MDOT and Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS)

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) has embraced CSS as a way of delivering on its mission of “providing the highest quality integrated transportation services for economic benefit and improved quality of life.”

MDOT has a decentralized structure comprised of 7 Region offices and 26 Transportation Service Centers (TSC) throughout Michigan to encourage collaborative relationships between stakeholders and staff. This structure supports a CSS approach to program delivery by providing local access to MDOT staff throughout project development, construction and maintenance activities, and helps facilitate integrated transportation solutions.

Guidelines For Stakeholder Engagement
Michigan Department of Transportation

MDOT’s CSS policy consists of three fundamentals:

Stakeholder Engagement, Flexibility, and
Effective Decision-Making. MDOT has incorporated CSS fundamentals in staff training since 2005. As a companion to the formal training, MDOT is currently working on tools to assist our region office staff in addressing local community needs and to help in building partnerships.

MDOT staff, at the TSC and Region offices, asked for assistance in how to conduct stakeholder engagement activities for their projects.

The major issues facing MDOT project managers are:

• When should I start the engagement process?

• How do I identify all stakeholders?

• What professional expertise do I need? Special skill sets?

• What kind of engagement is needed on my project and how do I make this determination?

• How do we maintain a consistent stakeholder engagement process statewide, while remaining flexible enough to respect local context and concerns?
Guidelines For Stakeholder Engagement is posted on the CSS page of the MDOT public Web site as well as MDOT’s internal intranet for easy staff accessibility. The document is formatted so it can be easily updated and kept current with FHWA and MDOT policies, strategic goals, and feedback from staff and stakeholders. The success of the Guidelines For Stakeholder Engagement document has initiated an effort by MDOT and local agencies to create a companion document focused on how to help local stakeholders engage MDOT on transportation issues. This effort is currently underway and is anticipated to be completed in 2010.

To address these issues, MDOT released “The Guidelines For Stakeholder Engagement” in February 2009. An internal interdisciplinary team assembled the guidance and presented it to the CSS Steering Committee, which is comprised of representatives from MDOT, and 19 local, state, and federal organizations. The Steering Committee provided valuable input while learning about MDOT’s commitment to CSS and how it is used in our decision-making processes.

The resulting document provides MDOT staff with suggestions and techniques to engage local stakeholders early and often during project development. The document is structured to allow flexibility in engagement approaches to best suit diverse Region, TSC and customer needs, while maintaining a consistent process for implementation statewide.

Guidelines For Stakeholder Engagement addresses:

- Why outreach to stakeholders is an important part of MDOT’s CSS policy.
- Key concepts of how to implement stakeholder engagement.
- How to determine the level of effort appropriate to the scope and scale of the project.
- When and how often engagement should take place.
- Identifying stakeholders and types of engagement techniques.
- How to follow-up and evaluate stakeholder satisfaction.

For information and document downloading, please visit: http://www.michigan.gov/ mdot