

Note: For the final agenda, presentation slides, and 'Fact Sheets' for each of the Case Studies, please visit: <http://cssnationaldialog.org/austin.asp>

Welcome

Jan Weingart Brown, Division Administrator, FHWA, Texas Division

- Looking forward to hearing from a variety of disciplines and perspectives to learn what CSS is and is not, begin dialog about what CSS should look like in Texas.
- FHWA has encouraged use of CSS for many years. CSS is integral to sustainability and better values in transportation solutions: high quality, delivered on time, with high approval from stakeholders.
- We need to leverage wider range of funding in order to get the best 'bang for the buck' for users.
- Can use the Eco-Logical framework from FTA and FHWA. Ecological on geographic basis not just for a specific project.
- CSS involves knowing the goals a community sets for itself and is fundamentally about balancing community needs and costs, protecting the public interest, understanding stakeholder issues, shortening project time, reducing 'do-overs'. This requires using CSS very early in project development and engaging in collaborative decision making.
- Data sharing is crucial to the transportation decision-making process. At TxDOT, we support data-sharing with programs connecting our resource agencies with transportation decisions, e.g. USFWL, USCROP.
- Successfully building consensus in the decision-making process begins with discussions on how we can partner, how CSS fits in with traditional framework, how it works or doesn't work. This input is key to having a successful day today at the workshop.

Peter Marsh, Supervising Engineer, City of Austin Transportation Department

- Using the term 'Solutions' perhaps indicates there is a problem that needs to be solved. The idea is perhaps that we use Context Sensitive Design (CSD) to reach a solution.
- Here in Austin we are looking to use CSS/CSD to develop gap studies for roadways, ped/bike systems. Also looking at rail for downtown as part of our strategic mobility plan.

CSS Update

David Carlson, Sustainable Transport and Climate Change Team, Federal Highway Administration

- CSS alive and well. The program is currently centered with the Office of Human and Natural Environment, with heavy support from the Sustainable Transport and Climate Change Team.
- CSS is a significant element in sustainability, livability. CSS activities are funded thru the Surface Transportation Environment and Planning Cooperative Research Program (STEP). Major themes include connections with livability and resources dedicated. As an example, FHWA sponsored the recent webinar CSS and livability
- Community livability is enhanced by CSS. It delivers on livability aspects by developing partnerships with Complete Streets and Smart Growth ideas. Also the Institute for Transportation Engineers has developed their *Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities* as recommended practice. This is a very important step in bringing CSS to forefront as the way of doing business.

- As for today, FHWA is asking you:
 - What will you do with what you hear today? Where will you take this? And can we rely on you to take this forward? What can we do to support these efforts from a national level? How do you envision using this in your community?
- For today to be successful, we need a dynamic exchange, lively conversation. We are looking to you to provide insight, feedback, and ideas. Also hope you will find new opportunities for partnerships in your region.

Case Study #1: City of Duncanville Main Street Initiative**Scott Polikov, Gateway Planning Group****Andrew Howard, Kimley-Horn Associates****Kent Cagle, City of Duncanville**

- The Main Street Master Plan redeveloped land patterns, meaning that some buildings would be kept, while some were replaced. Opposition arose, but was mitigated via CSS by taking the time to talk to the businesses and building owners in the area to get their input on the plan as it related specifically to them.
- These presenters would add “sustainable development patterns” to the definition of CSS; note that presenter is not referring to land use patterns.
- Road was 5-lane undivided, with a prior average speed in the 50-60 mph range, but the plans added a median with trees, expanded roadsides, etc. Used “Form-Based Codes”, city codes written in such a manner as to implement a vision for how Main Street should be.
 - Duncanville has an open zoning code (only noxious businesses are prohibited) for the area, so that the types of businesses located there are not overly restricted.
 - Architectural codes are enforced, however.
 - Some businesses’ structural replacement costs (such as replacing a grease trap, for instance) are grandfathered in on code issues if they fall under a certain dollar amount; no one wants to make a business upgrade something for \$150k that can be replaced as-is for less than \$10k.
 - Streetscape, multi-discipline team with full vision from economic perspective.
- Vehicle level-of-service (LOS) was a critical concern in the design, but pedestrian LOS was also an important consideration.
- Danger of design – any one aspect can come to overwhelm a design to the detriment of other aspects. Important to have more than just one person (city engineer, ADA compliance advocate, etc.) looking at the design at any one stage in development.
- Financing
 - Used what was essentially the equivalent of Tax Increment Financing (TIF)
 - Value capture strategy
 - Conduct a fiscal impact analysis
 - Should balance impacts on business (refer back to the grandfathering of business replacement codes in certain instances)
 - 2-step process; get momentum going on one end to get private sector to start on the other end
 - Ask Congress to make it easier to do small projects, perhaps via the HUD/USDOT/EPA livability program
- No buildings on Main Street hold Historic Building designations from the State of Texas and none are on the National Register, but the plans were made at the building scale (i.e., with owners, city, and team), so history of street was taken into consideration.
- Question-How do you get vision accepted?
 - Lots of meetings, discussion, work at business/individual level with issues specific to them.
 - Streetscape designs needed to consider specific business operations. For example, how am I going to load/unload TVs through the front door

Case Study #2: Central Texas Greenprint for Growth**Sean Moran, Capital Area Council of Governments****Sally Campbell, Envision Central Texas**

- Was not conceived as a CSS project, but used many of the same guiding principles.
 - CAPCOG and Travis County brought stakeholders together to create four top priorities for sustainable growth in the 2030 plan.
 - At priority-setting meeting, stakeholders used polling clickers to pick their priorities in an iterative process that let them view the resulting map and then change their choices. From this they developed an unweighted priority listing, then went back and weighted priorities to determine top four for the area. This became the Greenprint for Travis County.

- SH 130 at Onion Creek
 - SH 130 was designed, right of way was built, and construction of northern segments was begun before Greenprint was developed.
 - Greenprint shows high-to-moderate priority levels along Onion Creek and the Colorado River right where SH 130 was being built.
 - Had Greenprint existed first, the path of 130 may have been adjusted or design altered to mitigate negative impact on Greenprint priorities for Onion Creek, such as the creation of a green belt in that area.

- Extended to Hays, Bastrop, Caldwell Counties – but not Williamson
 - Received a Federal grant to expand the Greenprint priorities to neighboring counties. Originally the grant included Williamson County along with Bastrop, Caldwell, and Hayes, but Williamson County had many property-rights issues that would complicate the process for that area.
 - The expanded Greenprint was not created in time to include in the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's (CAMPO's) 2030 plan, but will be used as a resource for the 2035 plan.

- The Future
 - The reports and other outreach materials for the Greenprint will be available on the Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) website November 11, 2009. (<http://www.capcog.org/divisions/regional-planning/>)
 - City of Pflugerville in northeast Travis County is now working on their comprehensive plan, and CAPCOG has met with them to educate them regarding the Greenprint, hoping that they will incorporate that information.
 - CAMPO has written a letter of support for the plan

Case Study #3: I-15 Blue Diamond and Nevada's Landscape and Aesthetics Plan**Lucy Joyce, Nevada Department of Transportation**

- University of Nevada – Las Vegas did the research to develop the master plan. FHWA has been a big supporter of this plan

- Nevada Department of Transportation (NvDOT) provides the funding for program management, corridor planning, and new construction.
 - Funding is 50-50 with local entities on retrofitting projects
 - Maintenance is not funded in the master plan, so had to create own maintenance policy and funding tracking.
 - Found very little information on maintenance costs was available; generally this is not tracked by DOTs; had to develop maintenance estimates for the program

- Site Analysis

- A site analysis was done to reveal opportunities and constraints for the project. NvDOT worked with local agencies to let them know results and to make suggestions for future land use.
 - For I-15, the Las Vegas area was split into three corridors. Priorities for each corridor were set, and concepts were provided for treatments in each of the corridors.
 - Four levels of landscaping and four levels of hard treatments can be used. Process determined what combination was right at various locations within the corridors.
 - Also considered color palettes. Each of the three corridors was given a separate, but consistent color palette so that maintenance would be easier – tagging (graffiti) is a constant concern.
- Questions
 - Who keeps the plan running? “That would be me.”
 - How long did the process take? The plan started in 2002 and took 2 years to complete. The I-15 corridor plan was finished in June 2008. Aesthetic guidelines for that corridor are in progress.
 - How did you get input from local businesses? We hire a landscape architect to do the design, have them research the area, list stakeholders, invite them to participate, ask for consensus, develop plan and present at public meeting.

Case Study #4: Austin Accessibility Improvement**Sheila Holbrook-White, Texas Citizen Fund****Lee Austin, City of Austin Transportation Department****Roberto Gonzalez, Metropolitan Transportation Authority****Glenn Gadbois, Gadbois Consulting**

- AAAIM was born in 2008 out of a conflict within CapMetro (the Austin transit authority) and the community over fixed route service and access.
 - Proposal to study issue never mentioned CSS as the process, but that is what the resulting project used.
- A survey was conducted to understand accessibility, design, and service needs for Disability Fare Card users. About 17% of participants identified mobility challenges.
- City of Austin and CapMetro worked together with a team of survey participants that assessed individual bus stops and adjoining sidewalks/ramps to come up with priorities for improvements.
 - Challenge – some of the spots identified are in TxDOT right-of-way. TxDOT and City of Austin work well together at fixing problems, but not at identifying them. Coordination is the key to accomplishing the goals.
 - Assess current system “gaps”
 - Find solution to situations with constrained Rights of Way where utilities, sidewalk, drainage, etc. all conflict for space
 - Coordination/collaboration of stakeholders
- Questions
 - What is percentage of bus stops with shelters? Our policy is that a stop must have 50 passengers per day at stop to warrant a shelter, but we look at each location for specific needs.
 - Any plans for limited use of lanes on CapMetro routes? Buses have same congestion problems as cars. Travel time is better with dedicated lanes and may increase ridership. Taking away lanes is a hard policy issue (re-purpose lanes).
 - Has input from disabled ever conflicted with other riders? Yes. Their input is not the bottomline on what happens. It doesn’t solve problems, it gives response. Agencies have to balance array of stakeholder issues not just ADA. Survey identified challenges and the range of user experiences so can prioritize problems to formulate best way to spend limited funds.

Panel Discussion: Next Steps in Our Region**Kirk Fauver, FHWA, Texas Division****Jonathan Bean, TxDOT San Antonio District**

Peter Marsh, Austin Transportation Department

Moderator: Brian Bochner, University Transportation Center for Mobility, Texas Transportation Institute

- Q: What did you hear today that is of value for your incorporating CSS into projects?
 - Communication between stakeholders. FHWA needs to communicate the vision/role/responsibility of CSS.
 - San Antonio always tries to use CSS, bring stakeholders to the table, etc., respond to master plans from local communities, local developments/ambiance, look more at network side of things, dedicated lanes issues, Greenprint process into master plan on the front end.
 - Get input on what the public wants, gap studies, get public to tell us where the gaps are from user perspective. #1 is public input.

- Q: How can CSS help overcome obstacles?
 - Have specific goals and identify a project champion to stay with project from “cradle to grave”
 - Public education: need to get the public to understand what we are trying to accomplish and why
 - Public Involvement: upfront explanation can turn those in opposition into champions
 - Develop a formalized process for consensus building
 - Fear of change among landowners, businesses, environmentalists
 - One tool is Concession Development Agreements (CDAs); learning curve associated with these
 - Life in General: processes take time; need to keep communication open to prevent disappointment
 - Understanding of CSS; this involves a paradigm shift
 - flexibility ≠ relaxation of standards
 - at what level is policy set
 - CSS is a vehicle to accomplish many goals

- Q: What have you learned today?
 - For FHWA, communication and visualization are important; need to communicate goals and policies; identify market
 - For state DOTs, use masterplans of surrounding communities; look at entire network; value of front-end work (Greenprint)
 - For all, public participation with real listening to them, not just ‘hearing’

- Q: Who can serve as a project ‘champion’?
 - Doesn’t need to be someone known to community
 - Must have drive
 - Does not hurt to have an elected official or a business or community leader to act as champion
 - Should be someone with a sphere of influence – brought-in or home-grown
 - Consider who are you trying to influence and who are you trying to bring in to the process; this will help determine who you need as a champion
 - Sometimes you are the best choice for this role

- Q: Where will you take the information from today?
 - Start planning from beginning; for example if rail project, start with what is important for the community for intercity rail
 - Use today’s regional examples to discuss what can be done
 - The principles aren’t in competition, but work together. CSS principles are equal throughout planning, design, etc., and should be applied through all stages of program development.

- Q: How can the successes you heard about today be replicated?
 - Community involvement before deep analysis
 - Duncanville can relate to other Austin-area small towns with rail downtown (Buda, Taylor, Hutto)
 - Synergy between San Antonio and Austin following the Greenprint example; opportunity to replicate that effort
 - Keep in mind that CSS is not just design but also process

- Q: What are some key strategies?
 - Identify a champion
 - Listening vs. just “hearing”
- Q: What are some public education strategies?
 - TxDOT Workshops to bring in potential partners and/or local stakeholders
 - Demonstrate commitment to the project and how it fits into the community
 - Take advantage of formal and informal opportunities
- Q: How can media raise public expectations?
 - Outreach, outreach, outreach
 - Web 2.0, social networking, etc.
 - Videos
 - In an area with no champions, search out resources to bring as examples
 - Champions should engage in teaching rather than preaching
- Q: Do educational programs have CSS in instruction?
 - Need more, including academic representation at National Dialog workshops
 - NCSU has offered a CSS course in their engineering program
 - Texas Transportation Institute is developing a TxDOT Workshop which will be available in 2010
- Q: How can we better understand and explain value capture strategies?
 - Learn from demonstration projects (Washington D. C.) and Ft Worth where there is a new highway through the middle of town
 - All new tax revenue from CSS process can repay share of project
 - Understand ‘infill development’ processes
- Q: Are there examples or research suggestions to understand or investigate the impact of CSS?
 - Do the installations on I-15 constitute an attractive nuisance? Does it affect speeds and decision points?
 - Resources include: Eric Dumbaugh at Texas A&M University, Norm Garrick at University of Connecticut
 - Texas Green Ribbon Program; taking this from the District level to a statewide legislative mandate
- Q: How do you measure desirable outcomes?
 - No lawsuits
 - Faster progress
 - ADA compliance
- Q: What is the potential for CSS to become regulation?
 - It was cut out of SAFETEA-LU as requirement
 - May be more beneficial that it’s not a regulatory requirement
 - Close relationship between NEPA and CSS; NEPA is in effect ‘CSS in action’
- Q: Can we expect CSS-based performance measures in the next transportation bill?
 - Anticipate it to certainly be encouraged if not funded
 - Active conversation about setting benchmarks is underway
 - level of progress in implementation, measures for livable and sustainable communities, incentives for good practices.