

Context Sensitive Solutions Draft Implementation Plan

Background

Michigan's diverse and vibrant communities, beautiful landscape and abundant recreational opportunities deserve transportation solutions that function efficiently but also address the needs of local stakeholders. Toward this end, the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) will pursue a proactive, consistent and Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process in keeping with its mission to provide the highest quality transportation services for economic benefit and improved quality of life. A successful CSS program will require mutual commitment on the part of both transportation agencies and stakeholders to plan, develop, construct, operate and maintain infrastructure in accordance with CSS principles.

These recommendations have been drafted using stakeholder input gathered by the MDOT CSS Team over the past seven months. Over fifty stakeholder organizations provided input to the team.

Recommendations

The department will incorporate CSS into transportation projects wherever feasible. The department will develop or revise procedures and guidelines to expand CSS for transportation projects including:

1. Partnering

Create a Stakeholder/MDOT Partnering Committee consisting of stakeholders and an interdisciplinary cross section of MDOT staff. The committee will provide a forum for discussions about continuous process improvement. Stakeholders should include the County Road Association of Michigan (CRAM), the Michigan Municipal League (MML), environmental groups, and groups representing non-motorized interests, road builders, business community, and all transportation operators. The committee will create an operating charter to direct its activities.

Promote partnerships with state agencies, businesses, community groups, and transportation users to better coordinate resources.

2. Public Engagement

The department will develop and distribute public engagement guidelines. The guidelines will include the methods for identifying stakeholders and maintaining communication throughout the project development process. The guidelines will establish procedures to determine when the department would consider appointment of a public advocate to work with the local community.

The department will develop strategies for project visualization to provide the non-transportation public a better understanding of project intent and impact.

3. Flexibility in Design

Use the flexibility within state and federal design standards and develop alternate state standards where appropriate, without compromising safety and mobility.

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4. Education

Develop an educational program with focus on training MDOT management and staff on CSS concepts, processes and procedures as they pertain to their daily responsibilities. MDOT will expand the educational program to consultants and local agencies that perform contract services for the department.

Work with local agencies to promote CSS on local programs and present CSS concepts at local agency organizations' annual and quarterly meetings.

Pursue opportunities to conduct joint educational training with stakeholder organizations.

Train staff on design flexibility and discuss the procedural requirements for use of design exceptions.

5. Mobility

The department, through its transportation service centers, regions, and central offices, will continue to partner with local governments, county road commissions, transit agencies, metropolitan planning organizations and state planning regions, and the private sector in planning and developing an integrated transportation infrastructure.

The department will consider the need for integrated transportation in the early project planning and development process stage for state transportation projects.

6. Corridor Approach

Encourage a corridor approach to planning, including aesthetics, multimodal, heritage routes and natural environmental features to be implemented by an interdisciplinary team working in partnership with local authorities.

7. Transition Plan

The department will develop a transition plan to incorporate CSS concepts into the current program.

The department will use the input from the CSS focus groups to develop or modify guidelines and procedures to incorporate CSS principles into its daily activities as appropriate.

8. Measurements

The department will work with stakeholders to create methods to measure the success of CSS implementation and periodically obtain stakeholder feedback on progress.