

N.J. Department of Transportation

Policy and Priorities Board

Record of Decision

Context Sensitive Design

The New Jersey Department of Transportation hereby makes it policy that all future NJDOT projects will adhere to a philosophy of Context Sensitive Design (CSD). Broadly speaking, it is now NJDOT policy to conceive, scope, design and build projects that incorporate design standards, safety measures, environmental stewardship, aesthetics and community sensitive planning and design. In doing so, the NJDOT will consider the needs of all road users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and neighbors such as residents, and businesses, as well as drivers. Transportation both shapes the growth of our communities and affects the quality of life statewide, so all future NJDOT projects will strive to improve the overall quality of life in our state; mobility and safety is just part of that picture.

NJDOT's CSD Policy can be viewed as having three key components:

- A formal and conscious effort to Define the Context, including the Transportation, Environmental (natural environment) and Community (human environment) Contexts.
- Full collaboration and partnering with communities to involve them in actual scoping and design decision-making
- More flexible designs

While all three components are listed separately, the three components will be fully integrated during project development. It is critical to understand that good project development balances safety, needs, costs and context. Furthermore, the proper blend of the three contexts can only be achieved with community collaboration, and by defining the functional intent(s) of the roadway section we are addressing. Therefore, NJDOT, in collaboration with the affected communities, will determine the appropriate functional classification of the roadway, and the appropriate target operating speed prior to scoping and designing our projects. We will also make sure we determine how we are going to maintain and operate what we promise during Project Development, before we promise it.

Context sensitive design will draw on the outreach efforts MPOs undertake with counties and, to a lesser degree, municipalities during the development of the Regional Transportation Plan and corridor analyses that identify needs and modal strategies. CSD and community involvement will not be viewed as an event or separate step in a project, but as a program that never begins and never ends, and which is the responsibility of the entire agency, not just one unit. As we partner with communities, NJDOT will now be particularly mindful of fostering collaboration with traditionally under-served "Environmental Justice communities."

Action Statement:

To transition CSD into the existing pipeline, CSD should be fully applied to projects in Concept Development (CD) and in the early stages of Feasibility Assessment (FA). It's application should be limited to the extent possible for projects in the later stages of FA or Final Scope Development (FSD); the "extent possible" means that changes in project footprint significant enough to cause a project to be recycled are strongly discouraged. CSD should not be applied on a broad scale to projects currently in design.

Attest: o/signed Kathy Diringer
Policy Secretariat
on: October 26, 2001

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Copies to:
Board Members
Assistant Commissioners
Gary Toth, Presenter