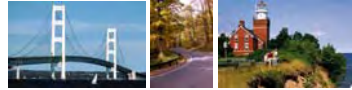


Session 5:

CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS AND THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (NEPA)



Understanding Environmental Issues

What is the environment?

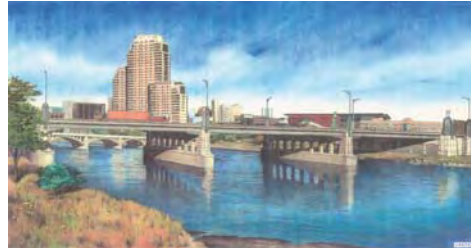
- Natural and built environments
- Social, economic, environmental
- Specific protected resources



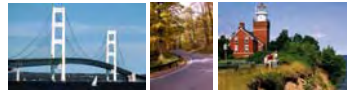


**Natural Environment
+ Cultural Environment
= Context**

The natural and cultural landscapes adjacent to the highway are the context of the transportation project.



US-131, Grand Rapids, MI



**Natural Environment
+ Cultural Environment
+ People
= Value of the Context**

What people value is critical to determining what needs to be considered as part of the transportation project.



US-131, Grand Rapids, MI

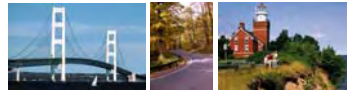


“There are many landscapes without highways. There are no highways without landscapes.”

- Lynn Lynwood, ASLA
MDOT Landscape Architect



I-94, St. Paul, MN



Understanding Environmental Issues

What is an impact?

Any change in existing conditions

- Adverse or beneficial changes
- Major or minor changes
- Widespread or localized changes
- Long-term or short-term changes

Adverse impacts require avoidance, minimization, reduction, mitigation, or compensation

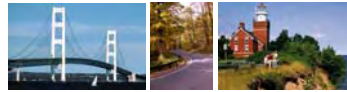




Understanding Environmental Issues

What is an alternative?

- No-build alternative
- Build alternatives
- Operational alternatives

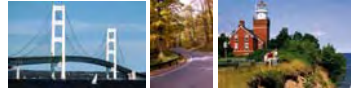


Understanding NEPA

- The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969
- Requires a review of impacts
- Requires a review of alternatives for major actions
- Applies to all federally funded projects

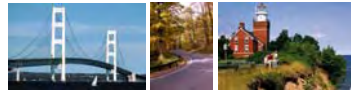


Ames Lake wetland restoration
St. Paul, MN



NEPA in MDOT

- **Categorical Exclusions (CE) - 90% of MDOT Work**
Projects not causing significant impacts
- **Environmental Assessments (EA) - 5% of MDOT Work**
Discovery process to explore impacts, which may be significant (EIS) or not significant (FONSI)
- **Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) - 5 % of MDOT Work**
Significant impacts expected from large and complex projects.



CSS and NEPA: A Common Approach

- Requires collaborative and interdisciplinary teams
- Engages stakeholders
- Addresses and minimizes conflicts
- Employs transparent decision-making processes
- Balances mobility and safety with environmental issues



River Trail, Lansing, MI



CSS and NEPA: A Common Approach

MDOT examines a wide range of environmental concerns

- Social issues
- Cultural resources
- Wetlands and floodplains
- Stream, lakes, and drains
- Coastal zones
- Protected plants and animals
- Water quality
- Air quality
- Traffic noise
- Contaminated sites
- Parks and other protected properties

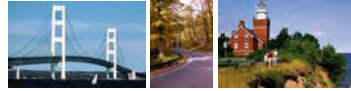


MDOT NEPA Staff

The MDOT Environmental Section has the skilled interdisciplinary team necessary to examine issues

- Historians and archaeologists
- Biologists and botanists
- Water quality specialists
- Social analysis specialists
- Noise and air quality specialists
- Contamination specialists
- Public involvement specialists

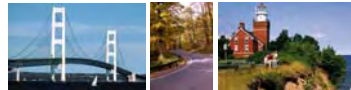




MDOT NEPA Regional Staff

The role of the Regional Environmental Coordinator

- A liaison assigned to each MDOT Region
- A communication channel to MDOT environmental specialists
- Facilitates environmental clearances



Conclusion

NEPA and CSS complement each other to plan, develop, and deliver transportation projects that benefit both communities and the natural environment.

