

## Core Principles of CSS

Beginning with the Thinking Beyond the Pavement conference in Maryland in 1998, CSS practitioners have identified core principles about CSS product and process that can be applied to both project implementation and evaluation.

In response to the challenge posed below, the definition of CSS was further defined by seven "Qualities that characterize excellence in transportation design," and by eight "Characteristics of the process that yield excellence." These "qualities" and "characteristics" are goals for any CSS project, and can also be used as evaluation criteria upon its completion.

### The CSS Product: Qualities of Excellence in Transportation Design

The "Qualities that Characterize Excellence in Transportation Design" - that is, of the physical end product of the CSS process - are:

- The project satisfies the purpose and needs as agreed to by a full range of stakeholders. This agreement is forged in the earliest phase of the project and amended as warranted as the project develops.
- The project is a safe facility for both the user and the community.
- The project is in harmony with the community, and it preserves environmental, scenic, aesthetic, historic, and natural resource values of the area, i.e., exhibits context sensitive design.
- The project exceeds the expectations of both designers and stakeholders and achieves a level of excellence in people's minds.
- The project involves efficient and effective use of the resources (time, budget, community) of all involved parties.
- The project is designed and built with minimal disruption to the community.
- The project is seen as having added lasting value to the community.

### The CSS Process: Characteristics of the Process That Yield Excellence

"The Characteristics of the Process that will Yield Excellence in Transportation Design" are:

- Communication with all stakeholders is open, honest, early, and continuous.
- A multidisciplinary team is established early, with disciplines based on the needs of the specific project, and with the inclusion of the public.
- A full range of stakeholders is involved with transportation officials in the scoping phase. The purposes of the project are clearly defined, and consensus on the scope is forged before proceeding.
- The highway development process is tailored to meet the circumstances. This process should examine multiple alternatives that will result in a consensus of approach methods.
- A commitment to the process from top agency officials and local leaders is secured.
- The public involvement process, which includes informal meetings, is tailored to the project.
- The landscape, the community, and valued resources are understood before engineering design is started. A full range of tools for communication about project alternatives is used (e.g., visualization).

## **Benefits of CSS**

As an approach to transportation, CSS has spread rapidly since 1998. In large part this is because CSS practitioners and advocates understand and embrace its many important benefits:

- CSS solves the right problem by broadening the definition of "the problem" that a project should solve, and by reaching consensus with all stakeholders before the design process begins.
- CSS conserves environmental and community resources. CSS facilitates and streamlines the process of NEPA compliance.
- CSS saves time. It shortens the project development process by gaining consensus early, and thereby minimizing litigation and redesign, and expediting permit approvals.
- CSS saves money. By shortening the project development process and eliminating obstacles, money as well as time is saved.
- CSS builds support from the public and from the regulators. By partnering and planning a project with the transportation agency, these parties bring full cooperation, and often additional resources as well.
- CSS helps prioritize and allocate scarce transportation funds in a cost-effective way, at a time when needs far exceed resources.
- Group decisions are generally better than individual decisions. Research supports the conclusion that decisions are more accepted and mutually satisfactory when made by all who must live with them.
- CSS is the right thing to do. It serves the public interest, helps build communities and leaves a better place behind.