&D), and Office of Construction (OOC).

**When should you go to a meeting?**

Generally, every project requiring environmental permits should be presented at an Interagency Meeting. Projects may need to be presented more than once through design development depending on the complexity of the environmental impacts and/or direction given at a prior meeting. A project may be identified during the PNDF process, the 30% design review, monthly solicitations to project managers, or by recommendation of OEP/EPC.

Presentations to Interagency Meetings may be made at various stages in the design phase but are generally made at either of two different points of a design:

1. Conceptual/Preliminary Design stage:
	* to help decide between alternatives and discuss associated consequences;
* ask a specific question;
* discuss best management practices/potential mitigation requirements that should be incorporated into a project;
	+ to discuss expected permits/authorizations and establish a preliminary time frame for obtaining permits.
1. Just after preliminary design/prior to semi-final/permit preparation/submission:
* to verify the permits or authorizations that will be required;
	+ to make sure that everyone is on the same page and to familiarize regulators with projects that they will soon see as permits;
	+ for guidance on what additional information should be included in permit applications; and
	+ to hopefully shorten permit review iterations/timeframes.

The two groupings above contain a sampling of reasons a project may be on the agenda and is not intended to be all inclusive.

**Getting on the Agenda**

A ‘call-for-projects’ email is sent out by OEP to the Project Managers (PM) about 4 weeks before the ICM with information regarding the upcoming schedule. A prompt response for projects planning to attend is appreciated. In addition, if a project is anticipated to attend at a future ICM, informing OEP in advance is very helpful with planning.

For projects planning to attend the current month’s ICM, a brief project description and a draft PowerPoint is to be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting. Final PowerPoints are required 1 week before the ICM. (See additional info below regarding the PowerPoint). The final agenda and PowerPoints are shared with the regulating agencies 1 week prior to the ICM. This allows for DEEP, USACE, and EPA staff to become familiar with the project related issues and be more able to make decisions at the Meeting.

Each project on the agenda will be given a time slot, based on complexity of the project for presentation and discussion that will typically be 20-30 minutes.

**What to bring to the meeting/PowerPoint Presentation**

Because all the different regulatory agencies are represented, it is important that Interagency Meetings are productive and allow complete and lasting decisions to be made.  Therefore, it is imperative that Project Engineers come prepared for the meeting.  The Project Manager/Engineer is responsible for the presentation at these meetings. Please be sure to bring proper staff representation that would be able to answer expected technical questions (ie: hydraulics/drainage engineers, structural engineers, environmental scientist if your consultant did the identification/reports). Sometimes city/municipal officials or staff to attend and speak regarding the municipal factors and/or drivers for the project. (If a municipal official is present, it is requested that the Project Manager introduce them at the start of the meeting.)

A concise yet comprehensive PowerPoint presentation is highly recommended. It should summarize all pertinent project information, and present photos and resource maps. Generally, meetings are held virtually via a Microsoft Teams Link. If face-face meetings are held, they will likely be in a smart room so that Department drives/networks, USB ports, ProjectWise, and Google Earth can be accessed.  It has been found to be good practice to have the ability to toggle between your PowerPoint presentation, Google Maps, hydraulic modelling data, and Design Plan pdfs – to be able to move around quickly and zoom in for questions.

The information presented by engineers at the ICM should be complete, with the goal of enabling final decisions to generally be made at the meeting. A checklist-style document and a Guide for PowerPoints are available for assistance when preparing for the ICM and to help engineers be concise, complete, and consistent. These can be found in the CTDOT Bureau of Policy and Planning – Office of Environmental Planning’s webpage under the Environmental Permitting Unit. [Office of Environmental Planning (ct.gov)](https://portal.ct.gov/DOT/PP_Bureau/Documents/Office-of-Environmental-Planning) Examples of past presentations can also be made available. Please also ensure that maps and plans within the presentation are readable. Certainly, the information in the presentation must also be tailored to the specific project, its stage of development, location/resources, and what permits are anticipated.

Note: Please keep in mind the ICM has a regulatory/environmental audience, and therefore, should not replay the Preliminary Design or Public Informational Meeting presentation. Also keep the time allotted for the presentation in mind. Plan the slides and detail accordingly to allow for both the presentation and questions/discussion with regulatory staff afterwards.

**Pre-meeting Discussions for PowerPoint Presentations**

Upon submittal of the draft PowerPoint and in order to ensure consistency and completeness, OEP/EPC will look over the draft presentation material and will give additional guidance on the presentation, if needed. OEP/EPC will arrange a meeting to review any presentation comments. Suggestions on the presentation are based on past ICM experience and DOT familiarity with regulatory staff.

**The Municipal portion of the Interagency Meeting**

Following the regular monthly ICM mentioned above, a related municipal project meeting is also held the same day. The intent of this meeting is to provide a forum and guidance for town staff and their consultant engineers to discuss municipal projects in the **State-Local Bridge** **(SLBP)** and the **LOTCIP** programs with the regulatory agencies. At this meeting, town staff or the Town’s consultant engineer present their projects to DEEP, USACE, and EPA staff. The same meeting and presentation guidelines apply as with the regular meeting. The only representation from the CTDOT will be EPC staff. If it is determined that a Town project should follow this process, the Town (or its engineer/consultant) should coordinate with CTDOT EPC Unit to be scheduled for an Interagency Meeting. (Contact via email at DOT-EPC@ct.gov ). Additional guidance can be found in the CTDOT Bureau of Policy and Planning – Office of Environmental Planning’s webpage under the Engineering Project Coordination Unit section.

**Documentation of Decisions - After the Interagency Meeting is over**

The information presented and decisions made at the meeting will be preserved for future reference:

* Report of Meeting: A Report of Meeting (ROM) will be developed by OEP/EPC staff to document discussions/decisions made at the meeting. The ROM for the regular portion of the ICM will be made available for discussion at the following month’s ICM, revised as needed and accepted. Report of Meeting documentation for specific projects will be included in final permit applications. ROM for the municipal portion of the ICM will be developed by DOT EPC Unit and will be emailed to the regulating agencies and the Project Engineer.
* Attendance sheets: Attendance sheets will be generated for each meeting, which may become important (possibly years later) to determine who was present at your presentation when a determination was agreed to.
* Engineering Presentations: Presentations and any other information supplied/used for the meeting will also be saved.

Reports of Meetings, PowerPoint presentations, pdf plans, other supporting information, and attendance sheets are saved (organized by meeting date) by CTDOT for future reference by DOT or regulatory staff. Information is currently located in the 3.3 Environmental Resources folder within CTDOT OEP’s SharePoint page. Please contact OEP or EPC if assistance is needed in accessing the information.

Please distribute this information as appropriate for staff and others that would benefit.   If you have any further questions, please contact Amanda Saul of the OEP Environmental Permitting Unit via email at Amanda.Saul@ct.gov or the Engineering Project Coordination Unit (EPC) via email at DOT-EPC@ct.gov .