



# Illinois Department of Transportation

Office of Planning and Programming  
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## OFFICE OF PLANNING & PROGRAMMING CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS

**SUBJECT: Implementation Procedures**

**DATE: March 15, 2007**

### Background

Public Act 093-0545, which became effective January 1, 2004, provides that the Illinois Department of Transportation “. . . shall embrace principles of context sensitive design and context sensitive solutions in its policies and procedures for the planning, design, construction, and operation of its projects for new construction, reconstruction, or major expansion of existing transportation facilities.” This is to ensure that the Department’s projects “. . . adequately meet the State’s transportation needs, exist in harmony with their surroundings, and add lasting value to the communities they serve.”

Departmental Policy D&E-21, issued on August 1, 2005, formally adopted Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) as the official policy of the Department for projects utilizing CSS principles. This Departmental Policy was signed not only by the Secretary of Transportation, but also by the Directors of Highways, Planning and Programming, Public and Intermodal Transportation, and Aeronautics. The Departmental Policy requires “Each signatory Office or Division is responsible for implementing and assuring compliance with the provisions of this policy affecting operations or policies under their jurisdiction.”

The CSS principles that are the focus of the legislation place renewed emphasis on the importance of an effective stakeholder involvement process for identifying the transportation and community concerns and values that need to be considered on each process. A key to this process can be found in the Department’s definition of CSS which states: “Through early, frequent, and meaningful communication with stakeholders, and a flexible and creative approach to design, the resulting projects should improve safety and mobility for the traveling public, while seeking to preserve and enhance the scenic, economic, historic, and natural qualities of the settings through which they pass.”

The Department’s CSS Goals are as follows:

1. Adequately meet the State’s transportation needs.
2. Transportation projects exist in harmony with their surroundings.
3. Transportation projects add lasting value to the communities they serve.

Department training on CSS is taking place. Among other items, the training includes information about the Department's planning process and the stakeholder involvement process for achieving effective Context Sensitive Solutions.

## **Applicability**

As stated above, Illinois law and Department Policy require the Department to utilize CSS ". . . in its policies and procedures for the planning, design, construction, and operation of its projects for new construction, reconstruction, or major expansion of existing transportation facilities."

## **Statewide Planning**

Utilization of CSS principles in the Bureau of Statewide Program Planning (SPP) will focus on stakeholder involvement activities in three main areas:

1. Long-Range Transportation Plan.
2. State Transportation Improvement Programs (STIP).
3. Multi-year Highway Improvement Programs (MYP).

The Long Range Transportation Plan is developed periodically by the Department to define long range policies, needs, and goals for transportation in Illinois. The Long Range Transportation Plan is developed with extensive stakeholder involvement pursuant to Federal planning regulation as codified in 23 CFR 450. These regulations require that the Long Range Statewide Transportation Plan be developed in consultation with State, tribal, and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation. The law establishes a list of "interested parties" who are to be provided with the opportunity to participate in the statewide planning process.

The role of SPP in long-range planning is to develop the Long Range Transportation Plan using the information gathered in stakeholder involvement forums. The Long Range Transportation Plan will require extensive public input, a review and possible expansion of existing state transportation strategies and policies and the addition of more detailed information concerning current socio-economic and environmental trends and conditions that will impact the future transportation needs of the state and its citizens. The public outreach program is implemented to ensure the Department's vision, priorities and investment strategies address the needs and concerns of the Department's stakeholders.

The STIP is a federally-mandated program of highway and transit projects that is developed from the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) and the IDOT highway and public transportation

improvement programs. The STIP is a four-year program. All of the projects identified in the TIPs developed by the MPOs in the urbanized areas in Illinois are incorporated into the STIP by reference. Each of the MPOs has a federally required and accepted public involvement process that they utilize for the development of their TIPs.

Pursuant to federal law, the STIP is developed in consultation with affected local officials with responsibility for transportation in non-metropolitan areas. The law establishes a list of "interested parties" who are to be provided with the opportunity to participate in the statewide planning process. For all of the non-metropolitan areas of the state, the STIP identifies projects contained in the Department's current annual and multi-year highway improvement programs as well as the five-year public transportation improvement program.

The STIP is published in draft form and is announced via a press release to media outlets. Advertisements are placed in approximately 74 newspapers throughout the state notifying the general public of the availability of the Draft STIP for review and comment. The role of Statewide Program Planning regarding stakeholder involvement and CSS for the STIP is to respond to public comments and to modify the STIP as necessary. The STIP is the subject of continuous and ongoing stakeholder involvement.

Publication of the MYP serves as a starting point for input, commentary, and discussions with the General Assembly, the public, and other interested parties regarding the annual highway program budget appropriation as well as transportation issues in Illinois. Stakeholder involvement with respect to the MYP is continuous and ongoing. Each successive MYP is built on the previous program published the prior year and includes review and modification of funded projects, analysis of need and available funding, priorities for addition of new projects, and the effects of stakeholder involvement from the previous MYP. Announcement of the program generates considerable media interest as well as numerous questions and comments from members of the General Assembly and the public.

Upon announcement, the MYP is available to the general public through the internet on the Department's website, public libraries, and upon request for a printed or compact disc version. The role of Statewide Program Planning regarding stakeholder involvement and CSS is to provide information regarding project status, anticipated program accomplishments and other requested information to all interested parties. After the MYP announcement, the role is to provide information to those who request it by responding to letters, e-mail, and phone calls. Changes made to the program as part of stakeholder involvement activities affect the next published MYP.

Individual highway projects contained within these plans and programs are subject to the CSS implementation procedures adopted by the Department's Division of Highways. These procedures, including extensive stakeholder

involvement requirements can be found in the Bureau of Design and Environment (BDE) Procedure Memorandum 48-06 entitled "Design Flexibility and the Stakeholder Involvement Process for Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS)."

Finally, in order to determine the necessity, viability, and potential scope and cost of transportation solutions, the Department conducts feasibility studies. These studies examine various identified transportation problems in order to seek potential solutions. Feasibility studies may result in CSS projects are subject to the Department's CSS requirements and should be conducted in compliance with the procedures identified in BDE Procedure Memorandum 48-06.

### **Urban/Metropolitan Planning**

Metropolitan transportation planning examines travel and transportation issues and needs in metropolitan areas. The planning process includes an analysis of alternatives to meet projected future demands and for providing a safe and efficient transportation system that meets mobility needs while not creating adverse impacts to the environments.

In metropolitan areas, transportation planning is a collaborative process led by MPOs and other key stakeholders in the regional transportation system. The responsibility for transportation planning lies with designated MPOs. The process is designed to foster involvement by all interested parties such as the business community, community groups, environmental organizations, and the general public through a proactive public participation process conducted by the MPO in coordination with the state department of transportation and transit operators. The process promotes consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns. Federal funding for transportation projects and programs are channeled through this planning process. Federal planning regulations are codified in 23 CFR 450. MPOs are not the actual implementing agencies for projects but provide an overall coordination role in planning and programming funds for projects and operations.

All federally-funded projects and all regionally significant projects must be included in each metropolitan area's TIP. Each TIP must be consistent with the Long Range Regional Transportation Plan (Plan). These Plans and TIPs are developed by the MPOs. When the Department has CSS projects included in these Plans and TIPs, it is necessary that CSS principles are utilized during their development and adoption. The Plans and TIPs must reflect community input and take into consideration the impacts on both natural and human environments.

By law, this planning process must include an identified public involvement process. Public-involvement meetings during the transportation planning process should include not only representatives from the Department, public transportation operators, special interest groups, and local transportation

agencies but also local land-use partners, federal, state and local environmental, regulatory and resource agencies, community representatives, and modal transportation providers. In addition, an MPO's participation plan should identify required stakeholder involvement as well as next steps for additional involvement needed to support the transportation planning process including the development of the MPO's TIPs. This participation plan must provide reasonable opportunities for all parties to comment. Regulations governing this process can be found at 23 USC 134.

The Department's role in this process is to ensure that plans and TIPs are developed in accordance with these Federal requirements and consistent with the Department's CSS requirements. In addition, in implementing any highway project which has been designated by the Regional Engineer as a CSS project, the Department is required to follow the Division of Highways CSS procedures established in BDE Procedure Memorandum 48-06.