

# *DIRECTOR'S POLICY*

*Effective Date:* 11-29-01

*TITLE* Context Sensitive Solutions

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## *POLICY*

The Department uses “Context Sensitive Solutions” as an approach to plan, design, construct, maintain, and operate its transportation system. These solutions use innovative and inclusive approaches that integrate and balance community, aesthetic, historic, and environmental values with transportation safety, maintenance, and performance goals. Context sensitive solutions are reached through a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach involving all stakeholders.

The context of all projects and activities is a key factor in reaching decisions. It is considered for all State transportation and support facilities when defining, developing, and evaluating options. When considering the context, issues such as funding feasibility, maintenance feasibility, traffic demand, impact on alternate routes, impact on safety, and relevant laws, rules, and regulations must be addressed.

## *INTENDED RESULTS*

In towns and cities across California, the State highway may be the only through street or may function as a local street. These communities desire that their main street be an economic, social, and cultural asset as well as provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods. In urban areas, communities want transportation projects to provide opportunities for enhanced non-motorized travel and visual quality. In natural areas, projects can fit aesthetically into the surroundings by including contour grading, aesthetic bridge railings, and special architectural and structural elements. Addressing these needs will assure that transportation solutions meet more than transportation objectives.

The Department can be proud of the many contributions it has made to improve highways that are main streets and the aesthetics of its highways and structures; however, there is a strongly expressed desire across California for this concept to be the norm.

Context sensitive solutions meet transportation goals in harmony with community goals and natural environments. They require careful, imaginative, and early planning, and continuous community involvement.

The Department's *Highway Design Manual*, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) regulations, FHWA's *Flexibility in Highway Design* publication, and the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials' *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets* all share a philosophy that explicitly allows flexibility in applying design standards and approving exceptions to design standards where validated by applying sound engineering judgment. This design philosophy seeks transportation solutions that improve mobility and safety while complementing and enhancing community values and objectives.

## *RESPONSIBILITIES*

### Director:

- Creates an environment in which innovative actions, such as context sensitive solutions, can flourish.
- Recognizes and highlights individuals, teams, and projects that advance the goals of this policy.
- Encourages staff to conduct and participate in meetings and conferences to expand the knowledge of context sensitive solutions internally and externally.

Chief Counsel: Evaluates and provides opinions on legal issues associated with context sensitive solutions.

### Deputy Director, Maintenance and Operations; Chiefs, Divisions of Traffic Operations and Maintenance:

- Support context sensitive solutions in the maintenance and operation of transportation facilities.
- Revise manuals and procedure documents to facilitate the application of context sensitive solutions.
- Initiate and coordinate research to enable context sensitive solutions.

Chief, Division of New Technology and Research:

- Conducts research and develops and improves techniques and materials to enable context sensitive solutions.
- Revises manuals and procedure documents to facilitate the application of context sensitive solutions.

Chief Engineer (Deputy Director, Project Delivery):

- Supports context sensitive solutions in the design and construction of transportation facilities.
- Encourages innovation and flexibility in design.
- Ensures projects are well coordinated to support the application of context sensitive solutions through the life of projects.

Chief, Division of Engineering Services:

- Conducts research and develops and improves techniques and materials to enable context sensitive solutions.
- Trains staff in the application of context sensitive solutions.
- Revises manuals and procedure documents to facilitate the application of context sensitive solutions.

Chief, Division of Project Management: Ensures resources are distributed to enable implementation of context sensitive approaches.

Chiefs, Divisions of Right of Way and Construction:

- Train staff in the application of context sensitive solutions.
- Revise manuals and procedure documents to facilitate the application of context sensitive solutions.

Chief, Division of Design:

- Works in cooperation with district and other functional units to develop guidance on design flexibility.
- Identifies good examples of the application of context sensitive solutions to share with departmental and local agency staff.
- Initiates and coordinates research to enable context sensitive solutions.
- Trains staff in the application of context sensitive solutions.

- Revises manuals and procedure documents to facilitate the application of context sensitive solutions.

Chief, Division of Environmental Analysis:

- Facilitates coordination with resource agencies to assure facilities and activities are in harmony with the surrounding environment.
- Ensures communities have the opportunity to be actively involved in the environmental stage of the project development process.
- Ensures context sensitive commitments are sustained, as warranted, as a project moves through the environmental approval process.
- Trains staff in the application of context sensitive solutions.
- Revises manuals and procedure documents to facilitate the application of context sensitive solutions.

Chief Financial Officer (Deputy Director, Finance); Chief, Division of Transportation Programming:

- Support the inclusion of context sensitive solutions when programming transportation projects.
- Communicate the importance of context sensitive solutions to the California Transportation Commission.
- Facilitate district development of funding partnerships for context sensitive solutions.

Deputy Director, Administration: Supports context sensitive solutions in the planning, design, construction, maintenance, and operation of offices, maintenance stations, and other departmental support facilities.

Deputy Director, Planning and Modal Programs: Supports context sensitive solutions in the planning of transportation programs and facilities.

Chief, Division of Local Assistance:

- Facilitates training of local agencies in the principles of context sensitive solutions.
- Trains staff in the application of context sensitive solutions.
- Revises manuals and procedure documents to facilitate the application of context sensitive solutions.

Chief, Division of Transportation Planning:

- Develops and maintains community planning guidance.
- Trains staff in the application of context sensitive solutions.
- Revises manuals and procedure documents to facilitate the application of context sensitive solutions.
- Works with regional transportation planning agencies, metropolitan transportation organizations, counties, cities, and the private sector to support and incorporate context sensitive solutions in planning, programming, and developing transportation facilities and services.

District Directors:

- Provide leadership in the application of context sensitive solutions in all planning, programming, project development, construction, maintenance, and operational activities of the district.
- Proactively ensure early and continuous involvement of stakeholders.
- Are responsive to requests by local communities, resource and other agencies, and the general public for context sensitive solutions.
- Assure that context sensitivity is applied to local and other projects within the State right-of-way.
- Train staff in the application of context sensitive solutions.

*APPLICABILITY*

All employees and others involved in the planning, development, construction, maintenance, and operation of State transportation and support facilities.

*Originally Signed by*

*11-29-01*

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JEFF MORALES  
Director

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Date Signed