



U.S. Department of Transportation
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Administration**

Context Sensitive Solutions Results of the National CSS Dialog Workshop- Austin, TX

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Context Sensitive Solutions

- Efforts underway to complete five national workshops by the NC State University's Center for Transportation and the Environment (CTE) and the FHWA.
- Best management practices and projects are being showcased at the CSS National Dialog workshops.
- CSS has been shown to be one of the best tools available to integrate community livability goals with project development activities.

What is Context Sensitive Solutions?

“Context sensitive solutions (CSS) is 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. CSS is an approach that considers the total context within which a transportation improvement project will exist.”

- Federal Highway Administration

Purpose of the CSS National Dialog

- The six goals of the Dialog are to:
 - Introduce CSS principles and practices to a wide array of partner organizations;
 - Identify CSS best practices and present those to transportation professionals across the nation;
 - Strengthen and broaden interest in CSS;
 - Discover new opportunities for partnerships;
 - Bring new perspectives to planning, designing, building, and maintaining transportation facilities;
 - Foster a community of CSS practice and promote dissemination of CSS best practice examples

CSS National Dialog Workshops

- The CSS National Dialog held a call for solicitations from May-July 2009. Over 90 submittals were received from 30 States in response to the call.
- A national steering committee reviewed the 90 CSS submittals and the best practices were highlighted as part of five CSS National Dialog workshops held across the Nation.
- CSS National Dialog Workshops were held in Austin, TX (10/20/09); Portland, OR (12/07/09); Charlotte, NC (02/04/10); Rutgers University, NJ (03/16/10); and the University of Minnesota (St. Paul, MN) on 04/22/10.

CSS National Dialog- Austin Workshop

- Over 100 participants representing MPOs, State DOTs, private sector, university researchers, FHWA, City of Austin, regional transit authorities were in attendance.
- Four major CSS case studies were presented at the Austin, TX workshop on October 20, 2009.
 - Main Street, Duncanville, TX
 - Central Texas Greenprint for Growth
 - I-15 Blue Diamond Interchange and Nevada's Landscape and Aesthetics Plan
 - Austin Accessibility Assessment Improvement (AAAIM)

CSS National Dialog- Austin Workshop (Main Street-Duncanville)

- City of Duncanville- Main Street reinvented to a true mixed use destination.
- Main Street anchored historic retail and government, however lacked sustained economic growth for many years.
- Duncanville initiated a economic development strategy to grow downtown housing, higher quality retail, upscale restaurants, and professional office space.
- Attracted young professionals and empty-nesters to live in Duncanville to develop a livable community center.

CSS National Dialog-Austin Workshop (Greenprint Central Texas)

- Central Texas region has a population of 1.5 M people, however over next 20-40 years the population is expected to approach nearly 3 M people.
- Challenges: How do you preserve quality of life, improve mobility, and protect our unique natural resources before they are lost?
- Product: Developed a Central Texas Greenprint for Growth as a tool for balancing sustainable conservation goals with the infrastructure needs of this rapidly urbanizing region.

CSS National Dialog- Austin Workshop (Greenprint Central Texas)

- Central Texas Greenprint for Growth incorporated the following steps:
 - Identify conservation goals and priorities for each county;
 - Convert goals and priorities into mappable criteria;
 - Weight criteria according to community goals and priorities;
 - Create overview maps that reflect each county's priorities (completed in 2009).

CSS National Dialog- Austin Workshop (I-15 Blue Diamond Interchange and Nevada's Landscape Plan)

- Development of a corridor design/landscape management plan for I-15 in the State of Nevada.
- Regional technical committee formed to review design and construction options, including landscape and aesthetic features.
- Website developed for public input and notification of project development activities.
- CSS design exemplified at the Blue Diamond Interchange reflecting historical and natural features fitting the context of the community and region.

CSS National Dialog- Austin Workshop (Austin Accessibility Assessment Improvement- AAAIM)

- Funded by the FTA and facilitated by the Texas Citizen Fund, AAAIM sought to resolve long-standing barriers to transit access for persons with disabilities.
- Physical challenges included broken side walks, non-existent curb ramps, outdated bus schedules, and missing landing pads for transit users.
- AAAIM's collaborative approach, process, and outcomes were rooted by CSS principles and they addressed both decision-making process and project outcomes.

Results of the CSS National Dialog Workshop (Austin, TX)

- Need to clearly establish a strong CSS “champion” each project highlighted a “champion” one to initiate, plan, develop and execute the proposed CSS outcome.
- Communications is critical for purposes of public input, engaging the community and stakeholders, and to involve local elected officials into the CSS development framework.
- Communications may be in the form of a well developed public involvement process, use of illustrative tools and techniques, public meetings and/or workshops (e.g., GIS-T, internet webpage, graphics/mapping, newsletters, brochures, etc.)

For additional information

- CSS National Dialog:
<http://www.cssnationaldialog.org/index.asp>
- Context Sensitive Solutions webpage:
<http://www.contextsensitivesolutions.org>
- AASHTO Center for Environmental Excellence website:
http://environment.transportation.org/center/products_programs/css_peer_exchange.aspx
- FHWA Website for Context Sensitive Solutions:
<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/context/index.cfm>

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