

**CHAPTER 4**  
**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**  
**PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TEAMS**

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## CHAPTER 4

### CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TEAMS

#### 1. GENERAL.

a. A project development team (PDT) is essentially the steering committee for a project, with a larger project team performing routine project development activities. The PDT employs different disciplines to develop and evaluate alternatives, make recommendations, and carry out the project work plan through subsidiary team members.

b. The original PDT concept was developed in response to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. The NEPA requires public agencies to “utilize a systematic, interdisciplinary approach which will ensure the integrated use of the natural and social sciences and the environmental design arts in planning and in decision-making which may have an impact on the environment.”

c. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) uses a formal interdisciplinary team approach for project planning and development for most major highway projects. An interdisciplinary approach is an orderly process where the interaction of different disciplines is used in the planning, development, and evaluation of alternatives. The Caltrans refers to this team as the PDT.

d. Formation and use of PDTs are generally limited to major projects that significantly increase traffic volumes, require substantial amounts of new rights-of-way, or for any reason that requires an environmental impact report. Projects such as crash barriers, signalization, and median divider protection are generally considered minor projects.

e. The PDT has overall responsibility for conducting studies that include the accumulation of economic, social, environmental, and technical data. It acts as a steering group for directing the course of studies and in making recommendations to top Caltrans District managers. Members of the PDT participate in major meetings, public hearings, and community interaction.

f. Information regarding PDTs can be found in Chapter 8 of the Project Development Procedures Manual, located at the following website:  
<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/manual-project-development-procedures-manual-pdpm>.

## 2. POLICY.

### a. California Highway Patrol—Request for Departmental Participation.

(1) The Caltrans should request the Division commander assign a representative whenever a project may have an impact on CHP enforcement or public safety. Projects may include:

- (a) Striping right or left shoulders as auxiliary lanes.
- (b) Narrowing shoulders or lanes.
- (c) Striping any section of freeway or expressway for high-occupancy vehicle operation.
- (d) Noise barriers adjacent to shoulders.
- (e) Ramp meters.
- (f) Weigh stations.
- (g) Paving a truck brake check area at the summit of a grade.

(2) Field Divisions shall promote departmental concerns (safety and security, enforcement, resource management, and motorist issues) with Caltrans Districts prior to PDT formation, and/or when requested by the Caltrans District.

## 3. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TEAM MEMBER SELECTION.

a. Team members may be full-time or part-time depending on the magnitude of the impacts or fields in which they specialize.

b. The selection of team members will depend on the scope and complexity of the proposal.

c. At a minimum, a PDT is composed of a Caltrans project manager, a representative of the regional transportation planning agency (if involved), and Caltrans representatives from district design, environmental, traffic, safety, surveys, construction, maintenance units, and the right-of-way unit. The program manager and/or program advisor should also be considered.

d. In addition to Caltrans members, members may be selected from, but not limited to, the CHP, the public, local and regional agencies, the Federal Highway

Administration, legal representatives (from the Caltrans headquarters Legal Division), ride sharing coordinators, and consultants.

4. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TEAM LEADER SELECTION.

- a. The PDT team leader is typically designated by the Caltrans Deputy District Director for program/project management.
- b. If the team leader is from another functional unit, the appropriate functional Deputy District Director will designate the team leader.
- c. The person selected as team leader will also be the project manager.
- d. Project assignments are based on project complexity and the ability, skill level, background, experience, past performance, and existing workload of the project manager.
- e. The team leader (project manager) can be from any of the functional areas.
- f. Selection is based on professional skills required to perform the planning and alternatives analysis specific to the assignments for that PDT.
- g. The team leader should have an overall understanding of the project development process; the ability to manage a team; and work effectively with communities, groups, and staff of local agencies.
- h. The Caltrans formation of the PDT, selection of the team leader, and all subsequent modifications to the team must be documented in the project file.

5. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TEAM FUNCTIONS. The importance and effectiveness provided from PDT functions are an important part of any complex sensitive solution approach to transportation project and program development.

- a. Assess available preliminary engineering and environmental data to confirm that the study should proceed. The PDT participates in the reevaluation of project manager requests for the transportation planning unit to validate previous systems planning recommendations for transportation improvements.
- b. Determine logical project limits.
- c. Determine the need for local, regional, state, or federal agency members on the PDT, or the need for citizen advisory committees.

- d. Initiate environmental and material investigations for projects that require significant disposal, staging, or borrowing.
- e. Recommend studies, timetables, alternatives, type of environmental documentation, and the feasibility of project impact mitigation measures.
- f. Ensure comprehensive analysis of the social, economic, environmental (including visual and aesthetic), and engineering aspects of the projects. The PDT calls upon representatives of various disciplines, as needed.
- g. Initiate a program of community involvement to encourage citizen and local agency participation throughout the study, including public meetings and public hearings.
- h. Ensure state and federal requirements for project development studies are met.
- i. Use information in related reports with input from the public hearing when recommending a preferred alternative to district management for project approval.
- j. Provide the design of a quality project that can be efficiently constructed and maintained within scope and budget, and on schedule.
- k. Ensure right-of-way is acquired and cleared on schedule.
- l. Provide advice during project construction on construction activities, contract changes and mitigation, and right-of-way commitments.
- m. Ensure project history is preserved by documenting project decisions and utilizing Caltrans' uniform file system.

6. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT TEAM MEETINGS.

- a. The PDT meetings should be held as necessary. Scheduled meetings assist in maintaining group dynamics and communication.
- b. More meetings are necessary during initial studies, with need decreasing during technical studies, and increasing again during completion and analysis of results prior to making specific recommendations for the draft environmental document.