What’s The Fuss About Context Sensitive Solutions & Complete Streets in Minnesota

Presentation Overview:

• CSS as the Umbrella
• Complete Streets Origins
• Complete Streets Benefits
• Complete Streets Status
• Mn/DOT Partnering Approach
• Complete Streets Examples
(2) Ways To Understand Context

- Interrelated conditions in which something exists
- Tying parts together to work as a cohesive whole

What’s Important about People, Places & Circumstances
Why is Context Important

Some Public Measures of Success

- Public Health & Safety
- Public & Stakeholder Acceptance
- Community Compatibility
- Environmental Compatibility
- Social & Economic Equity
- Return upon Investments
- Functions & Performance
- Timeliness of Response & Delivery
- Effects upon Quality of Life
- Preservation of Investments & Commitments
Context Sensitive Solutions

Definition by FHWA & AASHTO

CSS is a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders in providing a transportation facility that fits its setting. It is an approach that leads to preserving and enhancing scenic, aesthetic, historic, community, and environmental resources while improving or maintaining safety, mobility & infrastructure conditions.
Context Sensitive Solutions
Philosophy and Principles applying to Programs, Services, Planning, Project Development, Construction, Operations, and Maintenance
Context Sensitive Solutions

The Philosophy & Strategy

• Strive towards a shared stakeholder vision to provide a basis for decisions
• Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of contexts
• Foster continuing communication and collaboration to achieve consensus
• Exercise flexibility and creativity to shape effective transportation solutions while preserving and enhancing community and natural environments
CSS Principles

Original CSD (Now CSS) Principles “Paraphrased”

• Use interdisciplinary teams
• Involve your stakeholders
• Seek broad public involvement
• Use a full range of communication strategies
• Seek consensus in determining purpose and need
• Address alternatives and all modes of transportation
• Seek safe facilities for all users
• Seek environmental harmony

• Address community and social issues
• Address aesthetic concerns and integrations
• Utilize a full range of design choices and flexibility
• Document project decisions
• Track and meet all commitments
• Use agency resources effectively
• Create lasting value for communities
Mn/DOT Leadership in CSS
Many Award Winning and Nationally Recognized CSS Success Stories
But ... We Need To Tie More Together
Mn/DOT’s New Strategic Vision & Plan

How Does CSS Fit In?
Supporting The Strategic Vision & Plan

A CSS approach supports:

• Building responsiveness and accountability
• Building relationships and trust with stakeholders
• Building collaborative alliances and sustainability
• Partnering to share resources, responsibilities, opportunities, risks and benefits
• Accomplishing more with less ... balancing competing objectives while optimizing returns upon investments
Supporting The Strategic Vision & Plan

The CSS Flagship Initiative:
Seeks to integrate CSS in Mn/DOT as a business model to improve our processes and to balance competing objectives while enabling Mn/DOT to achieve benefits correlated to applying CSS philosophy and principles ...

Tying more key pieces together
CSS Benefits Research

Based Upon 33 Case Studies From Across the United States

Like MN TH 61 Reconstruction (North Shore of Lake Superior)
CSS Benefits – Agency Emphasis

Correlated To Applying CSS Principles (NCHRP Report 642)

1. Improved predictability of project delivery
2. Improved project scoping and budgeting
3. Improved long term decisions and investments
4. Improved environmental stewardship
5. Optimized maintenance and operations
6. Increased risk management and liability protection
7. Improved stakeholder/public feedback
8. Increased stakeholder/public participation, ownership & trust
9. Decreased costs for overall project delivery
10. Decreased time for overall project delivery
11. Increased partnering opportunities
CSS Benefits – User Emphasis

Correlated To Applying CSS Principles (NCHRP Report 642)

12. Minimized impact to human and natural environment
13. Improved mobility for users
14. Improved walkability and bikeability
15. Improved safety (vehicles, pedestrians, and bikes)
16. Improved multi-modal options (including transit)
17. Improved community satisfaction
18. Improved quality of life for community
19. Improved speed management
20. Design features appropriate to context
21. Minimized construction related disruption
22. Improved opportunities for economic development
Under The Umbrella of CSS

Flexibility in Design

Complete Streets
Flexibility in Design

It's Difficult To Balance Competing Objectives Within Overly Conservative Design Approaches & Standards
What are Complete Streets?

Complete Streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users — motorists, transit users, pedestrians and bicyclists of all ages and abilities are able to move safely along and across complete streets.
Origins of Complete Streets

**Problems:** 1/3 of the US population does not or cannot drive and nearly 5,000 pedestrians and bicyclists are killed and more than 70,000 are injured annually on US roads (*Mean Streets 2004*)

**Emergence:** Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Title II Act of 1992 requirements as applied to state and local government programs and services

**Emergence:** The current movement toward Complete Streets has grown since Federal Reauthorization Act TEA-21 in 1999 and US DOT issued policy statements and design guidance in 2000 for integrating bicycle and pedestrian facilities and travel

**National Complete Streets Coalition:** A broad coalition of transportation planning associations, realtor’s associations, disability & elderly advocates, private industry representatives, and walking and cycling organizations, etc. that emerged beginning in 2003
Expected Benefits of Complete Streets

- Improved pedestrian, bicyclist, transit user and motorist safety
- Improved mobility and access for a large segment of the population that cannot or does not drive
- Improved public and environmental health
- Increased transportation capacity and modal options improve mobility and also combat congestion
- Increased consumer savings
- Increased economic activity, competitiveness and property values
- Improved quality of life through more livable and sustainable transportation, communities, commerce, and growth
National Complete Streets Status

2000 US DOT Guidance:
Bicycling and walking facilities will be incorporated into all transportation projects unless exceptional circumstances exist

This guidance has not been followed by many jurisdictions
National Complete Streets Status

Proposed Complete Streets Bills in Congress

Proposed Complete Streets Acts were introduced in the Senate and House again in 2009 (S. 584 & H.R. 1443) and supporting letters have encouraged inclusion of the proposed legislation in the overdue and pending federal transportation reauthorization act.

Bills to ensure that all users of the transportation system, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users as well as children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities, are able to travel safely and conveniently on our streets.
National Complete Streets Status

Jurisdictions With Complete Streets Policies

124+ jurisdictions have adopted some form of Complete Streets policy
National Complete Streets Status

New 2010 US DOT Guidance:

On March 15, 2010, US DOT Secretary Ray LaHood announced a new policy regarding “complete streets” to place planning for bicycling & pedestrians on equal footing with the planning of highways and transit.

US DOT Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Regulations and Recommendations is posted on FHWA’s website at:
http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/policy_accom.htm
National Complete Streets Status

2010 US DOT Policy Recommendations

- Treat walking and bicycling as equals with other transportation modes
- Ensure convenient access for people of all ages and abilities
- Go beyond minimum design standards
- Collect data on walking and biking trips
- Integrate bicycle and pedestrian accommodation on new, rehabilitated and limited-access bridges
- Set a mode share target for walking and bicycling
- Protect sidewalks and shared-use paths the same way roadways are protected (maintenance, snow removal, etc.)
- Improve non-motorized facilities during maintenance projects
Minnesota Complete Streets Status

2009 Complete Streets Feasibility Study

The 2008 Legislature required the Commissioner of Transportation (in cooperation with other jurisdictions) to study the benefits, feasibility, and cost of adopting a complete streets policy applicable to plans to construct, reconstruct, and relocate streets and roads.

The Commissioner was required to report the findings, conclusions, and recommendations to the Senate Transportation Budget and Policy Division and the House Transportation Finance Division and Transportation and Transit Policy Subcommittee by December 5, 2009. The 2009 Report can be found at http://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/completestreets along with documentation of the process, participants and public comments.
Minnesota Complete Streets Status

2009 Complete Streets Feasibility Study

Complete Streets are feasible at all governmental levels within Minnesota. Mn/DOT is committed to partner with a broad coalition to build upon its existing approach to Context Sensitive Solutions in developing and implementing a Complete Streets vision and policy.

Some local governments have adopted Complete Streets approaches ... Hennepin County, Rochester, Bloomington, St. Paul, Duluth, Albert Lea

Mn/DOT’s State Aid Division assumed lead responsibility for managing the study and ongoing partnering efforts. An external advisory group will advise Mn/DOT staff regarding transition work planning and future efforts.
Minnesota Complete Streets Status
2010 Proposed Complete Streets Legislation

2010 Complete Streets “bills for an act” are alive in the MN Legislature. HF 2801 was passed on 4-21-10 and SF 2461 is expected to reach the Senate floor soon. The proposed legislation helps to support Mn/DOT’s efforts to create a state-wide partnership approach to complete streets.

The commissioner shall implement a complete streets policy after consultation with stakeholders, state and regional agencies, local governments, and road authorities. The commissioner shall address relevant protocols, guidance, standards, training and requirements and shall integrate related principles of context sensitive solutions.
Minnesota Complete Streets Status

2010 Proposed Complete Streets Legislation

• The 2010 Complete Streets Bills in the MN Legislature do not require Mn/DOT to do anything that the Department was not already committed to doing (except for additional reporting requirements for the Legislature)

• Local road authorities are encouraged (but not required) to create and adopt Complete Streets policies for their roads
Minnesota Complete Streets Status

Partnering with Mn/DOT for Complete Streets

Ongoing Formation of an External Advisory Group

- Americans with Disabilities Act MN
- Association of MN Counties
- MN Association of Townships
- MN Complete Streets Coalition
- MN Dept of Employment and Economic Development
- MN Federal Highway Administration
- MN Dept of Health
- MN State Historic Preservation Office
- MN Housing Finance Agency
- MN House & Senate Committees
- MN Dept of Natural Resources
- MN Pollution Control Agency
- MN Dept of Public Safety
- MN Public Transit Association
- MN Transportation Alliance
- League of MN Cities
- Metro Transit
- Metropolitan Planning (MPO)
- Regional Planning (RDC)
- Hennepin County
- City of Rochester
Minnesota Complete Streets Status
Partnering with Mn/DOT for Complete Streets

Some Complete Streets Study Report Recommendations:

- Mn/DOT should review & revise conflicting info in design documents pertaining to “CS”
- Mn/DOT should explore the feasibility of integrating “CS” guidance into one manual
- Mn/DOT should integrate “CS” into their new statewide scoping process and model
- Mn/DOT should identify ways to assist local governments in understanding funding sources and constraints that may pertain to “CS”
- Mn/DOT should serve as a resource to assist local agencies in developing their own “CS” policies with the support of Mn/DOT’s staff expertise
- Mn/DOT State Aid should make the variance process more accessible and transparent
- All agencies should develop an integrated transportation plan that addresses connectivity for all modes and for all users of all ages and abilities

Mn/DOT has identified over 20 work plan items and timelines related to planning, funding, design, training, support and communications
Complete Streets does not mean “all modes on all roads” or “one size fits all”, the goal of Complete Streets should be to:

- Develop a balanced transportation system integrating all modes via planning inclusive of each mode
- Provide for transportation users of all types and ages and abilities
Complete Streets Come In Many Forms
A Planning Challenge

Leveraging development and redevelopment so land use and transportation are mutually supportive in design and functions.
A Planning & Urban Design Challenge

Better Integration of Movement & Activity and Edge & System Relationships
CSAH 3 Excelsior Blvd Case Study

- **Excelsior Blvd reconstruction** (St. Louis Park) contributed to a revitalized 1st ring suburban avenue and redevelopment that replaced a blighted and congested highway formerly lined with barely solvent retail.

- A vibrant new mix of civic uses, housing, sustainable retail and a town center has drawn in new people and businesses to support mixed-use and transit-oriented development.

- Demonstrated flexibility in design with existing 4-lane minor arterial carrying 19,000+ ADT including landscaped median, reduced lane widths, reduced left turn lane lengths and transitions, and improved access control.
CSAH 3 Excelsior Blvd Case Study

• **Reduced design speed and flexibility in design** reallocated space to balance stakeholder needs and objectives while also calming traffic and improving safety for all modes and users.

• **Other improvements** include on street and off street parking in shared mid-block structures, pedestrian safety and comfort amenities, off-route bicycle accommodation, near and far side transit stops, public seating and green spaces that all combine to create a desired sense of place.

• **In the 2 years after the completion of reconstruction segment one, annual accident rates decreased over 60%**.
CSAH 3 Excelsior Blvd Case Study
CSAH 3 Excelsior Blvd Case Study
An Allocation Of Space Challenge

How Much Space Do You Need and For What?
Complete Streets Comparison

Not a Complete Street

More of a Complete Street

Reallocating Space with Flexibility in Design  ... Same Overall Width
Complete Streets Comparison

Not a Complete Street

More of a Complete Street
Complete Streets Comparison

Complete Street in Summer

How About in the Winter?

Operations & Maintenance Needs are Year-round
Complete Streets Questions?

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MN Complete Streets Coalition
www.mncompletestreets.org

Mn/DOT Website - www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/completestreets/