Session 6:

MDOT CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

This session, starting with the governor's Executive Directive on CSD, followed by the State Transportation Commission policy on CSS, and culminating in an MDOT Implementation Plan for CSS, is a set of cascading policy announcements, documented in one location to reinforce the message that every employee in MDOT should practice CSS in all its projects.

Governor's Executive Directive

No. 2003 – 25, dated Dec. 23, 2003 titled:
Context Sensitive Design for
Transportation Projects

Defines CSS as:

"A collaborative, interdisciplinary approach
involving stakeholders for the development of a
transportation facility that fits its physical setting
and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and
environmental resources, while maintaining
safety and mobility."

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A clear and direct definition of Context Sensitive Design is provided within the governor's directive:

*"*Context Sensitive Design means a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach involving stakeholders for the development of a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility".

It is the same definition of CSS adopted by the FHWA.

The phrase "collaborative, interdisciplinary approach" indicates the need for an interdisciplinary team to develop a project. "Involving shareholders" indicates the importance of public involvement, while the list of resources expresses the need to consider the project's context.

The directive's language makes clear that the state's responsibility to provide *safety and mobility* is still paramount.
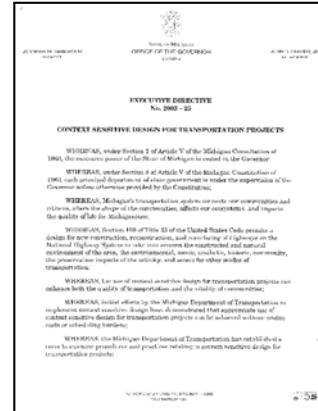
Governor's Executive Directive

Recognizes:

- Importance of transportation systems
- Section 109 of Title 23 of the US Code
- Enhancement opportunities
- Achievable without undue costs

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The Governor's Executive Directive also recognizes that the State of Michigan takes seriously the role that transportation systems play in connecting communities and citizens, altering the shape of communities, affecting ecosystems, and generally impacting the quality of life for the people of Michigan.

The Directive also understands that MDOT must continue to operate within the legal constraints of US Code, Section 109 of Title 23.

The Directive recognizes that existing programs such as Transportation Enhancements can be utilized to fulfill the promise of CSS.

It concludes that projects utilizing CSS will improve the quality of transportation and the vitality of communities, and that projects incorporating CSS must be realized without delaying implementation or raising the cost of supplying transportation services to the people of Michigan.

Governor's Executive Directive

Directs MDOT to:

- Incorporate CSS into projects
- Encourage and institutionalize CSS
- Create educational programs
- Expand tools for use with CSS
- Prepare Guiding Principles
- Invite participation by various groups to contribute in the development of policies

Merrick Street Bridge, Adrian, MI

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MDOT is required by this Executive Directive to facilitate the application of CSS through a number of methods. These include: incorporating CSS into projects when feasible; encouraging and institutionalizing CSS; creating educational programs; expanding tools necessary to successfully apply and illustrate CSS; develop policies, procedures, criteria, and guidelines for CSS; developing partnering relationships; and establishing communication strategies.

NOTE: Although the Governor's original directive uses the term *Context Sensitive Design* or *CSD*, it has, by agreement, been translated to mean *Context Sensitive Solutions* or *CSS*.

Transportation Commission Policy

Context Sensitive Solutions
Adopted May 25, 2005

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Per the requirements set forth in the Executive Directive, the State Transportation Commission established a policy for applying CSS throughout MDOT ("Context Sensitive Solutions," dated May 25, 2005). This document officially changed the name of this design approach from *Context Sensitive Design* to *Context Sensitive Solutions*.
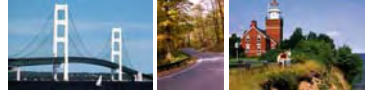
Transportation Commission Policy

- Recognizes Governor's Directive
- Pursues a CSS process consistent with MDOT mission of providing mobility and safety
- Promotes partnerships
- Early in planning considers integrated transportation options
- Uses flexibility within design standards

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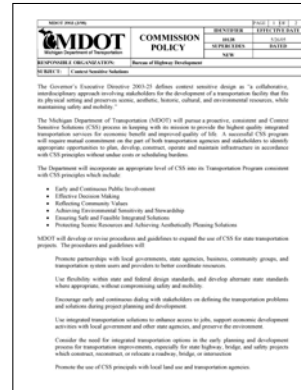
This one-page policy begins by recognizing the Executive Directive, specifically by stating the definition of CSD. It further states the position and actions to be taken by the department, as:

"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 integrated 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 identify appropriate opportunities to plan, develop, construct, operate and maintain infrastructure in accordance with CSS principles without undue costs or scheduling burdens."

Please note that there is no new money being allocated to implement CSS.

Transportation Commission Policy

Incorporates CSS into MDOT's transportation Program consistent with CSS principles:

- Early and continuous public involvement
- Effective decision making
- Reflecting community values
- Achieving environmental stewardship
- Ensuring safe and feasible integrated solutions
- Protecting scenic resources
- Achieving aesthetically pleasing solutions

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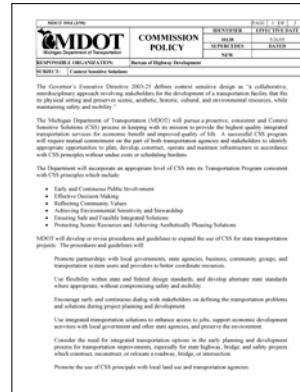
This MDOT Commission Policy recognizes the principles of CSS and directs the Bureau of Highway Development to facilitate a program that incorporates an appropriate level of CSS into its transportation program, consistent with the following principles:

1. Early and continuous public involvement
2. Effective decision making
3. Reflecting community values
4. Achieving environmental sensitivity and stewardship
5. Ensuring safe and feasible integrated solutions
6. Protecting scenic resources
7. Achieving aesthetically pleasing solutions

Implementation Plan

Draft MDOT Implementation Plan
Dated December 13, 2004, titled:

"Context Sensitive Solutions"

Recommendations drafted by the
MDOT CSS Team using input from
over 60 stakeholder organizations

Mackinac Bridge, MI

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Further definition of the CSS approach is provided within the MDOT Context Sensitive Solutions Draft Implementation Plan. This plan, dated December 13, 2004, is a work in progress. As a draft, it provides a number of recommendations. More than 60 stakeholder organizations participated in a process and provided input to the CSS Design Team in developing these recommendations.

CSS TRAINING MANUAL   June 2006
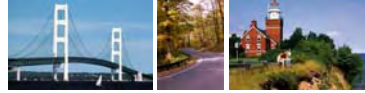
Implementation Plan

List of Recommendations:
- Partnering
- Public engagement
- Flexibility in design
- Education
- Mobility
- Corridor approach
- Transition plan
- Measurements

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Eight recommendations are identified within this Draft Implementation Plan, guiding the department to develop or revise procedures and guidelines to expand CSS for transportation projects. These recommendations include:

1. Partnering to improve interagency cooperation
2. Public engagement to ensure appropriate stakeholder involvement
3. Flexibility in design so the most appropriate solution can be selected even if it is not the standard solution
4. Education of MDOT staff and stakeholders on the principles of CSS
5. Mobility, a fundamental need of society, will be ensured
6. A corridor approach, rather than a single project, will be considered
7. A transition plan will outline how projects already in production will incorporate CSS principles
8. Measurements for determining the success of CSS will be identified

Conclusion

MDOT is committed to implementing CSS throughout its organization as required by the Governor's Executive Directive and Transportation Commission Policy.

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In conclusion, MDOT has embraced the directive from the Governor to advance the design and implementation of transportation projects utilizing the CSS process. Successful implementation of CSS requires commitment from the entire organization. The CSS policy outlined by the State Transportation Commission and the draft Implementation Plan prepared by MDOT, clearly indicates MDOT's commitment to implementing CSS.

CSS is not something that is easily adopted. It requires several deep modifications in the way Departments of Transportation have traditionally conducted their business. Incorporating CSS into MDOT will mean that MDOT must become a *learning organization*, systematically searching out the lessons it learns as it begins to apply CSS to all of its planning, design, construction, operations, and maintenance across the state and for all modes of transportation. It means that it will always, as an organization, strive to apply those lessons in an effort to improve its implementation of CSS.