



MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
Engineering Services Division
Technical Memorandum No. 06-19-TS-07
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To: Distribution 57, 612, 618, and 650

From: Acting Division Director
Engineering Services *M. Larson (Acting)*

Subject: Design Policy - "Design Excellence through Context Sensitive Design and Solutions"

Expiration

This Technical Memorandum supersedes Technical Memorandum 00-24-TS-03 and will remain in effect until October 17, 2011, or until the guidance is fully incorporated into the Mn/DOT Road Design Manual and Highway Project Development Process.

Implementation

This policy will only apply to Trunk Highways (not State Aid routes) and is effective immediately.

Introduction (A Tradition of Design Excellence)

The 20-year Minnesota Statewide Transportation Plan articulates 10 policies that support Mn/DOT's Strategic Directions. In alignment with Mn/DOT's Strategic Direction to "Make Mn/DOT Work Better", Policy 10 is "Protect the Environment and Respect Community Values". Mn/DOT has a tradition of context-sensitive planning, design, construction and operation of transportation facilities that become a source of community pride and enhance the economic vitality of the state. In recognition of this tradition of context-sensitivity, FHWA designated Mn/DOT as one of 5 "pilot states" charged with the responsibility to help advance the understanding and application of the philosophy and principles of Context Sensitive Design and Solutions nationwide. While many of Mn/DOT's program and project accomplishments have been recognized nationally and internationally, it is important to articulate Mn/DOT's policy, principles, and approach in regards to the implementation of Context Sensitive Design and Solutions (CSD&S).

Purpose ("Design Excellence through Context Sensitive Design and Solutions")

The purpose of this tech memo is to articulate Mn/DOT's project development philosophy and design policy within the changing context of what society expects of public agencies in fulfilling their mission. It is Mn/DOT's policy to use a "context-sensitive" approach to create excellence in transportation project development - an approach that incorporates flexibility within design standards, safety measures, environmental stewardship, visual quality, and community sensitive planning and design.

Guidelines (Context Sensitive Design and Solutions (CSD&S))

CSD&S can be defined as the simultaneous balancing and advancement of the objectives of safety and mobility with preservation and enhancement of aesthetic, scenic, historic, cultural, environmental, and community values in transportation projects. CSD&S is the art of creating and sustaining transportation public works that satisfy users, stakeholders, and neighboring communities by integrating and balancing projects with the context and setting in a sensitive manner that relies upon broadly-informed planning, consideration of differing values and perspectives, and tailoring of designs and solutions to unique project circumstances. CSD&S uses a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach that includes early and ongoing involvement of key stakeholders to ensure that transportation projects not only perform safely and efficiently, but also in harmony with the natural, social, economic and cultural environment. Effective management of early and ongoing public and stakeholder involvement helps reduce delays, rework cycles, and unnecessary expenditures of time and money and thereby contributes to streamlined and cost-effective project and program delivery.

Principles: (Mn/DOT's CSD&S approach promotes six core principles)

- 1) Balance safety, mobility, community and environmental goals in all projects
- 2) Involve the public and affected stakeholders early and continuously
- 3) Address all modes of travel
- 4) Use an interdisciplinary team tailored to project needs
- 5) Apply flexibility inherent in design standards
- 6) Incorporate visual quality considerations throughout project development

Measures of Success: (Successful projects exhibit the following attributes)

- 1) Community acceptance
- 2) Environmental compatibility
- 3) Engineering and technical functionality
- 4) Financial feasibility
- 5) Timeliness of delivery
- 6) Commitment beyond the project (preserving the investment)

Cost:

The State's cost participation shall be consistent with Mn/DOT's "cost participation policies". Furthermore, it should be recognized that while CSD&S can increase the scope and budget of project costs, CSD&S can also reduce project costs.

Questions

For information on the technical contents of this memorandum, please contact **Scott Bradley, Landscape Architecture Principal Supervisor, (651) 284-3758**.

Any questions regarding publication or distribution of this technical memorandum should be referred to Sophia Wicklund, Design Standards Unit at (651) 296-3190 or Michael Elle, Design Standards Engineer at (651) 296-4859. A link to all active Memoranda and a list of historical Technical Memoranda can be found at <http://www.dot.state.mn.us/atoz.html>.