Context Sensitive Solutions: An AASHTO-FHWA Peer Exchange

September 6-8, 2006
Baltimore, Maryland
History

Guiding Principles

Purpose of Peer Exchange

Program Structure

Your Charge: Raise the Bar!
History

Groundbreaking “Thinking Beyond the Pavement” workshop

- Mix of FHWA, Resource Agencies, Advocacy Groups and Communities, and State DOT engineers and planners
- Reached consensus on a definition of Context Sensitive Solutions...
  
  “a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility. It is an approach that considers the total context within which a transportation improvement project will exist.”
History (cont’d)

- Reached consensus on a set of guiding principles:
  - 8 Characteristics of a process that yields excellence
  - 7 Qualities of an excellent project

- Made implementation recommendations:
  - Educate transportation professionals and stakeholders
  - Encourage the application of CSS Principles on all projects
  - Work to overcome barriers to integration
  - Consider a future national workshop to measure and evaluate progress of instituting CSS Principles
History (cont’d)

Following the Conference 5 Pilot states joined forces
CT, MN, KY, UT, and MD

- Partnered with FHWA in their regions
- Worked to promote awareness of CSS Philosophy
- Worked to promote acceptance of CSS Principles
History (cont’d)

Pilot state/FHWA efforts

- Training programs
- Revamped project development processes
- Major efforts to incorporate CSS into agency cultures
- FHWA-launched website
- Continuous outreach
AASHTO Task Force on CSS

- Established to take CSS implementation to the next level
- Broad representation from FHWA, the Consultant Community, and an increased number of states
- Developed a 3-year Action Plan
AASHTO Task Force on CSS (cont’d)

- **Focus:**
  - Design-flexibility concerns
  - Further outreach and training
  - Explore ways to measure effectiveness of CSS

- **Results:**
  - AASHTO published *A Guide for Achieving Flexibility in Highway Design* in May 2004
  - “Performance Measures for Context Sensitive Solutions” published as a web document in October 2004
  - National CSS survey
  - Partnership with FHWA
CSS Principles

- 15 Principles
  - 8 Characteristics of a process that yields excellence
  - 7 Qualities of an excellent project
- Developed at the 1998 workshop
- Adopted by SCOH
- Accepted by stakeholders
CSS Principles (cont’d)

- Communication and partnering are basic components of the principles guiding a process that yields excellence.

- A well thought out and well executed process will yield projects that meet the needs of the communities in which they are located.
CSS Principles

The process seeks to...

- Understand the landscape, community, valued resources before beginning engineering design.
- Involve a full range of stakeholders with transportation officials and forge consensus on the scope.
- Tailor the highway process to the circumstances.
- Secure commitment from top agency officials and local leaders.
- Provide open, honest, early, and continuous communication.
- Establish a multi-disciplinary team early.
- Tailor the public involvement process to the project.
- Use a full range of tools for communication.
CSS Principles

The project....

- Satisfies the purpose and needs as agreed to by a full range of stakeholders.
- Is safe.
- Is in harmony with the community.
- Exceeds the expectations.
- Involves efficient and effective use of the resources.
- Is designed and built with minimal disruption to the community.
- Is seen as having added lasting value to the community.
Involve Stakeholders in Scoping Phase
Tailor Process to Circumstances
Secure Commitment from Top Agency Officials and Local Leaders
Use Full Range of Tools to Communicate
Communication is Open, Honest, Early and Continuous
Seek to Understand Landscape, Community and Valued Resources
Tailor Public Involvement Process
Multi-disciplinary Team
Characteristics of the Process
Involve Stakeholders in Scoping Phase
Tailor Process to Circumstances
Secure Commitment from Top Agency Officials and Local Leaders
Use Full Range of Tools to Communicate
Communication is Open, Honest, Early and Continuous
Seek to Understand Landscape, Community and Valued Resources
Tailor Public Involvement Process
CSS is important. The old way...you're fired!
Qualities of the Project

- Project is a Safe Facility
- Project is in Harmony with the Community
- Project exceeds Expectations of Designers and Stakeholders
- Project involves Efficient & Effective Use of Resources
- Project is Seen as Having Added Lasting Value to the Community
- Project is Built with Minimal Disruption to the Community

Project Satisfies Purpose and Need
CSS Principles (cont’d)

Principles will be revisited over the next few days

- Are they still valid?
- Do we need to change them in any way?
- Do we need a new set of principles?
Peer Exchange Goals

- Advance CSS Philosophy through sharing:
  - Successes
  - Benefits
  - Challenges
  - Risks

- Advance CSS Philosophy through action:
  - Develop individual State Action Plans
  - Provide input for AASHTO Action Plan to be presented to Board of Directors at Annual Meeting in Portland
Peer Exchange Program

- Good mix of participants, stakeholders, FHWA, and state DOTs
- Program based on the states’ assessment of most important topics to cover
- Pre-conference assessment – where states are now
- Two full days of concurrent, interactive breakout sessions
- Each breakout will have a list of questions to prime the discussion
Peer Exchange Program

- Principles will be revisited
- Culture change will be explored
- States will develop Action Plans tailored to their specific needs
- Serve as input for AASHTO/FHWA Action Plan
CSS Survey – August 2005

- All 50 states & Washington DC responded
- States have a wealth of information to offer
  - Training
  - Partnerships
  - Formal Policies
  - Best Practices
CSS Survey (cont’d)

- Still many challenges
  - Clear understanding of CSS within DOTs and within communities
  - Culture change
- Learning from peers was noted as being the preferred method
Encouraging Survey Results

- 47 states have sponsored workshops, seminars, and/or training on CSS
- 35 states have established formal policies
- 37 states are reviewing project development processes
- 25 states are making cultural changes
- 38 states have “best practices” to share
Breakout Session Topics

- Project Delivery
- Multi-Disciplinary Teams
- Stakeholder Involvement
- CSS Project Presentations
- CSS Principles Application
- Mainstreaming CSS
Project Delivery

- Share best practices, tools and techniques to support integration of CSS into the process
- Look at the NEPA process and CSS
- Share ways to achieve better relationships and accountability
- Discuss cost and budget issues
- Identify training needs
Multi-Disciplinary Teams

- Explore innovative approaches to internal and external team formation
- Share strategies for coordination and communication among team members
- Look at teaming skills critical to successful CSS implementation
Stakeholder Involvement

- Share policies and practices for public involvement
- Share tools to support effective partnerships
- Evaluating success through the eyes of the stakeholder
CSS Project Presentations/
CSS Principles Discussion

- Project Types - two breakout sessions for each
  - Urban
  - Small Urban
  - Rural
  - Design Build
- Each project session includes a stakeholder representative for a public perspective
CSS Project Presentations/
CSS Principles Discussion

- Project evaluation form
- How do the projects just presented relate to the CSS Principles?
- Any recommended changes to the Principles?
Mainstreaming CSS

- The need for change
- The role of leadership
- The role of the public
- Overcoming barriers
- How to get buy-in
- How to make change sustainable
Your Charge:  Raise the Bar!

- **Action Plans for Individual States**
  - Move to the next level of CSS integration
  - Chance to tailor the plan to each state’s needs

- **Action Plan for AASHTO**
  - Partnership with FHWA
  - Professional Development
  - Research
  - CSS within AASHTO
Action Plan for States

- Two states will summarize their action plans
- Template provided to assist states with follow up within their individual DOTs
- Go to the next level; make it challenging but make sure that it’s doable
What’s Next?

Future of CSS from leaders’ perspectives

- FHWA
- Resource Agencies
- Local Government and the Public
- State DOTs
- AASHTO organization
Action Plan for AASHTO/FHWA

Full day meeting at AASHTO Annual Meeting

October 26 in Portland, OR

- Prioritized list of issues, challenges and opportunities based on your input
- Develop a joint AASHTO/FHWA Action Plan