McDermott: Katie McDermott, CTE, NC State University (Raleigh, NC)
Lane: Leigh Lane, Senior Research Assistant, CTE, NC State University (Raleigh, NC)
Neuman: Tim Neuman, P.E., Eastern Coordinator, Center of Excellence for Context Sensitive Solutions, CH2M Hill (Chicago, IL)
Albright: Gregg Albright, District 5 Director, Caltrans (San Luis Obispo, CA)
Van Wagoner: Susan Van Wagoner, Executive Director, Route 50 Corridor Coalition (Middleburg, VA)
Henderson: Mell Henderson, Director of Transportation, Mid-America Regional Council (Kansas City, MO)
Lee: Don Lee, Roadside Environmental Engineer, North Carolina Department of Transportation (Raleigh, NC)

[THEME MUSIC]

McDermott: Hello I’m Katie McDermott with the Center for Transportation and the Environment. This is CTE’s National Teleconference Series. The purpose of this live forum is to engage transportation and environmental professionals in a dialogue about new policy issues, research innovations and best practices in the field. Today’s program examines a framework for improved transportation decision-making called Context Sensitive Solutions, or CSS. For those of you who have been working in transportation for a while, you’re probably more familiar with CSS as a concept that is applied during the design phase of highway or bridge projects, however the principles of CSS can, and many say should, be applied at all functional levels of transportation, from planning and programming through project development and design, and into construction operations and maintenance. The purpose of this program is to explore how CSS is being utilized more holistically at transportation agencies throughout the country and to examine some of the institutional and external factors that are driving change in this area. We invite you to discuss today’s topic and to share your experiences with our panel. To do that you can use the numbers on your screen to phone or fax in your questions and comments at any time during the live broadcast, or you can email us at cte_email@ncsu.edu.

After the program we invite you to participate in CTE’s new web-based “After the Program” discussion forum where you can continue to talk about the issues raised during the live broadcast with our panel and other audience members. The discussion forum will start at four o’clock Eastern Standard Time today and will continue up to two weeks following this broadcast.
A few more details before we get started. First, I hope you’ve already had an opportunity to download the program handout and a copy of the panelists’ slide presentations. If not, I encourage you to do that from CTE’s website. From this site you can also replay this program in its entirety after the broadcast or you can order a copy of the DVD, VHS cassette or written transcript. We’d also like to get your feedback on today’s program and to do that, if you are participating at one of the satellite downlink sites, you can complete the evaluation form located in your handout and turn that in to the site coordinator before you leave this afternoon or, if you are participating via the web, please complete the online evaluation form located on CTE’s website. We thank you all very much for your attention to this.

Well, at this time it is my pleasure to introduce **Ms. Leigh Lane**. Leigh is a senior Research Associate with CTE. She currently serves as the lead developer and trainer for the Context Sensitive Solutions training program that is currently being delivered to staff at the North Carolina Department of Transportation, along with professionals outside of the department. Leigh is a civil engineer with more than 17 years of experience in the development and analysis of public involvement and community impact analyses. She also currently serves on TRB’s Context Sensitive Solutions Taskforce, as well as other related committees and subcommittees to the Transportation Research Board.

Leigh, welcome to the program.

Lane: Thank you so much, Katie. I’m very excited to be here today to be your moderator for this wonderful teleconference on Context Sensitive Solutions. We have a great program for you today. We have a wonderful group of panelists—very enthusiastic CSS experts. We have put this panel together because of their knowledge and experience with Context Sensitive Solutions, their multi-disciplinary backgrounds, and their experience working with communities to find acceptable solutions to meet transportation needs.

As Katie has already stated, this teleconference will apply the CSS principles throughout the transportation decision-making process, beginning in planning and moving into programming, continuing into project development and finally construction operations and maintenance.

The CSS principals that will guide our discussion today are:

1. Meet the transportation need;
2. Be an asset to the community; and
3. Be compatible with the natural and the human environment.
This requires a concerted effort to balance these various principles throughout the decision-making process, and we are going to hear today from our panelists that represent these various areas in how we can go about doing that.

Now I would like to introduce the panel. First on our panel is Mr. Gregg Albright. He is the District 5 Director for the California Department of Transportation. Gregg is the individual that provides the bridge across all the functional levels of transportation decision-making, as he is responsible for activities ranging from planning, project development, construction and operations for California’s central coast, which extends up the coastline from Santa Barbara County through Santa Cruz County.

Next we have Susan Van Wagoner, executive director of US-50 Route Corridor Coalition in Middleburg, Virginia. Susan represents our customer, which is a very important stakeholder for us in the CSS process and she will be sharing with us the community’s perspectives, various values, interests and needs related to the US Route 50 Project in Virginia.

Next we have Mr. Tim Neuman. Tim is the Vice President and Chief Highway Engineer with CH2M Hill from Chicago, Illinois. Tim has been very involved with the National Cooperative Highway Research Program 4480, “A Guide to Best Practices for Achieving Context Sensitive Solutions” and he is our project development expert.

Next we have Mell Henderson. Mell is the transportation director for the Mid-American Regional Council from Kansas City, Missouri and is our planning and program expert panelist. Mell has actually been on a panel before on safety-conscious planning so we’re glad to have him back with us again.

And last, but not least, we have Don Lee, and he is the State Roadside Environmental Engineer with the North Carolina Department of Transportation. He has worked with NCDOT since 1985 and he is our expert panelist representing construction, maintenance and operations.

Katie has already discussed the agenda. Hopefully, everyone has a copy of that agenda. The first hour of this telecast, we will be talking about the history of the CSS movement and we’ll move into a discussion with Susan about concepts of quality of life and defining context. She will share with us very interesting information about the Route 50 Project in Virginia. We will have a brief panel discussion on the need for change. Then we will have a break, and move into various functional areas with three different presentations representing planning, programming, project development, construction operations and maintenance and follow up with a discussion on bridging the gaps.
Finally, we will have another panel discussion on next steps for CSS, and then the last part, which is the most exciting part of the program, will be your opportunity to call, fax, or email us your questions and we very much look forward to that segment of the program.

So, moving right along with our agenda, we have a brief history of CSS and transportation. This conversation will be between myself and Tim Neuman and Gregg Albright. I’m going to start you guys off with a quote and I’m going to read from something, so listen very carefully, because I’m going to ask you to respond to what I am going to read to you to start the discussion on history. I am first going to read from Section 101 of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and it says:

The Congress [and then it says a lot of other things that I left out, but it’s very important, dealing with the environment] declares that it is the continuing policy of the Federal Government in cooperation with state and local governments, and other concerned public and private organizations, to use all practical means and measures including financial and technical assistance in a manner calculated to foster and promote the general welfare, to create and maintain conditions under which man and nature can exist in productive harmony and fulfill the social, economic and other requirements of present and future generations of America.

A lot of bureaucratic kind of language there, but it says a lot and I hope you panelists are listening to what it said, and participants, panelists and participants listening to what that said. That was promulgated in 1969 by our Congress. Then 30 years later, in 1998, we have this quote that comes from thinking beyond the payment Maryland State Highway Administration Workshop held in 1998 which two of our panelists were there. Tim and Susan were both at that conference, and many of you I’m sure tuning in were at that conference. There’s this quote that comes from that:

Context Sensitive Solution asks questions first about the need and purpose of the transportation project, and then equally addresses safety, mobility and the preservation of scenic, aesthetic, historic, environmental and other values. Context Sensitive Solutions involves a collaborative interdisciplinary approach in which citizens are a part of the design team.

So, gentleman, these two may have different words, but to me they sound quite similar. My question for you is, if there was a gap of three decades, and one could say that prior to 1969 there was at least a decade and a half of communities and various citizens pushing to have that statute promulgated. So, the question I have for you is: where this journey we’ve been on towards Context Sensitive Solutions, what is the
journey we’ve been on? What are the milestones and what events bring us into the
twenty-first century? Tim, I’m going to start with you.

Neuman: Thank you, Leigh. One comment I will make is that legislation does tend to be reactive,
so in one sense if you take ‘69 as the formal beginning, if you will, of the CSS
movement, arguably it really started before then, because legislation comes up as a result
of a need. We’re either doing something wrong or not doing something that we should be
doing. So in that respect, we could even trace CSS further back from that. Your quote
from the Maryland conference sounds very similar to what the NEPA language talks
about, and in fact I would say that CSS is the expression of the intent of NEPA, and the
real interesting question is if we passed NEPA in ‘69—and I think Gregg has probably
got some great observations here relative to actually running an agency—how does it
take so long to pass a regulation, pass a law that says this is what our policy is, and still
35 years later we’re still struggling with meeting its intent. My perception is that’s kind
of where we are. We’re getting there. Is 30 years a long time? I would say there are
probably organizational and institutional issues that explain that, and I don’t know,
Gregg, what your reaction to that is.

Albright: I think the fact that there has been 30 years may seem frustrating. Remember what we’re
talking about here is a cultural change, a cultural earthquake, so to speak. Yes, in 1969,
society said, “Wait a minute. We’ve got to be a better steward and we have to change
things.” But you have to remember, the rest of us that are in transportation, we were set
up over an organizational structure that was successful in the ‘50s and ‘60s, but not
prepared for this new set of objectives. So 30+ years of changing is, I hate to say it, but
it’s probably what would be expected when you’re talking about institutionalizing
something and changing culture. What’s really exciting is the fact that I think the
mobility industry, all of us professionals, are recognizing that we can’t do things the way
we did back in the ‘60s. It was very successful, by the way, but at this point we are now
involved in a new landscape. That new landscape needs new skills.

The trends that are part of the 21st century require us to go about this in a little
different way. I’d like to show a few slides that would help to illustrate this. It was kind
of exciting when I think of the first slide that shows the Institute of Transportation
Engineers did a survey of their membership—and this was international, too—and
basically, if you allow me to read it, it says, “In the 21st century, our own professional
development,” this is referencing the Transportation Engineers, “as well as our
organizations must be more diverse than it was in the 20th century. While our focus has
been on technical expertise, the changing transportation environment is demanding new
skills.” If I stop here for a moment, the new skills they are talking about here are not the
technical ones. The ones that we really enjoyed, we went to school and we learned how to
do things in a technical manner. We loved to solve problems. Now we can see, if you
note the slide on the screen, that we’re looking at, really, problem-solving skills. It used
to be you had a complex problem and you had to solve it. What is it? Next slide would
show it was that technical work. We’ll define the problem, we’ll solve it and we’ll come
up with a technical solution and it will be solved. It’s not that simple, as shown on this
next graphic here, there are actually two components. There’s the left side here in this
case where it’s the technical work that we are really comfortable with, that we fine tuned
in the ‘50s and ‘60s. One the right-hand side, though, we see another component that has
to be a part of today’s landscape. The transportation landscape calls for building consent
amongst a diverse group of stakeholders. And in the next slide you’ll see that it’s actually
an interactive . . . it’s a back and forth between the technical expertise that we’re so good
at, and building consent.

But there’s another piece that’s missing here, and I’ll use this simple graphic to
show that. Actually, these two pieces have to play. We have developed new skills on
building consent in a diverse group of stakeholders and still not give up on our technical
skills, but the last slide here I have, really the big problem is defining the problem. I’m
afraid many of us in the transportation industry have said, “Okay, we understand the
problem, stand back and let us solve it.” And do you know what? The new skills that
we’re having to really get our hands on is recognizing that we collaboratively need to
come together to define the problem. If we have an ill-conceived purpose and need, we’ll
end up with a struggle and tension between different stakeholders. And what we’re going
to see over the next hour as we talk is we are going to see the need to find ourselves in a
more collaborative effort from the very beginning as we are discussing and defining the
problem because I remember in design school, 90% of solving the problem is defining it
properly.

Lane: I want to add because I had this wonderful quote from Einstein that really speaks to what
you’re saying. I didn’t know I was going to get a chance to use it, but thank you Gregg.

Albright: You’re welcome.

Lane: I love to use Einstein’s quotes. And this one is: “The significant problems we face cannot
be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them.” And another
one that I have that relates to Einstein has to do with the fact that once a well-stated
problem is a half-solved problem, I mean, if it’s well stated, so that’s very good perspective. Very interesting. And Tim wants to add to that.

Neuman: I think that what’s interesting over the last 30 years, I think we’ve gotten collectively a much better grasp on the dimensions of the problem and I would say arguably 30-35 years ago we didn’t either understand or react as well to the interrelationship between transportation solutions and land use in policy decisions. And I know we’re going to talk a lot about this today, but suffice it to say that we’re all a lot smarter at least in understanding the dimensions of the problem. I think we still struggle with how to deal with it and part of that is because of organizational and political policy issues, but suffice it to say that the old way of, you know, you have a transportation need as defined strictly in terms of counts or volume or I want to go from A to B, and now our understanding that the nature of the problem and the solution to that problem involves more than just transportation might be narrowly defined but land use and other types of decisions, that’s something that has come to us, that understanding has come to us, I think, a lot more than it did, and I think that also explains the history of why we are where we are today. How we are going to get to the right resolution, that remains to be seen, but I think at least we have a better handle on things now.

Lane: Gregg, why do you think that we have the understanding of the different dimensions that Tim was just talking about. What has happened as a society for us in our current culture that has really pushed us to have that awakening, awareness, if you will, as it relates to the knowledge of the different dimensions that are out there?

Neuman: Well, if I understand the question, what we’ve seen is a change towards the fact that, basically, decision-making and influence has been pushed down closer to the customer. So, again, if I am being responsive to the question, I would point out that the fact that people are more empowered and more engaged in protecting the quality of their life, we have regulatory agencies that are given a mission to protect, in many cases, natural or cultural resources. All of those things contribute to the fact that you now have a broad range of stakeholders that are going to essentially require to be engaged, need to be engaged for us to get the full picture of the issue. Otherwise I am just looking at it in a parochial manner and I’m missing half of the, I need everybody else to be there at the table. I don’t know if I was responsive or not.

Lane: No, I think that was very responsive to what I was asking.

Neuman: Well I guess the other thing I would say is, over the last few years I think we tried solutions and in many cases ended up chasing our tail or the solution is creating another
problem and we’ve gotten to this situation where a whole combination of things: resource limitations, unforeseen impacts. The problem has got a lot more dimensions and at some point we step back and say, “Are we really approaching this issue the right way?” I mean, different locales in this country have come to that conclusion faster than others, but I think, generally speaking, the old solutions, the old approaches quite clearly ended up not being the total answer and I think that explains where we are today.

Albright: And when we try to approach something without the total answer, we fail. And I think all of us in the transportation industry, really, we don’t get excited about producing lots of paper, we get excited about giving the public something. So I think one of the things that motivates us the most is when we can actually see something done and if we have a system that comes up to the 11th hour and fails, that rubs us wrong, there is a core value that is not being accomplished. I have seen most of our industry get pretty excited over the idea, “Okay, it’s not working. We’re prepared to change.” And the new skill is the one that comes back to mind. We need to be careful of what are the institutional barriers that are keeping us from being responsive because the bottom line is we are happiest when we are producing a product that the people use, that is responsive to their needs. We are least happy when we are failing at the 11th hour and we’ve wasted a lot of resources. I think we desire to be good stewards of the public trust.

Lane: Very good. As an individual who has actually held public hearings in the state of North Carolina, I will absolutely agree with Gregg that we do want outcomes that our customers are happy with. Because standing up in front of hundreds of very angry people is not a very pleasant situation.

This conversation that I have had with Tim and Gregg really brings a lot to light in terms of what we are going to be talking about with Context Sensitive Solutions today. The CSS mindset has come over many decades. It has evolved. It’s not only an outcome but it’s a way of thinking and it really requires us to understand that transportation does affect all that’s around us. There is an interconnectivity, and I think that’s a perfect segue to begin my discussion with Susan Van Wagoner. Susan, as I have already mentioned, is a representative of the community. Susan, you have to remind me. That’s a long title that you have. It’s the Route 50 . . .

Van Wagoner: Route 50 Corridor Coalition.

Lane: That’s right. Okay. Very good. What I want to talk to you about, Susan, is this idea about quality of life. Even though we really didn’t, in the history section, talk about quality of life, I think that most of this panel as well as many of the viewers today would agree that
the greatest measure of success for Context Sensitive Solutions is preserving, protecting and even enhancing our quality of life. That’s, you know, kind of it in a nutshell. But, what does that really mean? When we talk about quality of life, it’s a bit unclear. From your experience working with the community in Middleburg, Virginia and surrounding areas as well, because this is a very long project. In rural Virginia, I might add. Many people think that Context Sensitive Solutions is an urban type situation, but it’s not. It applies in rural settings as well. This makes it very interesting. My question for you is, kind of thinking back—because this project has been highlighted as an example of excellence in Context Sensitive Solutions—but thinking back, what were the citizens of the community saying when this Route 50 project came up? What would you say the qualities or characteristics of a good quality of life were they talking about, that they were concerned about?

Van Wagoner: Well, not to go into a ten-year project and all of the history of it, but, it originally started with a conventional solution to a problem that I think Gregg brought up the idea of defining the problem, and I think that is one of the key elements here and that traffic was increasing to a slight degree and where we live is 45 minutes west of Washington, D.C. so even though it’s rural, it’s right next to a major metropolitan area, so there are some of those same issues.

Lane: If you can kind of paint a picture for us if you will, because I know you’re an artist so, if you can, paint a picture in words of that quality of life in that area, what are the words that would come to mind to describe that. The various qualities or characteristics of that area that come to mind that you hear people talking about on a daily basis, you heard them talking about years ago, that they love.

Van Wagoner: It is, and that’s the first thing we did, is a visioning process for people to actually define what it is that they love, which is a small town atmosphere. The rural setting, the beautiful countryside, the incredible history that’s there. The solution that had come up for solving any transportation problem that existed there at all was to build a four-lane highway and bypasses around the small historic towns. People very quickly got together and looked at the actual problems as they identified them, not as they were identified by conventional transportation measures, and what they said the problems were, were speeding and aggressive driving, not congestion.

Lane: And who were “they” and I’m hearing that that’s a component of quality of life—was the community concerned about safety?
Van Wagoner: The community was concerned about safety as it pertains to speeding and aggressive driving through the community, not congestion.

Lane: Okay. So a good quality of life for the citizens of that community was having a safe transportation facility.

Van Wagoner: Yes. Absolutely.

Lane: Along with these other things: the rural setting, the historic features—

Van Wagoner: And protecting the tourism value of the area.

Lane: So there was an economic component that you were concerned about.

Van Wagoner: Absolutely. Local businesses. Basically, people who lived there wanted it to stay pretty much the way it is. And that’s true of many communities throughout the country. But there is good reason for it. There’s an economic reason, and all of those things, so we did actually get together and come up with our own vision.

Lane: Okay. And that happened after the first discussions of the Route 50. When the Route 50 Project came forth and was talked about, the community was very, very concerned about that.

Van Wagoner: Yes.

Lane: And I’m kind of going back in the past here and thinking before you began this process that you embarked upon with the citizens of the community. Well, let me ask this question. What did the transportation agency responsible—which was the Virginia Department of Transportation—what did they do to engage the community to find out what these qualities or characteristics of good quality of life are and what the community interests and needs were as they related to the quality of life?

Van Wagoner: Well, we did that. We the community did that.

Lane: The community did it. There was nothing specifically that the transportation agency did.

Van Wagoner: No. We did all of the work ourselves. We hired an independent consultant who is an expert in transportation planning and rural traffic calming. And we had our own meetings and we raised our own money and we put together a plan to be an alternative to the widening of the road.

Lane: Do you have a comment for our viewers that relates to, you had your own group and you had your own money that you used, but what about other communities that may not have their own? If you put yourself in that situation, and imagine other communities having quality of life characteristics that they are very concerned about. You said you did it, I guess, why did you do it? Why did your community do it?

Van Wagoner: We did it because no one else would do it.
Lane: Okay, you had to do it.

Van Wagoner: And I think we have led the way for a lot of other communities and we have worked with people all over the country on similar issues and I think now that people are all getting together and discussing Context Sensitive Solutions. I think now DOTs are much more aware of this sort of thing and a lot of them actually follow our lead in doing it. Now we are actually, to give VDOT the credit it deserves, we are now working very closely with them on implementing the project and it’s a terrific process, but it was a long time getting there, I’m afraid.

Lane: And Susan is getting ready to tell us—we’re not going to go to that quite yet because I want to say a little bit more about the quality of life issue. Defining quality of life is an extremely important step in Context Sensitive Solutions and in fact very important to be done as part of defining the context. I have taught almost a thousand individuals now in the transportation profession and even some outside the transportation profession and we ask every one of them to define quality of life and this does require people to stop and think critically and it’s not always hard to think about how your life depends on many different things. It’s the interconnectivity and the interrelationship and we all care about so many things.

Susan has mentioned some of the things: the small town feel; the historic structures; and the feeling that you get when you are in this quaint, cozy, rural community. We care about those things and they affect our lives, so to take the time up front—and Gregg has alluded to this as well—but taking that time up front to understand that is extremely important. And that moves us on into the kind of defining context. But in defining context what we’re trying to do is relate the quality of life characteristics or qualities or indicators back to transportation and the question that we’re asking is “How will transportation effect all of those quality of life characteristics?” That begins to put it within the context, if you will, that we need to have to move on and define a problem. So, I absolutely want to make that point clear that from a community’s perspective, as you have heard from Susan, this idea of understanding the quality of life. They took it upon themselves to define that quality of life through a visioning process, but many communities do not have the resources to hire someone to go in and do that, and oftentimes it becomes the transportation industry’s challenge to do that or assist a community in doing that.

So, now that we’ve kind of piqued everyone’s interest, Susan, as it relates to this Route 50—and I know you really want to get into some of the details and tell people
about that project and I know that our viewers are interested in that project—let’s go ahead and have you move into the Route 50 project and give us some more background and show us some of your slides on that. So I’m going to turn it over to you now.

Van Wagoner: We did put together a few slides just to let people know what the community is like. I think the first one just has a map of the area which is probably difficult for people to see in too much detail. But there are three villages along a twenty mile stretch of roadway. So it’s a rural area, but extremely historic. And the next slide shows one of many historic markers all along the roadway. Homes that are still being used that were built in the 1700s, 1800s. The next slide shows that’s the library in Upperville, believe it or not. It’s the smallest library I think in the state, maybe in the country, but these are the types of buildings that are all along the roadway and the villages. I think the next one actually has all of the towns involved—Upperville, Middleburg and Aldie going from west to east. What has happened is they were just small villages and because the road was widened and straightened and various things, now it has become sort of a highway with buildings on the side, as opposed to a town with a main street.

So that’s what we’re trying to get back to and still accommodate the through traffic, which is easy enough to do in Middleburg actually. The largest town is a population of about 680. So that just gives you the size and the other two are about 100. The next slide just shows some of the countryside farming community, world famous equestrian industry there, and just numerous, numerous historic sites. The next slide is our famous Paris Gap view which is pretty much what the whole area looks like. To try to get through it as quickly as possible, we did put together a two-volume report, which we still have copies of if anyone’s interested. It shows all of the history of the area and the whole process that we went through as a community to define our vision of the community and to come up with an alternative plan to a four-lane highway. We had meetings, we made our own little homemade maps, and some people who have been to these conferences have seen some of them that I used to cart around and put up on the wall, and everybody would laugh at me but it wasn’t a PowerPoint presentation, but this is what we actually used and we had to use the mayor and town administrator actually drawing on the maps and coming up with their own designs. We had a float in the Christmas parade, just to be very hokey. It was great fun. We had an oxcart that we drove down the road. It was raining and snowing but it was fun. And we redefined the problem, which is what Gregg had said and I’m so happy that all of these people are coming
together and saying, “Oh, we should do those things” in the order we actually did them. So either we did the right thing or you guys finally did the right thing, I’m not sure.

What we came up with was not building a four-lane highway with bypasses around the towns, but to do a rural traffic-calming project that would actually solve the problems that people had identified, which was the speeding and aggressive driving. We don’t have a congestion problem. The design of it—I think we have a before-and-after shot—this is downtown Middleburg. The one traffic light along the 20-mile stretch. And if we—gradually—this shows what the design would be, which is things like changes in pavement—the parking lanes would be paving stones. We would decide what was actually going to be widened and the road narrowed. More street trees bulging out at the corners—typical traffic-calming measures that are used in a lot of places. And next we have a view of the entrance to Aldie. We would have entranceway features at the beginning of each of the towns, and the next slide I think shows that. Yes. There’s the actual existing thing, and we have another slide of how we would put splitters in the roads, and landscaping and streetscaping, and a lot of you are very familiar with traffic calming.

So the issue really becomes one of our having to do it ourselves. Hopefully that is ending now and we can get all of these wonderful experts and DOTs and consultants and construction people to help from the beginning and now we are implementing the project. Our senator, John Warner, saw this as a national model and it was federally funded in the 221 Bill, and we are now implementing the project. Working with VDOT, with their local task force, we have been involved in every step of the process, including writing the scope of work and the RFP. We were on the selection committee for the consulting team—the first time that’s ever been done in the state—and we have a very good working relationship with VDOT. I go to every meeting and what we’re finding is that we can be very helpful on certain projects, like we are trying to get right-of-way donated—things like that can be done on the local level. So I think we have a lot of things that we can be helpful on.

Lane: So from listening to this, I have so many ideas that you are throwing out and I’m just jotting down, and I hope the viewers are doing the same thing, and even our panelists as well, because you said so many things that triggered in my mind the principles of Context Sensitive Solutions right down to the actual application of it and the skills that were used. This idea of inclusiveness, I heard a lot of that and participation and collaboration. Did
you, once you went through this, did the community perceive themselves to be partners in this process now? Was there a difference between the beginning to where it is now?

Van Wagoner: Oh, yes. I think, well actually I think the community sees itself as leader.

Lane: Leaders, the actual leaders, which is better.

Van Wagoner: I do. You know. And now partners. And I know it is difficult, I’m sure to include everyone, it’s hard to identify all of that. That’s one of the things we probably are going to discuss as we go along today, but it’s been quite an interesting process.

Lane: Gregg, do you have something . . .

Albright: Yes. I want to compliment—it’s this kind of action that is really needed to create social change. So I think the fact that she had to do it and put so much energy into it, you know, it may be disappointing. But in reality, that exactly how we change in our society. People who have a vested interest and a passion. Now, what you are coming up against was us DOTs, Departments of Transportation, we have this alliance to old practices. We have a commitment to the skills and experiences that were successful yesterday, and yet you’re calling us to walk into tomorrow. And so I think this is so complementary to have a group come up. It’s a shame that you have to put so much energy into it, but they have the passion. And then we come along. So you were leaders. And I think the ideal thing would be for us institutions to overcome these barriers that we face that are sometimes very practical, like where do we have our staff resources. But if I had a vision of who we should be, we should be back to a partnership where there is this alliance relationship, where in fact we can’t accomplish anything without each other. In other words, if we can get to the point—and you were complimenting VDOT a moment ago—if they are not at a point where they recognize that they need you and you need them to accomplish these objectives, you move from this buyer/seller—I’m coming in and telling you that you need a four lane and you’re saying, “I don’t want to buy it,” then we move to a co-creator. Imagine that. I have a vision. I have a vision that we could create a situation where we have an alliance relationship. One that’s built upon “I need you and you need me.” We’ve got to come to the table.

Lane: That’s just beautifully said, Gregg. Thanks you so much. I like that. It’s kind of hard fought to say anything after that, but I’m going to give it a shot. The things that I heard Susan say that I think are very interesting, as we go back to the principles of Context Sensitive Solutions, was this deliberate effort to really look at the transportation need, the human and the natural environment, and back to this kind of community asset. And there was a balancing that went on. The community took the leadership role and brought the
Department of Transportation along. It worked out okay. Everybody is happy now. As I was saying, some communities may not have the financial ability to do that for themselves, and we have to keep that in mind and realize that that is going to be a challenge for us and maybe—we were talking about the transportation industry kind of to the table and providing that balance and expanding the way we think about transportation to a much broader arena. Defining our problems much broader by focusing not just on the transportation need that we are all trained so well to deal with but also looking at the human and the natural environment, including the stakeholders to develop something that becomes a community asset. They were beautiful pictures. And I did hear that the aesthetics were very important and the safety was important, but the tradeoff in there was that maybe mobility or the travel time—I know originally that was planned to be widened to four lanes with some bypasses, so there was some “How fast are we going to get someplace?” Apparently that community was willing to trade off that for preserving the aesthetics and the rural feel. I think it’s very important for us to understand that there are tradeoffs.

Let’s move on—Gregg already started our panel discussion on this need for change. The institutional practice—he mentioned that—and what’s driving the need for change. I’m opening up to all of you folks to—let’s talk about that. And I hope the viewers are writing down questions as well. What do you think about that change? Gregg has thrown in his ideas, which were great, and, what do you think about that?

Neuman: Well I guess, Leigh, from my perspective, it shouldn’t be up to the community to interject themselves in the job of an agency whose responsibility presumably is to provide a service, so—and I think you said it well, not everybody has the resources, not everybody has the energy, frankly, not everybody has the kind of influence to make things happen. The real issue is, why isn’t every project done like this—and I don’t mean by the outcome, because [Route] 50 is a unique project, but why isn’t every project done in a manner where the community is engaged in a systematic process-driven approach. There are good explanations for that. It’s certainly not for a lack of desire, at least in a lot of areas, in some cases it may be. But there are clearly some barriers, we’re still doing things the way we used to do them.

If I could call up a slide from—I’ve got two slides from our course that we teach and there is some summary—we do a two-day workshop on CSS and we have done it on behalf of the federal highway—there, there’s the one, thank you—and, Gregg I’m interested in your comment, but our perception is that there are really four areas that
really have to be dealt with and each organization is different, but arguably the one, the culture up in the left corner, arguably may be the most important one. We do an exercise at the end of the two days and we ask folks “What’s driving you as an organization to embrace CSS?” And they brainstorm and then they do a little preference voting, if you will. This is boiled down, but we’ve taught this in Alaska, in Maine, Louisiana, North Dakota, and I tell you, you hear the same stuff. And this is what you hear: external stakeholders expect us to be more open. In some cases, not all, we have folks such as Gregg who are pushing us, senior managers within the department—that’s hit or miss because that’s not true in some places. Proven successes elsewhere, “Gee, these guys did it, this state did it, why can’t we do that?” that’s a powerful driver. And the last one, if I can pull it up here, Federal Highway—this is a big initiator.

Now we also say, “All right, what’s keeping you from getting there?” And I’m going to quickly run through these. “Gee, all this stakeholder stuff and a lot of meetings and all of this back and forth and alternatives.” Okay, that’s expensive. “We don’t know how to do this” or “we only have one landscape architect in the whole state, you know, and he can’t work on every job.” Okay. “Our design manual doesn’t allow us to do the types of things that we are talking about” tort liability comes up, I know we are going to talk about this, but this is the biggie, I would argue, and maybe Gregg has got some insights out of this. You know, these are “our projects,” and we are going to lose control if we turn the processes over to external stakeholders whoever they might be.

Now, to summarize, if you look on the left, the driving forces are external, generally, with the exception of select senior managers. The stuff on the right is internal. And again this is what we have kind of found in talking all over the country. What is pushing these external forces, what’s holding you back is internal forces. I don’t know, Gregg, if you’ve got any—

Albright: That is hitting it right on, because we’ve done it to ourselves. And it makes sense. An organization that was successful yesterday establishes a pattern and feels good about that and so you keep that pattern going, you hold onto it. You know what? We should have zero tolerance for the idea that we are going to lose control. We are not being asked to be irresponsible and give up our mission to provide safety, or whatever it is. We are not being asked to be responsible, we are being asked to be responsive. And again, you go back to the idea, if we pretend that we are just in a parochial world, where we do our own thing, we are going to fail. We are going to fail on all of the complex projects. So, what we have to do, because we have done it to ourselves, is internal restrictions. We have got
to change our performance measurements. That sort of thing. We have to reevaluate how we consider ourselves successful. And you know there is a core value that, old-timers or new-timers agree to—if you are delivering a solution and it’s being done, everyone agrees that’s the measure of success.

So we can ask the person who is clinging to the old ways, “Are you getting things done in this new world?” and I have to grudgingly often say, “No, I’m not.” A core value is to get something done: “Are you willing to change?” “Yes, I am.” Now we have to restructure our whole organization’s performance measurements, so that we get the right kind of behavior out of it. And it’s not always just the Department of Transportation has to do that. Quite often the legislators can say, “Well, are you spending your money?” Well, if you’re going to just ask us to spend money, we can spend money, but it’s not going to be the right project. So we have to stand back and say, “Wait a minute. Hold us accountable, but hold us accountable in a way that promotes the right kind of behavior.”

So these institutional barriers that you have on the right-hand side of your slide can be removed and you don’t have to have all of these artificial influences on the left side of your graphics getting things done. Everybody buys into the whole thing and says, “Yes. Core value? I like to see something done. I like the idea of a good stewardship of taxpayer resources. I like the idea of stewardship from an environmental standpoint, preserving communities, and providing mobility.” That will drive the change. Not easily done. A lot easier for me to say, but I think that’s what is moving us right now.

Lane: I’d like to throw something out, because I would like to hear from both Don and Mell on this issue. And it comes from part of what Susan was talking about. I was listening very attentively, and one of the things that I heard you talking about is how one of your senators—is that correct?

Van Wagoner: Yes.

Lane: Is that a U.S. senator?


Lane: A U.S. senator bought in and thought this was the greatest thing in the world. Well, I teach, as Tim does, a context sensitive solution class and we asked them also, some of the very same things, and guess what? Tim, it’ll be no surprise that North Carolina is coming up with the same things all of the rest of the states are. Well, one of the ones I hear is political. Political influence in the process. And yet Susan is here attesting that a senator thought this was great and apparently went to congress to get the money for this demonstration project. So you can flip that situation and say—Mell, I put you on the spot.
on this, because you are right here in the planning, metropolitan planning organization, having to work with all of the mayors, local officials, you are dealing with the politics every single day. What do you think about that? What do you think about the CSS and the planning of the change there? The idea of change?

Henderson: Well, it does all come back to what you are about as a community and what you are trying to accomplish and I think sometimes we lose sight of that and we get focused in on the transportation project and the utility of the transportation project and we lose sight of the bigger picture. Sometimes our elected officials are very good at seeing that bigger picture and holding us accountable to thinking a little more broadly than perhaps we otherwise might if we are solely focused on transportation utility.

Lane: I am kind of thinking about the bookends of this and Mell being the first bookend there, and then Don kind of being the back—I mean you folks are holding this together. I mean without the planning and without the construction operations and maintenance, we don’t have anything. The middle is not driving this whole thing. It has to be comprehensively throughout decision-making.

You’ve heard this discussion, Don. What do you think in terms of what does it say for change? Coming from your perspective?

Lee: Well, I think the construction maintenance part of the whole picture has oftentimes been left out. And sometimes construction folks are pretty sure that people, planners and designers, had some screws loose when they were preparing some of the designs, [LAUGHTER] but, really, in reality, what this comes down to, decisions have been made, commitments have been made, and it’s up to construction engineers and the integrity of the profession to make sure we fulfill that. And it’s critical for a lot of reasons. And primarily, the most prominent reason is for trust. Building trust with the communities, with the agencies. And we found rather rapidly here in North Carolina that we can’t do it on our own, and if we don’t fulfill those commitments, oftentimes there is a lightning bolt from somewhere and usually that’s very uncomfortable. So we recognize and respect what CSS is.

Lane: When I think of the construction and operations and maintenance side, this idea of promises made and promises kept really comes to mind, but there is a lot of other things as well and you will have the opportunity to share some of the work that you are doing in North Carolina. An application, really, of Context Sensitive Solutions.

So, does anybody else have some comments to add on this idea of change—and even for our viewers that would like to call in and have a question, we would love to hear
from you and we are certainly prepared to take a live call or get your fax or email. Tim, do you have something to add?

Neuman: Well, I want to just go back to your question about political—if you want to call it political meddling or whatever—and I hear this all the time on projects: “We’d be okay if the politicians would stay out of it.” And I think about this and I say well, let’s see, we’re a public body, we are spending public money on publicly-owned land and we’re incurring impacts—good, bad and indifferent—on the public. If that’s not the business of political leaders, then what is? And it seems to me when you get wrapped around the axle of politicians’ meddling, it suggests to me that we haven’t done enough of our homework to work with them—they’re stakeholders too. And some might argue they’re at the top of the list in terms of importance and if they “meddle,” one could say, well maybe we haven’t done the right job of involving them and what are their interests and what’s their vision. They’re the ones that were elected for this particular geography. Is not their input important and is it not warranted? Again, anybody want to jump in on that, but that’s kind of my take on it.

Albright: I tend to agree that there are days when I wake up and oh, no, I got a call from Senator So-and-so, which I won’t mention here. [LAUGHTER]

Lane: He might be watching.

Albright: The reality is that I like the idea of turning them, instead of being a liability, they’re really an asset to me because their ears are very close to the ground and they really understand the political landscape. So what if I was to meet with them routinely and ask them: where are the hotspots? What is it we can do? If I can make him or her look successful, they like that. But the reality is that also I leverage all of that experience and knowledge they have. But it means a little extra effort on my part. I can’t sit back in my office and find a little cubbyhole and work on CAD and just do something, I’ve got to be out there. And some of the most effective community involvement is simply having coffee with the mayor and sitting there and saying, “What are the key issues? How can we do this?” And all of a sudden, they jump on. And I go back to—I hate to be a preacher here—but I go back to the idea that they’re now a partner, and I get a lot more done. And yes, sometimes it drives us in a little different direction but the reality is that I need their perspective.

Lane: That is terrific and I think a really good point to close this first section on and I’ll say this, we’ve talked a lot about trust, building relationships; to build relationships we have to build trust. And how are we going to build that trust? Well, Gregg just said sitting down
with that person, that politician, having a cup of coffee and listening. I think that to be successful in this change that we really do have to look at knowledge, skill and our desire. I think Tim called it the driving force, maybe what’s motivating. But the right knowledge, the right skills and having the desire, will take us where we need to go and help us build those relationships. So with that, we’re going to close this first section of the teleconference off and we’re going to have a 10-minute break and when we return we’ll have presentations on the various functional areas of transportation decision-making.

Please do remember that you can phone us, email or fax us. We are looking forward to the questions. I know you have some questions out there. So we’re looking forward to hearing from you and we’ll see you in 10 minutes.

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Lane: Welcome back to the “Context Sensitive Solutions: A Better Way” teleconference. We’re on to the second segment of the teleconference called “CSS and Transportation Functional Area Overviews.” We’re going to start this by having Mell Henderson talk about CSS and planning and programming.

Henderson: Thank you, Leigh. I’m going to focus most of my attention on sort of the big-picture-context part of Context Sensitive Solutions. As we’ve come to learn in the Kansas City region, we’re not just building projects, we’re building a community. And for us it’s very much an economic issue. It’s clear to us that the most important resource of our future economy is highly skilled, educated, talented, innovative people. Well, those kind of people can live anywhere they want to live. Why would they want to live in a place like metropolitan Kansas City? We don’t have oceans, we don’t have mountains and when I flew out yesterday in a rainstorm, we weren’t having mild weather. We’ve concluded that we have to create a region that works better than others, a place that provides opportunities for folks to have a fulfilling life. So how do you go about doing that? Well, I’m going to tell you Kansas City’s story.

We began with the premise that a great region solves problems and makes progress. But progress toward what? Well, through our metro outlook project, we surveyed almost 1700 households in the Kansas City region to find out what we want for our metropolitan community. At least 70% of our residents said that things that were very important to us were: safe neighborhoods, good health, loving relationships, time for
family, a clean and healthy environment, good public schools, strong families, adequate income, successful children . . . The list goes on and on. Now for those of us—a little sidebar here—in transportation, do you realize none of those say anything about access or mobility or congestion? It kind of tells us that transportation is really a means to an end. And the value of transportation is to what degree it allows us to accomplish these things that are most important to us. These factors and issues tell us that we care deeply about our personal standard of living, our health, our safety, our income, but our interests are really broader than that. We also care about neighborhoods, families, children, schools, the environment and much more. We’re concerned about our community and its future. In short, we don’t want progress for some at the expense of others. We don’t want progress now at the expense of future generations, and we don’t want economic progress to come at the expense of social health and nature as well. But rather we really desire a region where the quality of life is continually rising for everyone. So what does that mean for transportation?

Well, as we developed our current long range transportation plan, Transportation Outlook 2030, we specifically looked for ways that our transportation systems and our transportation investments could support our regional goal of a rising quality of life for everyone. Building on the work of Metro Outlook, through discussions with our policy leadership, we identified four ways that transportation could support our one regional goal. And these became our transportation goals. First, to support a healthy strong regional economy, to build a public, private and philanthropic wealth that our community will need to make the investments we want to make in our community. Second, to maximize access to opportunity for all area residents, to ensure that everyone has the ability and opportunity to participate in all that our community has to offer. Third, to support a quality built and a quality natural environment, again to make metropolitan Kansas City a place where educated, talented people will want to be. And then fourth, to promote the safety and wellbeing of the traveling public, to ensure that as our citizens move about the community every day, they arrive safely at their destinations.

Well that set the stage for us, but we really wanted to make this more practical. In order to make progress toward these transportation goals, what exactly should we be doing? What should our investments and our projects focus on? We asked the various transportation committees that we have to support our work, we asked interested citizens to public meetings and we also asked the community at large through a transportation
issues survey that over 600 people completed. And what they told us became our plan’s policy direction. Our priority focus for the near term.

Specifically, they told us that we should, first, increase our emphasis on maintaining our existing transportation infrastructure. This is something our citizens have repeatedly told us is their number one priority but something that we don’t have a very good track record of doing. Second, we should increase modal choice, provide real options to our citizens for how they move about our community. Third, we should better integrate transportation projects into the fabric of the community, ensuring that these often large and somewhat permanent facilities not only provide transportation utility but also enhance the communities they reside in and relate better to what’s on the land adjacent to them. And fourth, we should better manage roadway capacity, getting the most we can out of our current roads, the investments we’ve already made, and thinking much more strategically about when and where it is appropriate to add capacity to our already very large roadway network.

This policy framework, our goals and our policy direction, in many ways encourage us to look at transportation in a broad context. We’re beginning to understand that our transportation decisions have to do with much more than the facilities themselves. They impact the community overall in terms of how it feels and functions. To put it another way, I think in some ways we as transportation planners have been too focused on the journey, sometimes at the expense of the destination. And our challenge today is really to rethink our work in such a way that we’re helping to create, enhance and support our destinations that make the journey worth taking in the first place. And it is encouraging to see as we have moved on into project development activities, many of these goals, this policy framework, showing up in the purpose of need statements that are being developed as part of those projects.

One of our most significant efforts has been the Creating Quality Places initiative which resulted in 20 principles to encourage and support alternative community design practices throughout Kansas City. These principles were developed through four committees representing a broad range of participants and they’re really adaptable to any community in our region and they’re supported by a number of resources, case studies, model ordinances, design standards and financing mechanisms that elected officials, planners, private developers and builders can use to implement them. And we’ve supplemented this with additional workshops and speaker series to continue to bring new information and new approaches to our community.
We group the Creating Quality Places principles into four categories, which you see on the screen. I’m not going to go through all of those, but I wanted to give you a flavor of some of the transportation principles that are part of that initiative. The transportation principles include recognition that a quality transportation system accommodates a range of travel modes in a balanced way to maximize access and mobility and to minimize congestion. They also recognize the importance of the local street network in providing access to homes, shops and businesses apart from the high speed major arterials. They note the importance of designing streets in ways that encourage pedestrian and bicycle use and they note the importance of street and community design in making transit a viable travel option.

Several case study examples have been developed to illustrate this last transit support of development principle. This example shows how the public street and the adjacent private land in a historic town center could be redesigned and redeveloped to create a more vibrant economically successful place.

This example shows how an older suburban mall site could be redeveloped as a mixed-use town center, better connected to the surrounding residential district so that neighboring residents could easily walk, bike or take transit to conduct activities that currently pretty much require them to use a car and drive.

This example shows how a currently undeveloped green field site could be developed as a walkable, bikable mixed-use community that would be effectively served by public transit, would allow much of the residents’ daily activities and needs to be met within the development and could potentially reduce the travel demands being placed on the higher level transportation facilities around the perimeter of the site. Hopefully these examples give you a sense of the vision we have for how our community could change over time through a partnership of public and private actions.

I do also want to mention that there’s one other very critical step in our work, that of programming the funds to implement Context Sensitive Solutions. We’re currently at MARC examining the processes that we use to program funds, and we certainly have several challenges in this area yet to resolve. We continue to work to see that our project funding processes are inclusive of the broad range of activities that are eligible for the federal funds that we program. We’re also looking at our project evaluation methods to ensure that we can evaluate a broad range of project types in a fair way.

And finally, we recognize that in many cases a proposed project or solution is really at a conceptual stage when we’re programming funds. If we attach additional
expectations around design to those projects, we really need to then monitor their progress as they move through the entire design and project development phase. And that’s something we’ve not historically done. So that’s a new avenue for us to monitor what happens as projects move forward.

In conclusion, I’ll simply restate that, from our perspective, we’re not just building projects, we are building a metropolitan community, a quality place, a place with safe neighborhoods and strong families and healthy children, and that is our context for Context Sensitive Solutions.

Lane: Very, very good, insightful, wonderful work that you’re doing. You hit on everything that I would have wanted you to hit on in that 10 minutes.

We’re going to move to Tim Neuman who’s going to talk to us about CSS and project development. And many of you out there watching as viewers will be most familiar with this, the Context Sensitive Design it was called, before Context Sensitive Solutions; we’re now calling it “Solutions” rather than “Design,” really did focus more on project development. And to define project development for those of you who may not know what I’m talking about, I’m really talking about the activities that are pre-construction. Planning has occurred, a project has been programmed, and now the environmental studies pursue and you also have preliminary design on a range of alternatives, you move into right-of-way plans and right-of-way acquisition and final design plans. And so we’re going to have the highway design engineer, Tim, talk to us about that very important project development phase and how CSS applies.

Neuman: Okay, thank you, Leigh. Well first, I think it’s important to look at the notion that CSS is much more than just “aesthetics.” By now I think you understand that—and if you look at some of the early literature there’s a feeling that, well, this is all about maybe you could call it putting lipstick on a pig or [LAUGHTER] making projects look nice, and CSS is much more than that. And the things we’ve been talking about today—an open, inclusive planning process, integration of environmental studies—this is what CSS is all about.

Leigh brought up these guiding principles from the Maryland workshop, and from a process standpoint I think we need—always understand that we’re there to serve and address a transportation need. And the notion of being an asset to the community as opposed to just doing as little damage and getting out of town at midnight, is something that the community really wants us to do and I think transportation professionals would like to have that attitude.
For those of you who want to learn more about process, if you will, specifically on the design side, these are some of the key documents in what I’d say, the CSS toolbox, flexible and highway design has been around for many years. NCHRP 480, which I’m really speaking from, is the one on the right. The one in the middle was just published this past spring, and it is AASHTO’s, it’s been referred to as their bridging document, but it’s their policy statement on what do we really mean when we talk about flexibility in highway design? Well, in [NCHRP] 480, from a process standpoint, we discovered or uncovered, if you will, four critical success factors to successful projects, and these are listed on the screen.

What I’d like to do is spend a couple minutes going through each of these four critical success factors. And interestingly enough, we start with decision-making. And that may seem counterintuitive, but at the beginning of any project if you don’t take the time to engage everybody, all the stakeholders and making sure they understand: what are the decisions, who will make those decisions, who is involved in recommendations, what’s the process by which we make these? If you don’t take the time to outline that, you’re putting yourself and the project at risk, and you’re certainly sending wrong messages to stakeholders. They’ll draw their own inferences about this.

This is just an example of a simple decision flowchart for a project, and this happens to be for a study in Ohio. But it outlines the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholder groups, and it says these are the folks who are going to make the decision. In this case it’s the DOT and the regional planning commission. But that’s just an illustration of what we mean by an approach to a project to really ensure success. And really what we’re talking about is trust and credibility in setting and meeting expectations in folks. Second critical success factor is reflecting community values, and this is the quote that Leigh mentioned earlier on what that really means, and what’s really important here is recognizing that public involvement as a task is a critical task; it’s integral with the project; it has its own skills, budgets, deliverables. You wouldn’t think of doing a highway design project without surveying the physical context, the topography. You shouldn’t think about doing a project without surveying the human context, the stakeholders. And that’s been a hard lesson for some of us to understand, but when you put it in those terms, I think it becomes a little bit easier to get your arms around.

Now when we survey stakeholders, and what we’re really trying to understand very early on are all of the competing or key interests, and I use that word “interests” as opposed to “positions.” And there are many, and they are going to vary by project. And a
lot of times those of us, we have an us-versus-them mentality about this, we’re working for the DOT and everybody is against us, but quite clearly there are competing interests. And this is what makes projects challenging, is that you have external stakeholders who don’t see eye-to-eye either on what’s important to a community or what’s important to them, and our job should be to understand that.

Now, how you go about doing this makes a big difference, and this is a process map, a timeline, if you will. We hit on this really hard earlier, and Gregg and Leigh talked about this, the very first step is defining the problem. And in defining the problem, this is more than just the problem from the DOT’s perspective, it’s from everyone’s perspective. And in the process of doing that, what happens, we get a lot of issues and concerns on the table. Well, this is what we want. I like to call this: looking for trouble. You need to go looking for trouble at the beginning of the project. The next step is: how are we going to define success? What’s our evaluation framework, what constitutes a successful alternative, what are the most important values, how do they align? Again, this is not necessarily how everybody does it, but if you can’t agree on what success is, how can you hope to agree on what the solution is? Only then, only then are you ready to start looking at alternatives, and if we make mistakes routinely, we tend to jump into this alternative stage without covering those first two sufficiently.

The third critical success factor is achieving environmental sensitivity, and again, how you approach the project makes a big difference. Now, we have regulatory issues and regulatory requirements, and I would submit that we can check the boxes and fill out the forms and get the fonzis [ph] and all that good stuff done and not be environmentally sensitive. And what we’re really talking about is a process in which we don’t commit to doing a lot of work and figuring out what we think needs to be done until we really understand what all those issues are. We take the time to really understand the survey, and we commit ourselves to the principles of avoidance rather than mitigation.

The last critical success factor, one that’s pretty close to my heart is this notion of ensuring safe and feasible solutions. And the message I like to give to the highway design brethren, our own staff as well as the folks who work with, is that this process is not about mandates but choices. We have choices in what we can do. It’s not a case, it’s not foreordained that you go from here to here to here to here and that’s the end solution. We have choices in design speed, design vehicles, design dimensions. We have choices in solutions that are other than infrastructure. And this may seem daunting and challenging, but that’s how we really need to deal with our job. Invariably we run into situations about
safety, and this is a slide for those of you who have been through our course and seen this, and I’d like to put this on the screen and ask folks: is this road safe or unsafe? And depending on your perspective and also if you can see me coming, you have different answers to this. But from the highway designer’s perspective, who is familiar with the green book and roadside design guide and design manuals and standards, this slide presents problems—problems that beg for solutions. So suffice it to say, the answer to this question is not simple and in fact may vary depending on the context.

Safety in this term, in the CSS environment, clearly has two dimensions. Highway designers are familiar with, that’s a picture of the green book for those of you who may not be familiar with it, the AASHTO policy. That’s one important dimension of safety but it’s not the only one. The other one is substantive safety. And what that really refers to is the performance; either the actual or the expected or the target threshold performance in terms of meaningful measures such as crash frequency and severity. Both of these are key to understanding, to making good context sensitive alternatives and solutions. Now, the non-highway and traffic folks should take solace in the fact that this is an area that the design profession is hitting real hard. There are some major investments being made in understanding what I would refer to as the science of highway safety. I think it’s interesting, and some might argue, an indictment a little bit on us that post-NEPA, before NEPA we didn’t know anything or care about how to model noise or air quality, but we certainly can do it now. And yet it has taken us a long time to even understand the need to model substantive safety. We’re getting there, there are other parts of the world where this is embedded or routine practice. We’re going to get there in this country and it’s absolutely critical for us to be able to do that to successfully engage in evaluation of alternatives in the context sensitive environment.

Finally, this is an issue that almost always comes up, it’s one that doesn’t go away, it is there, and that’s the notion of tort liability. And a couple things here: sometimes the solutions may be out of the box, sometimes they may require design exceptions. We may get some questions on that. I’ve talked to a lot of risk managers around the country, and Jay Smith, who is quoted here, is the Assistant Chief Counsel, he’s the risk manager from Missouri. He’s also the chairman of the TRB tort liability committee. And he says, “Look, I wish our engineers could understand that it’s their job to design the highway the way it’s supposed to be. If you design it, do the right things, document your decisions, you can’t keep us from getting sued. That’s not your job, you
have not control over it, but I’ll defend us if you made the right decision.” And we need to really understand that.

Now, I’ve really covered the project development process up to record and decision, final engineering, getting it in the field. And one area that I know is a huge concern, and it’s a lot of pressure, and if it’s not done well and if we didn’t do our job right on the design side it can create big problems, that is moving from design to construction and maintenance.

Lane: Absolutely.

Neuman: So it’s probably a good time to turn it over—

Lane: Absolutely, that sounds great. Although I’m still trying to get over the lipstick on the pig comment, so that was a good one, use that one in class, I love that. Looking for trouble also is an excellent way to talk about defining context, so I like that a whole lot as well.

Don, we’re always keeping you last, these construction operations and maintenance people always have to be at the end and last. This is your turn to be on center stage and tell us what you want us to know about Context Sensitive Solutions and in fact how we can hopefully make it easier for you to be context sensitive.

Lee: Thank you, Leigh. And again, welcome to our panelists to North Carolina, we’re delighted to be hosts for today. And Leigh, you referred to the construction maintenance earlier to bookend, and sometimes we refer to it as the dark side, [LAUGHTER] or it’s been referred to it as the dark side. But I heard a construction engineer years ago, a seasoned construction engineer, tell a rather young design engineer to go ahead and design it. We’ll build it the way it needs to be built in the field. So I want to share with you where we’ve been since that time I heard that quote some years ago. Take a look at this. Our highway administrator Lynn Sanderson brought this forward as a strategic goal for all of us in the Department of Transportation. I’ve looked at this quite frequently and tried to decipher what it means.

To me, what it means on the construction end, and certainly what the training teaches and what we hear in our environmental stewardship training, the top part, timely program delivery, really deals with the human environment. People nowadays are getting to the point that they’re not tolerant of two-, three-, four-, five-year construction periods. It interferes with businesses, schools, activities. So we at the department have realized, and created in the state construction office here in Raleigh, an impact program that is involved in informing the public handling construction interviews, and it actually is staffed with the engineer professionals and public information officers. They go into
communities and work on issues. They do public service announcements; they get announcements at the local ballgames or athletic events, to try to put a face on DOT that we are sensitive to the customer’s needs. And for a long time that’s one area we’ve been extremely poor at, is informing the public and keeping the public involved in what the next step will be in keeping them informed.

The second part of that, from environmental excellence, that’s an area to me that’s the natural component of this, and realistically we’re here discussing this today in North Carolina primarily because of regulations and permit conditions. There’s no way to sidestep that; that’s how we got to this point. But what has been the real interesting part of this is getting people, construction engineers and other professionals to understand what it means, and having the energy, a desire to do what’s right, no matter whether it’s in a permanent condition or it’s a regulation. And I want to take you through some of this here very quickly.

In my 19 years’ experience with the department, traditionally construction maintenance activities have not been context sensitive. And why is that? One observation I’ve made is it’s very difficult to hire professionals with a CSS understanding. It is very difficult to hire young people with that understanding and respect of what it means. However, I’m here today to tell you that I currently believe that through training and environmental stewardship awareness, that Context Sensitive Solutions are fully integrated in the construction and maintenance programs in the Department of Transportation. I want to share some of this CSS experience with you on a couple of projects.

Sedgefield Lake, keep that lake in mind, put that mental picture, carry that with you through this presentation. This is not about a permit condition; this is not part of regulation. It’s a part—what this is is in a built-out neighborhood where we’re proposing to build, in the process of building a fairly large highway connector, an outer loop in this area, and these folks came to us early in the process and concerned about what’s going to happen to their lake. It’s not permit driven. This is the project you see in red, this is the NCDOT project. The green section there is a local city project, the city of Greensboro, and you can see the lake area south of that in blue. This is the area they’re concerned about. Are you familiar with the CSS principles? This particular one, those folks, residents of Sedgefield Lake probably didn’t think this was going to be much of an asset community, especially after they did a draw-down project, clean, excavated sediment from their lake, refurbished their dam and did quite a bit of upgrade in that area. And then
here DOT is coming with a road project. Well, we met with stakeholders repeatedly over these work quality issues, and early on in the design process, particularly in erosion sediment control, we came up with some unique designs and partnered with the city to give them a commitment that we would not be back in that area to clean out their lake. They also hired a consultant to do some preliminary work ahead of construction to determine what was there, the depth, and they were quite poised for our construction project.

We talk about being compatible with the natural environment, but this is where the rubber hits the road. When we get the contract and it’s ready to start with construction, we have to be sensitive to what we’re doing. There’s a time we’re starting to landscape, there’s no doubt. We have to be very sensitive to it, and the way turbidity rules are here in North Carolina, there are rules and requirements for it, but it just makes good common sense to make sure that we’re doing the right things at the right time. But as a result of this, we’re having quarterly meetings with the lake, the homeowner’s association, they’re included in our meetings we’re having. We’ve hired a university researcher to help with testing, we react when we had problems, and so far it has worked really good.

I want to jump to another project. Before I get to this, back on the human aspect, we’re putting together a top ten list of projects here in North Carolina with high impact in the urban metropolitan areas to where we’re going in and meeting with businesses ahead of time, meeting with the local leaders, getting the church leaders, civic leaders to stand up and say that DOT is going to be doing such and such a thing in this area coming up in the next couple months. We’re trying to get the word out, and again, put a face on what construction is.

Take a look at this next project, this I-485. The real critical thing here is that bullet #2, it’s in Long Creek watershed, it’s a 303d listed project. And our actions on this project are in part because of permit conditions, but it’s primarily because of the understanding for sediment erosion control. And DOT enjoys a delegated program from environmental agency here in North Carolina. NCDOT has a delegated erosion sediment control program from a regulatory authority, which is North Carolina Sediment Pollution Control Commission. Long Creek, the 303d, the reason it’s listed is sediment. This is the project. You can see the watershed area. The solution, we partner with Mecklenburg County, who currently had some infrastructure in place for testing. We got a contract with NC State [University] to do some research, looking at erosion control technologies
and practices, and also the health of the watershed prior to us arriving with the construction, and during construction, and we’re going to look at it after construction. You can see the monitoring sites. They’re an intensive monitoring program taken every 30 minutes. This is a third party, the county is taking the water sampling upstream, and through our projects and downstream, so we have bared our souls. This information is available to anyone who wants to look at it.

We figured out a way to be reactive and of the samples taken, you can see what kind of [ph] we had. We have had to respond with some high turbidity samples and make some adjustments as needed. But I think the message in all of this is, the research continues to show improvements, but what’s really interesting is the researcher that’s involved in this DOT project of helping us refine our process, is currently the one that’s helping revise the state manual for erosion sediment control, and they’re going to use DOT projects as example, and DOT designs an example to guide what’s being done in the future for sediment erosion control. Just mentioned earlier, we’re in the public eye, we’re spending public funds on public lands. Why shouldn’t we be an example? We can do it, and it takes the right stewardship mentality to make it happen.

But I want to end on really what I think it means in construction, the reality of CSS with these two projects I just carried you through. The first one, and very important is for field commitments that sometimes we’re pretty sure that the design people had fallen on their head and had some problems in designing some of these facilities, but we’re getting brought in earlier, construction maintenance people, to understand and listen to the commitments and understand why the typical sections show up the way they do.

And this next one is very critical also. We’ve hired some temporaries that are students over at NC State and some of them are involved with these researchers doing some work on our projects. They are also reporting that the environmental awareness, the erosion sediment control, the turbidity issues, the part where it’s the practical reality of construction is now being taught in the classrooms and their labs. They are actually designing plans in dealing with what it is, what we’re dealing with is runoff from highway construction, so it’s taking the real world to the classroom. And hopefully in the future we’ll have more students that are coming out of the various programs that have an awareness for this and an understanding and a respect for it, so we won’t hear those statements like I heard one time from that seasoned construction engineer. So we’re glad to share our message, and thank you, Leigh.
Lane: Thank you very much, Don. I hope that all of you listening today can actually link up and see and understand the things that Mell was talking about, and relate them through Tim all the way to Don, and to really make sure that we’ve got that, we’re going to turn it to Gregg. And we’re going to talk about this bridging of gaps, because that construction engineer that was wondering, what were those roadway design engineers doing when they did that, because it makes no sense, it’s not buildable and it doesn’t work. Well, the project development people oftentimes wonder what those planners were thinking about when they came up with that idea. So that is an issue for us to think about. These, if you will, subcultures within the larger culture.

So what are your thoughts on bridging that gap and linking all of those functional areas together?

Albright: Thank you, Leigh. I’ll tell you, it’s pretty simple. If we don’t, we fail. Clearly, what you saw there was a transition from the most advanced kind of long range planning that we would do as transportation professionals, including land use, which I hope we can talk about a little bit more. You go through scoping exercises to define what is the problem. You go to programming. That means we put down the dollars and the cents and you define the purpose and needs statements. You move into project delivery, which involves environmental phase, and on into construction. And that’s kind of the cradle-to-grave for specific actions that we call projects. And then you have to live with it and maintain it and operate the facilities as you go on. Okay. I just ran through the full range of what I as a director have to oversee within a part of the state of California that I live in.

I said cradle-to-grave, but actually it’s probably just a constant recycling. So if you were to come in with these principles, these Context Sensitive Solution principles early on, but then neglect to pass them, to continue it on, you lose credibility. So if you could come in with your advanced planning and develop vision-casting within the community, if you create a sense of what they want and then just ignore them, you’ve failed. And in fact, your credibility is lost, it’s a disturbing thing. Or you come in late and try to introduce Context Sensitive Solutions at the 11th hour when you haven’t scoped or programmed the dollars or the type of project. It’s a struggle. It’s a serious struggle that usually ultimately costs the taxpayer money.

Well, it’s pretty simple. Basically, we just need to engage in all of these different disciplines from beginning to end. For example, if the maintenance and operation folks are engaged in the advance planning efforts, they don’t have to be engaged 40 hours a week, but if they’re engaged so there’s some communication, the practical realities of
how you manage these facilities on a day-to-day basis could be folded into the vision-
casting. It becomes another part of the stakeholders. So when their community is sitting
there saying, “We want something absolutely unique and special,” and the DOT says,
“We don’t even know how to do that,” we start finding a way to solve it. And maybe the
DOT doesn’t do it, but maybe we create a new way of doing it so we can accomplish that.
But you don’t have unrealistic expectations.

So as a director, I try to emphasize multidisciplinary teams, I also try to bring
folks from geographic-based areas together and talk about what are you doing. We’re not
talking about a lot of time or effort, but all that contributes to having more well-informed
decision-making, beginning to end. By the time it gets to construction, I would hope our
construction folks know exactly why the plans look the way they do. They’ve walked that
path to the point where they understand that.

To try to bring this together pretty quickly here, another technique that I think we
should explore and create more emphasis on would be simply single half-project
management. A project manager who kind of cradle-to-grave, he or she manages it and
allows for that continuation of that information to go along. When we sit there and
develop something in our little stovepipe and throw it over the fence to the next stovepipe
and they get it and they go, this looks insane, let me fix it, that’s often part of our
problem. If we have a single project manager going through, then it can help it as well. It
also allows for, if I am representing a particular segment and I’d just say, this is my
position, I should be able to have somebody come up next to me and say, okay, let’s talk
about what is it we’re really trying to accomplish; don’t stick with positional kind of
statements and go to interest-based statements. Again, that’s just simply well-informed
decision-making all the way through. And looking for trouble, as mentioned earlier, I
kind of looked at, which I called looking for opportunities, I don’t know. But basically
bringing out people that you know you are going to come in at the 11th hour and get them
engaged. So again, I come back to, on a very collaborative kind of person, feel
comfortable in that environment. So since they allowed me to be director for another few
days until I get home, the bottom line is we’re going to promote that, and that’s my
expectation.

What I’d like to do is kind of transition now to our next subject here by showing
a very short little video clip. Let me explain that. About a month ago I was in
Philadelphia, at the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials
(AASHTO). They had their 2004 convention and during that process they were giving
awards, and one of them was the best practices and smart growth in transportation. And I was pleased to find out that the California Department of Transportation, Caltrans as we call it out there in the west, we received an award for the best institutional change, and that was Context Sensitive Solutions, changing the culture. Well, changing as I mentioned earlier, the culture of 22,000+ organizations, is not an easy task. The momentum is occurring, I’m very excited about that. And so we had sent in our process where we changed expectations, new policies. We went for training support. We were doing outreach to our external stakeholders. And basically we also showed some of the symptoms of good CSS. What’s a symptom? It could mean a community that’s happy with something. So if we could, let’s go to a little video clip from last month’s annual conference.

[MUSIC]

Narrator: The California Department of Transportation, Division of Transportation Planning, Office of Community Planning, is honored for its agency-wide approach to applying smart growth principles. California officials have embraced the Context Sensitive Solutions that encouraged public participation in transportation decision-making. Caltrans officials consider this the lynchpin in their approach to smart growth. The heart of California’s smart growth approach is balancing transportation needs and community values, and promoting multimodal connections. For this, AASHTO’s Center for Environmental Excellence salutes Caltrans for its best practices in smart growth and transportation.

Albright: Now, it was very pleasant to have this recognition that we are changing our institution. It has obviously been something that’s been going on for years. But I just simply see all that we have yet to do. But Context Sensitive Solutions principles are at the heart of us being successful.

Lane: Congratulations to you and Caltrans for winning that very prestigious award.

Albright: Did you know that Philadelphia has great cheesesteak sandwiches?

Lane: No, I didn’t know that. [LAUGHTER] But I’ll remember that. Well, we’re going to move into this panel discussion. Gosh, there’s so much that we have here, food for thought, and Gregg’s bringing up land use and all kinds of things to think about. We do have a few questions that have come in, but we’re going to tackle this panel question first, and to each one of you here. And this really goes to: what are the next steps? And the reason why this is so important for us to discuss is because people do want to know about Context Sensitive Solutions, so I think they’re starved for a new way, a better way, if you
will. And it is part of the Federal Highway Administration’s environmental vital few, specifically the objective that they have to improve the environmental quality of transportation decision-making throughout the country by applying CSS principles and the CSS approach. So with that in mind, what are some of the next steps? And also the skills, we talked about a little bit of the knowledge and the skills that are required for this, but just an open discussion; what do you have on your mind? Susan, what do you think about this next step, from the community—

Van Wagoner: Can I take a backstep and then a next step?
Lane: Sure.

Van Wagoner: In listening to everybody’s comments, and Mell particularly about the visioning, and which is exactly what we did, I think I need for transportation people all over the country to know, to understand that the ordinary citizen and the average person doesn’t have a clue about transportation language and all of these things. They know that they have to get to the grocery store, and they know they have to get the kids to soccer practice, they know they want—in our community people want to see the stars at night. There are things like that that they know, and by Mell doing the visioning process, and that’s what I’m thinking the future needs to include, is ordinary people being asked ordinary questions, not—we had one of our transportation people send out a questionnaire to some people saying, well how wide do you think the shoulder should be? They don’t know how wide a shoulder should be. [LAUGHTER] And it’s based on, there was no context even, in it. So the questions to ask normal people is what do you love about your community, what do you want the community to be like in 50 years?

And as Mell said, none of the answers they got have anything to do with transportation. In our area, people want to—we have dirt roads, people want to keep the dirt roads and be able to walk on dirt. People like going to the post office to get their mail. I mean, that’s not the case in every community, but to me, CSS is not a general thing; it’s about each individual community.

Neuman: It could lead from needs, from an organizational perspective and whether you’re a Department of Transportation, whether you’re a consulting firm that works for the Department of Transportation. I think some of the issues are, Susan brings up, and we have to be able to communicate effectively with non-technical stakeholders in terms of mutually understandable, and that are helpful in arriving at defining the problem and framing the solution. At one level, it’s not talking in acronyms and not talking down to people. And at another level it’s engaging in a meaningful discussion of quality of life
that helps understand in measurable terms what that means and how it might influence a solution. So in a very broad sense, simple communication skills, whether that’s working on people who are in your agency or whether that’s recruiting or attracting people or whether that’s putting project managers with folks who are out there in positions where they can be effective spokespeople for the department. I think that’s a big area.

Gregg, I don’t know about Caltrans, or Don, about North Carolina. Some agencies are really good, they’re getting there—some that we work with are really working hard to bring up that skill set and others frankly are still struggling.

Albright: Well, there’s another component that we’ve touched on a little bit, and that is, we talked about how one community had to do extraordinary things and get additional funding. I’m a little concerned about—those are the empowered communities that have passion. I’m a little worried from an environmental justice standpoint, about communities who don’t feel so empowered and not so capable. Does that mean you just don’t get what they need? No. If I was to call on other DOTs around the nation, and other transportation professionals in regional government and such, we need to be able to change the way we do things so that we’re culturally relevant, using this idea of speaking in a way that’s understood. We need to be, from an environmental justice standpoint—I hope that term is understood by most—we need to be able to reach out to people whether they are culturally connected, or disconnected, disfranchised, whether they’re economically sound or not, we feel that we need to be able to reach out to them and engage them so they can the vision-casting. I frankly think that the transportation professionals need to be taking some ownership over that, and I would call on other DOTs to recognize that it’s part of our job to help communities, particularly those that are disenfranchised, disempowered, because we owe it.

Lane: Well, Gregg, Dr. Beverly Ward, who called in, whom I know quite well, a dear friend of mine from Florida, she was asking a question about under-represented populations, environmental justice populations, so I think that you kind of addressed some of those concerns, and when we come back from the break we’ll talk about that a little more, because I happen to be extremely passionate about the topic of environmental justice, and no, it hasn’t come up, and I can see that you in California with the great diversity there would be as well. So I appreciate those comments, and if we have more time, we’ll follow up with some more thoughts on that. Much to think about, much to talk about. CSS, Context Sensitive Solutions, is an umbrella of participation, collaboration, listening, creativity, imagination, leveraging other resources from agencies; it’s all of these things,
it’s stakeholder considerations, environmental, natural and human considerations, engineering, communication. It’s about multidisciplinary teams, and it’s about flexible approaches as well. So, it’s all of these things—we’ve heard it here within this panel. And we’re going to go into the next section after a ten-minute break. This is your time. We already have a few questions, we’ll come back, we hope that you will call 1-888-228-6736, you can phone in, you can fax, or email us, and when we come back from the ten-minute break we will answer your questions. Thank you so much, we’ll see you in ten.

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Lane: Welcome back. As I said, this is your time, and we have several questions that have been faxed or emailed into us, and I’m going to start with one that we had faxed, and this one is from Robert Durks [PH], and I do apologize if I botch up someone’s name, and this individual is an environmental program manager with the Federal Highway Administration, from the Indiana division office in Indianapolis. And his question is for the entire panel, if anybody would like to answer that: “What should a state DOT do to implement CSS, specifically what general steps should be taken?” Gregg? You already saw this and since you wanted to start it.

Gregg: Yeah, I think there’s a couple of steps. You can’t just say, “Go, make it so.” You have to first clearly define expectations. So, within a DOT, we can establish new policies and procedures, because that’s what drives behavior. So we can start there. We can share best practices, we can celebrate the successes, and where people feel comfortable, we can lessons learned from those things that did not go well. So there’s ownership over that. We start buying—we can train our staff, to equip them. Because quite often they’ll look at this and think, “I don’t understand it, it’s scary,” it means loss of control like we talked about earlier—all these sorts of very deliberate steps we can take. And we need to break down barriers. Let me hit a few of these points a little bit further. Policies and procedures are clear, but sometimes it’s a matter of communicating to our own staff. And we developed a little brochure, because quite often the state highway’s the main street that said: “Hey, listen. There’s already a lot of flexibility here, staff. You’re not using it.” We’ll show how much flexibility we have in our design standards right now, where you can accommodate someone’s needs when our state highway is someone’s main street. No change of policy—it was just saying you’re not even using the flexibility you presently have. Let me just touch on one more point before I pass it on to the other panel members
for this. I think there’s also barriers that we’ve established. I talked earlier about—we’re so comfortable with yesterday’s successes, we hold on to those skills and experiences. I think we need to be willing to set aside those good things—don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater—but recognize that we have a new landscape. But quite often it also means we need to change the way we distribute our staff and resources. In other words, we have staff that are heavy in project development, well maybe we need to move a few more resources into planning, and maybe we need to train and actually bring in people that are good facilitators—so it’s a different skill set. Well, until we eliminate the institutional barriers, until we equip people, until we give them clear expectations, why should there be change? We have to do all those things if we expect change, and it takes time.

Lane: I have a question that I’m going to read that is from Scott Bradley, hello, Scott. Scott’s the chair of the Context Sensitive Solutions taskforce with Transportation Research Board, and he has sent in a question and he actually sent it to Gregg and Don and myself. Others are welcome to comment but I think it falls right into what Gregg was talking about, let’s just make sure we covered everything in what you said there. It says—well actually it says from your NC DOT experience and I’m going to add Caltrans in there and other places that Tim has worked with. “From a DOT institutional change perspective what would you recommend as the very most important steps necessary to accomplish upper management buy-in, clarity of expectations and accountability for meeting those expectations in terms of integrating CSS philosophy and principles and all aspects of DOT’s culture and operations? Not something that you just pull out of the back pocket when you have to.” And Tim wants to add something. It fell right in with what you were talking about, Gregg, so I wanted to go ahead and read Scott’s question. And Scott is from Minnesota.

Neuman: Okay, actually what I was going to respond to was the first question. But let me kind of address both of those a little bit. So what can a state do? How can you achieve buy-in? I think first of all, the first question was from Indiana. And folks in Michigan are going through the process right now and some of the things that they’re doing, they may want to engage Michigan DOT folks, but 1)—and I think Gregg alluded to some of these things—is do a self-assessment. First, you have understand what it is and if you’ve gotten that far, if you’ve gotten that far and you understand what CSS is, then you have to do a self-assessment. You know, what are the things that we do well? What are the things that we don’t do so well? And then why is that? I think related to that is: identify your statewide stakeholders—if we’re talking about a state, for example—identify your
statewide stakeholders and survey them. Michigan for example, this past year, got their, had a series of workshops statewide. They brought folks into Lansing, they were statewide stakeholders and they talked about this stuff. And they engaged them in a little bit of a work exercise over a few months to help identify policy shortcomings, needs, what should we be doing better, and in effect framed the program. So those are just two specific ideas that came to my mind. Again, I think if there’s anybody listening from Michigan DOT who can provide more insights on that, or perhaps contact the other caller, that might be helpful. Now to get to Scott’s question, maybe Gregg or Don want to deal with Scott’s question.

Albright: When I think of upper management that’s implied here, what is the core value that they’re trying to—what drives their behavior? If someone’s frustrated because they’re not buying in to something, chances are the upper management sees this as the flavor of the month and they see it as something they’ll pull out of their back pocket grudgingly. I would suggest that they have a misunderstanding as you pointed out, you need to understand what CSS is. CSS principles are actually the most effective way to deliver programming. CSS principles are actually the way you’re going to be successful in today’s transportation landscape. So I’d go towards upper management, try to assess what their core value is in that respect and then touch that. And because if you see it as the flavor of the month, you can ride this out, we ride out things all the time, just hang in there. The reality is there’s no going back. So I would suggest that upper management needs to take a hard look and be secure enough in themselves to expose them to peer review, external expert review, be willing to say, “Okay the world has changed. I have a choice. I can stay the way I am and not be relevant anymore in a short period of time or I can change.” They’ve just got to be secure in themselves and allow that to happen and so I’d say you’re going to touch a core value, they want to be—they want to deliver a service to the public and this is the best way to do it.

Henderson: Quickly, could I—?

Lane: Yes, absolutely.

Henderson: I think we need to recognize it’s not just procedural, that some of it’s philosophical. It’s really valuing the input of others. And embarking on what will be a shared decision-making process. And I think, historically, we’re used to checking in with the public and validating what we’re doing and this is not that. This is really talking to them and listening to them from the get-go. And it’s sort of a philosophical shift as much as it is a procedural shift.
Lane: That’s outstanding. If anybody wants to add—it’s hard to follow up that isn’t it? It absolutely is. Thank you so much Mell.

The next question that we have, this one is for Tim but others can respond as well. This is from Donna Kilber-Kennedy and she just happens to be with CH2M Hill.

Neuman: She gets a gold star for working it in.

Lane: [LAUGHTER] How about that? I’m not sure where or what office that she’s out of, I can’t tell from there. But the question is how do you overcome the perception that you need to sacrifice design quality or compromise design standards to achieve Context Sensitive Solutions?

Neuman: That’s a question that comes up quite a bit and some of the answers to that, first of all if you look in 480 and if you review some of the work that’s been done around the country there are plenty of examples that are clearly groundbreaking, innovative, creative solutions that don’t involve any compromises in design criteria or any design exceptions if you want to use that terminology. If you talk to the folks in the five pilot states—and we didn’t really get into the pilot states in the history piece—but the five pilot states and you talk to them about, “Have you increased your use of design exception since you ‘got religion’ or whatever?” They’ll say, “No, I mean, we’re doing about the same as we used to.” The question, though, suggests that there is some sort of inherent tradeoff that needs to be made at some point and I react to that in a couple of ways. First, we need to get away from shying away from this notion that when we make decisions we’re making tradeoffs, and in the field of safety it tends to be viewed as this motherhood-and-apple-pie and we never compromise safety and how can you ever think of doing that. And I would just suggest that there are lots of ways in which we compromise safety. We’ve done it for years, forget CSS. If there’s anybody out there that doesn’t believe that right turn on red in the aggregate isn’t a safety compromise, I’d like to talk to them. And I’m not criticizing, I’m simply stating what should be obvious, that we do these tradeoffs a lot of times we do them for very good reasons. Let’s accept it. Let’s make it part of the landscape, let’s do it explicitly and let’s move on. Last point on this whole issue is: design standards and safety are not necessarily related directly as I pointed out in my presentation. And if there’s something our profession needs to do a better job is it’s understand those substantive safety relationships so that they can make good design exception decisions when they are necessary and only when.

Lane: Thank you, does anybody have anything they’d like to add to that? Okay, we have a question from Susan George, information officer with the Kentucky Department of
Highways, District 12. Question is for Susan. “You said the Simpsons were involved in choosing route 50’s consulting engineers. How did this come about? And do you think this level of citizen involvement is needed for all projects or just for those with extraordinary or unusual elements?”

Van Wagoner: Well, that’s a very good question. How did it come about? Susan, we may need to have a phone conversation about that. It’s a long, long story, and it took about five months to get that cleared through all the various things. However, we held our ground and said we needed to be involved. It was our project in the beginning. We designed it, we hired the people who helped design it, that’s what was being implemented. We should be involved in who helps to do that. And that was finally agreed to by all parties. The selection process went incredibly well. It was a unanimous decision anyway, it was a very good process and I think everybody was pleasantly surprised and that was a good step. Whether or they should all be done—there’s projects on so many different levels and so many different small projects, large projects. So I can’t, I guess, advocate having citizens on every selection committee that’s ever done. But the very large ones are things that really do impact a community where there are citizens involved to the extent that we have been anyway. We also have a citizen taskforce that works directly with VDOT and we—the task force itself makes all the implementation decisions on this project. So in that sense, it would be sort of an outrage to cut the citizens out of that process. I’m sure there are others where there wouldn’t be quite that much involvement. If there’s controversy, maybe they should be involved. But if there’s no controversy, it means the job has been done well in the first place and it doesn’t need to go to that forum.

Lane: Gregg wants to make a comment?

Albright: Well, I think that last comment is the key. The question is not whether the DOT sees this as a—reaches a threshold, well now this is a complicated project and so we need to have some sort of stakeholder engagement. It’s whether the stakeholders feel it’s an issue. So you can have a small change, but it would be a big impact on a community, then you better engage them even if it’s a small project. Now, you can do it in cost-effective ways, you can piggyback on other existing processes that are in place, you don’t have to create a monster.

Van Wagoner: Well, it was very cost-effective because our time is free!

Lane: Excellent point!

Albright: Why are you going to have a project that’s pretty complicated, but no one cares? So if I may, basically, we have a responsibility to assess whether there’s going to be someone
who will feel compelled to step up. If they’re going to step up at the 11th hour, I want them in at the beginning, not at the 11th hour. So really it boils down to that perception as to whether this affects a quality-of-life issue or not. Not the number of dollars or the types of things that are involved. So I’d say we can do this in a cost-effective way, it doesn’t have to be burdensome to engage stakeholders. And if you have a constant flow you might put together a citizen’s advisory committee that would represent a community, if you have a constant flow of projects. Another case is you might simply go to an existing organization like a homeowners association, that already exists, and just tag into that, piggyback, and come out again with the input. So I base it on: is there a likelihood that someone’s going to be interested in this, and they might want to get engaged too late, I’d rather have them engaged early.

Van Wagoner: Well, I think it goes back to something that Tim was saying about—and I think Mell too—about intention and getting people involved early, getting people, it’s the whole process, but it's the intent as well. If it’s genuine, if the DOT is genuinely interested in what Susan or you know, they have to do it. So it’s—you know, if—I think what a lot of people who actually do this kind of work, and we find that it works pretty well. And then people get excited about it and then it carries on.

Neuman: But the worst thing you can do is give people the impression you’re interested in their input, but what becomes apparent as the project moves forward, that you’re going through the motions, you’re checking the boxes, or you’ve already got your mind made up but you got to do this because someone told you you got to do it. That’s the worst thing you can do.

Van Wagoner: And believe me, people know the difference.

Albright: And you can err, DOTs can also err on the side of doing the wrong kind of community involvement. Quite often the wrong tool is picked that doesn’t address the objectives at all as far as the public outreach. We might do a big open house when that doesn’t solve the problem. We need a workshop or a sharette. So we can share—we typically do shoot ourselves in our foot quite often because we’re still learning. That’s why it’s taken three plus decades for us to get our act together. We’re learning as to what tool to pick out of the tool box. If we’re not sincere, and they’re not effectively engaged, then shame on us, we’re worse off than had we not done anything.

Lane: I think that in listening to this discussion, one major point that comes out is that we simply cannot apply a cookie-cutter approach to this. If that is what the industry expects, I think that there’ll be three to four more decades and maybe just never. Because the
point of this is to realize that every community out there, stakeholders, they do have
different values and different perceptions. It’s our job to understand that, and we need to
develop the right tools and techniques to fit that specific context, if you will. And that’s
why all of that work, that great graphic that you used, Tim, that shows the problem
definition being where all that effort is put into. So you’re defining context as part of that.
Defining the problem as Mell did in that whole—what do people care about? Because
now I can validate what you did by over 1,000 people coming through a CSS class and
believe me, sometimes I think the only reason transportation comes up is because they’re
transportation folks. But by and large, it’s mainly all these other things they’re concerned
about. So we have to think about that, and it’s not one size fits all, and that’s really what
we need to keep in mind here. I’m going to move right along with another question that
we have from Abdullah with Federal Highway Administration from Michigan, and this is
to all the panel. It has to do with project development though. “Do you think that the
project development process is broken and needs to be fixed? If so, in what areas?” And
you know, a lot of these are—

Neuman: You have three days, right?
Lane: A lot of these overlap and you might could say, “well, I’ve already kind of answered
that,” I don’t know if it provokes some other thoughts in your mind, and I wanted to get it
out there.

Neuman: Well, I guess I’ll start. I don’t—you know, broken—part of the self-assessment process is
if your own assessment in your state of the projects—and Abdullah’s working with
presumably with the Michigan DOT, the jobs are all going well and okay in terms of
schedule, scope, budget, outcome, okay. And stakeholders are happy with how the DOT
is performing then the answer to that is no. If the answer to that is, “well, sometimes we
have problems,” then chances are there’s one aspect of it that’s broken. But you know, is
it broken, did it kind of run off the road a little bit, does it need a little maintenance? I
think that really depends. Generally speaking, I think we’ve talked about a whole range
of areas where we need to do things differently. From a process perspective I do believe
that the order in which and how you do things on a project, not the technical stuff, but
defining the problem first, defining success first, and then, and only then, starting to talk
about alternatives, if there’s one area that I perceive things are broken it’s that, and well-
intentioned people and engineers want to jump to solutions right out of the box, and the
first public meeting want to put up alternatives. You know, and if they haven’t, if they’ve
skipping the first two steps, then that’s to me a sign that the process at least on that job’s broken.

Albright: I need to second that motion because many, many people feel like they need to provide something for someone to throw a dart at, and it goes back to that purpose and need statement, where they have—we really need them to come in and start defining in terms of their interest, and so we can start following them. We’re playing catch-up during the project development phase. I think we’re really good at putting out plans and specs and estimates. I think we can put out widgets at incredible speed. Just keep the money flowing to us and we can put it to work. But where we mess up, I would agree it’s at the very initial scoping stage. And if I had to—I’ve already implied, I would move more resources towards working to develop better scoping exercises that could be programmed with the right project from the start, then watch our efficiency. The skids will be greased, and watch us deliver the product. We’ll put it out fast and put those people that like to do the widget development, you know, down and dirty PS&E, plan specs and estimate work, put them to work, and put them to work in the right direction.

Lane: Thank you. I have another question here, and I’m going to direct this one to Mell, it says Mell or Gregg, and I’m going to direct this to Mell because it’s specifically talking about your creative quality places, and this is Scott Bradley and he’s busy! Thanks Scott, for the question. [LAUGHTER] He says—this is Scott Bradley who works in the Minnesota DOT. “Mell’s creating quality places and transit-supported slots seem to imply that transportation planning and land-use planning or activity and movement would be simultaneously integrated and usually supportive of one another. How does that get accomplished with multiple jurisdictions and authorities?” And I’m so glad you asked that, because I wrote that question down myself. I was going to grab you after and ask you. Great question, probably other viewers are really interested in that as well.

Henderson: If I knew the answer to that question, I would be a multimillionaire. [LAUGHTER] It is a very complex issue, and in an ideal world, yes that’s exactly what you would do. You would make all of those decisions in conjunction with each other. I think the reality is in a lot of cases, land-use decisions are pretty much the purview of local government, cities and counties, and that’s an authority of power that’s very important to them that they protect. And in a region like ours, where we have eight counties and 116 municipalities, what may be a logical decision for one local government to make for itself, multiplied across a hundred-plus jurisdictions suddenly as a region maybe isn’t the best decision. And a challenge is, I think, to get people to look at their individual decisions in that
broader context. And this as context is everything. And so I don’t know that we have a clear answer to that. Our efforts in Kansas City, through the Creating Quality Places initiative, have really focused on trying to equip local governments with tools and information so that they could begin to think differently about the decisions they do, the processes they follow. The idea being that the real success in this whole arena will be from everyone making decisions on their own that move us together collectively in a progressive direction, as opposed to trying to impose top-down, what is allowed, what is not allowed. And we do, on occasion hear from a particular citizen wishing that MARC as the regional council could somehow be the region’s land-use police. And I mean, we’re not going to do that, we’re not empowered to do that, and we hardly make any better decisions than somebody else does. There are folks out there who want somebody to be in control of that, and that’s not the reality that we experience. So I think our challenge is to really provide as much equipping and tools as we can to the folks who are empowered to make those decisions, and maybe we can see a different outcome than what we’ve seen historically.

Albright: I wish we had the answers too.
Lane: I do too.
Albright: I think this is a fundamental foundational question. As long as land use and transportation and investments don’t dance together, we’re going to be playing catch-up. Our infrastructure across the whole nation is in a horrible place right now, and it’s going to take time to catch up. And it has a lot to do with land-use decisions, but I’m not going to be the one who’s going to suggest we pull away local control for land use. That’s part of being American. I want you to work on that answer because until we get the transportation investment and land-use decisions together, we’re going to be playing catch-up, and it’s a problem that we’re going to pay for. It costs more money really as a society than we recognize.

Henderson: It really is. Conversations we’ve had in the Kansas City region have focused more on: if you do develop land, can you develop it under these principles? We’ve not yet had the conversation about where we should be developing land, and it does come down to I think an economic cost question at some point. Because if we’re preparing lots of land for development under the anticipation that it may develop, so we’re building water service and sewer and transportation facilities and everything else, and all that land is not in fact going to develop within a period of time, then we’ve spent resources for things that we didn’t need to spend them on. But we’re not ready, I don’t think, as a community yet to
have that conversation about where it’s appropriate for development to be. That’s a hard conversation to have because I think in that conversation you have winners and losers.

Lane: So consensus, you would hope to have consensus but it would be a challenging attempt to get that consensus.

Van Wagoner: This is just one thing we work on and work on and as citizens and—Gregg brought up smart growth and, you know, land use is the key to all of it to me. And I think it comes to that all the time and that is very tricky, goes back to the visioning thing that Mell’s doing and it’s—you know, whether the people who live in an area, in a community, get to choose what that community is like, is really what it comes down to. I was told by an engineer who helped us quite a bit was that we should decide what we want the community to be and then build the transportation system that matches what we want it to be, not just continually build because of the cookie-cutter approach or because we have a certain number of vehicles, or it’s going to grow because of course it is, because it did before and so now—if we need to decide what we want and then design that. And that brings in not just what we want, but what we need, it brings in the economics of the community, it brings in a lot of different things. But we don’t have to let just outside sources make those decisions for us, the communities can make those decisions and I think that’s where we citizens come in.

Albright: And I think one thing we can contribute is to help them be informed. I was mentioning earlier, informed decision-making will go a long ways because logical people will make good decisions if they have the information. I think a DOT or regional government can provide traffic modeling to show the consequences of this decision or that decision. That I think is the best and most practical step is to start providing information so that when a community sits back and does a vision-casting of what they want, they’ll come up with a Disneyland main street or something. That’s not going to be reality either. They need the other information so they can get something practical, it’s like, “Oh yeah, we do need an economic sustainability here in our community, you know, we accept that.” You keep adding information, good decisions will come out of it. We still keep local control, which is—we love the idea of it being pushed down as low as possible, but we have to come in—the state agencies particularly, or regional government—we have to come in because we have more robust resources to give them tools like traffic modeling or whatever it might be. And so there’s a great complementary relationship. If it’s working right, a local community should be screaming to get a DOT to the table.
Van Wagoner: But what we need the DOTs to do, and I think what they’d like to do is give us a model, give us a land-use model, let the transportation people say what kind of land use we can provide a transportation system for.

Albright: The consequences of those land use decisions, those two different choices.

Van Wagoner: And if we just keep making land-use decisions, for which we cannot build a transportation system, there’s not enough money.

Lane: So clearly we can all see from this discussion that planning plays a tremendous role in being successful and applying Context Sensitive Solutions, there’s no question. And that’s why [ph], because we know that. But we also realize that there are challenges related to this whole land use discussion. The last CTE teleconference—some of you viewers may have tuned into how to do indirect and cumulative effects, and it’s a little bit of a repeat of some of the things that we’re talking about. It is on the radar screen and my professional opinion is, as many things has, is the citizenry becomes more educated and more informed, they will push back, and they will push back to local officials, political, elected local officials and a state and a national elected officials and say, we don’t want this. That’s what happened in the 60s and that’s why we had that myriad of legislation in ’69 and the early ‘70s with National Environmental Policy Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act and so forth. Historic properties, you’d have protection of that. So over time through the education that we can provide, and we need to be talking honestly and informing our citizenry about that. So it’s a great discussion and we can continue some of these discussions through the bulletin board that we’re going to be having. We do have a couple more questions and I think we have time to get to them and I’d like to do that.

We have a question, let’s see, from Darryl Heikins [ph], Heikins? I’m not sure. And this person is from California. Gregg? Though it’s not—the question’s for Susan. “Often—” and here it goes, and he is with the California DOT, this person is, according to the email address. “Often, well intentioned agencies and public advisory panels reach a stalemate due to their predetermined requirement to reach consensus within the group on decisions. How do you overcome the diversity of opinions in a group and weigh the voice of one person over those of an entire community or large interest group?”

Van Wagner: Good question.

Lane: Yeah.

Van Wagner: Well, I think what Gregg just said, that reasonable people reach reasonable decisions, and when you do get a group of people together and you do let everybody—listen to everyone and let everyone listen to everyone, very often it does just work itself out. We actually
had situations where we would get a group of people together to make just even small decisions on the design and everybody just—because it was a small group, everybody just kind of agreed. It was sort of remarkable. As we all know there can often be just one person that does go against, sometimes people just like to do that. So it’s a very complicated issue and I don’t—I daresay we don’t have everyone in our community totally on board—

Neuman: Um, first of all, I’d say: don’t put yourself in a trap to promise the impossible, which is to say we’re going to make everybody happy. And in fact, we could debate today about what the word consensus means and the fact is that—is a consensus as it’s commonly understood the objective of a process, some would argue it’s not. Some would argue, you know, informed consent, or at least I understood the process. The other part of that is going back to when we’d talk about decision models and who’s making decisions, make it very clear there are certain decisions that these are going to be made by these folks. We’re going to listen to everybody, but at the end of the day, these folks are going to make that decision. You are owed an explanation as to what their decision is, and you are owed them as a listening point. But at the end of the day, someone’s got to take ownership of that, and it depends on what that decision is. So what I’m saying is when you’re setting up stakeholder groups and you’re engaging stakeholders and you’re dealing with folks, don’t put yourself in a position where you promise that you’re going to listen to everybody and make everybody happy on every single issue, because that ain’t going to happen. And you find yourself on a blind alley and then you say, now where do we turn? And that’s been my experience.

Albright: I think as I watch this happen, because California has its fair share of people that have an agenda and they’re not interested in really developing consensus. And that’s when you have to turn to their peer group and you have to ask your peer group, “You’ve heard what we’ve done, what we’ve tried to do, we’ve tried to be as flexible as we could in this case,” and let the peer group decide whether they want to manage their own selves and say, “Listen, Mr. Smith, Caltrans is doing everything they can for you, they’re being as responsible as possible and you’re just not going to be happy.” And I often try to find an environment where I have people that will stand up and do that for us, because it’s hard for me to do that. So those people that are really outside the envelope there, they often can through peer pressure, be calmed down or at least marginalized.

Van Wagoner: We haven’t actually done that.
Neuman: I do want to make one—there are some things that just plain flat out are not negotiable.
You know? Don maybe you’ve got an example. There are some things you can’t do just because you can’t. An example is, if wouldn’t it be nice if we had green stop signs, we think it would fit better in the environment. Well, no, that’s a legal issue, we ain’t discussing this. That’s a real pointed example, but there are just some things that you just can’t do. And people need to be told that. They can’t be led to believe that absolutely everything’s on the table and we can negotiate anything and if you guys really all want green stop signs, okay we’ll give it a go. I think that’s an important—I don’t know if you’ve got any examples in the construction side that come to mind.

Lee: Well, it’s very—it’s a complex issue, but I think about where we’ve been and where we’re going with this. I think there needs to be some performance goals. It’s particularly at the construction operations end of where we know what we need to do as far as commitments, and then when that discussion comes up about what we can and can’t do, it’s somewhat been defined from upper management. And with some rim of flexibility. And then I think we need to put forth that professionally is one area. Another area that I see we probably need to move into is: in our resident engineers’ offices, which are the people that are accountable for building the projects, I think it’s okay for them to be told to get out in the community and be the face and be the project manager and meet with the locals. So when the next project comes along, DOT has built a base of trust, so you’ve got the consensus, and the majority of people that are going to be on the mainstream, and then there’s a system for dealing with the ones that may be more on the fringe.

Lane: Do we have any other comments? Actually, we had one last question that we—and this was from Dr. Beverly Ward from CUTR, Center for Urban Transportation Research. This is—it had to do with the environmental justice. “Please comment on the importance of involving underrepresented or less powerful members of the community, youths, elderly, persons of disabilities, persons with low household incomes.” We only have a few minutes and I’d really like to—I’ve sat here the entire time and I haven’t talked about community impact assessment, but I would like to mention that in regard to environmental justice. When we talk about the human environment, we absolutely have to have a process to understand what the effects of transportation are going to be on our communities. And community impact assessment in a process in which to do that. And we absolutely have to make sure that we are reaching out to all the communities, not just the communities that—in Susan’s case were very fortunate and raised a half a million dollars to do the study. Most communities don’t have that.
We have a caller that’s come in, okay, fantastic, we’ll take that. Okay?

Caller: Yes, I have a couple of little comments I’d like to make. One example, about the green stop sign, that was a little weak, because red is a color, it’s an indicator that we all kind of understand as a probable, possible hazard. That just threw me off on his thinking process that he presented. And there’s another comment that is a more important comment that I’d like to make: communities are like individuals. There can be a lot of diversity there and they’re always changing. They should be changing earlier on to particular needs. And continue this diversity within a country.

Lane: Could I—I didn’t get your name and where you’re from.

Caller: Well, I’m calling from out of state.

Lane: Florida.

Caller: Yes, a former Michigander.

Lane: And I understand you were thrown off by the sign. Very quickly, Tim.

Newman: If I threw you off, I apologize. It was meant to be an extreme example, and I apparently succeeded.

Lane: Yes, you did.

Newman: The only point I’m making is that we do have to be careful when we engage people in discussions that there are some things that are off the table just because they’re off the table, and it goes back to the trust and credibility in setting limits, that’s really the only point I was making. And people are owed an explanation of why something’s off the table, for sure. And that explanation needs to be legitimate. And I just used, like I said, purposely very extreme example, so I apologize.

Lane: That’s okay, Tim. Context Sensitive Solutions in fact can be controversial. I have yet another quote as I move into the closing of this segment, or this teleconference rather. And this quote is from Bertrand Russell, and it goes like this: “Change is one thing, progress is another. Change is scientific, progress is ethical. Change is indisputable whereas progress is a matter of controversy.” And I certainly do think that panelists as well as our viewers will be exposed to controversy. I don’t expect the controversy to totally go away, but I do believe with the Context Sensitive Solutions principles—I have seen, working 17 years in a transportation profession, worked on projects, using these principles before they were ever called Context Sensitive Solutions, that in fact it is the most efficient and effective way to do things. Trying to do the right thing the first time. That’s what we want to do, and we all want to see that commitment.
I do have the pleasure of doing the official closing, and the first thing I want to do is thank this wonderful, energetic, enthusiastic panel. We could probably go another three or four hours discussing this topic, and I will tell you, Tim does a two-day class and I do a three-day class and even at the end of three days we still have questions. We know they’re going to be there. If you want to send your questions in, there is going to be a web board at the CTE website that’ll be available to you and we will continue to converse with you. The panelists have agreed to do that, they volunteered their time graciously, and I so much appreciate that. I appreciate the CTE staff, especially Katie, for putting together for putting together this very important webcast on Context Sensitive Solutions.

I’m grateful to have been the moderator for Context Sensitive Solutions. Being part of the CTE team as a senior research associate, I’ve spent, like I said, over 17 years in the industry and used the principles before they were called that. I’m also grateful to be part of a new age, a new time, and a new way, in fact, a better way, a little catchy phrase there in terms of the better way in making transportation decisions which will improve the quality of life for all of our customers as well as all of us. We’ve heard many interesting ideas, we’ve shared experiences, and hopefully all of you, the listeners and viewers of this teleconference have learned something from this teleconference that you can personally go back and do differently. We know we’ve left you with questions, but this is, as we started the teleconference, an evolulational process, and we will get there. A CSS approach can produce outcomes that embrace community values, protect and preserve our natural and human environment, and meet the transportation needs of the future. We must remember that our decisions affect our own futures and those of others. I challenge each of you to listen to every voice. Listen, that’s an important message today, and to honor the special knowledge that each person brings to the decision-making table. Through the sharing of experiences, thinking critically, using imagination and creativity mixed with courage, commitment, and compassion, we can create a world that reflects a good quality of life for all.

Now, before I turn to Katie, a couple of things that I want to tell in terms of pointing you in some other directions. You’ve seen some information come across during the breaks. Specifically I want to mention to you that the Federal Highway Administration has a commissioned project for public spaces in concert with other agencies and organizations to develop an online resource center on CSS. And this is to help all of us share our experiences. They’re in fact looking for best practices, case studies, CSS resources, state CSS program, et cetera, to include on the website, and the
person you will need to contact is Phil Myrick at pmyrick@pps.org. This website should be up and operational by early 2005, but please share any information that you’ve got, that’s how we’re going to get there and make progress the quickest. There is also the Context Sensitive Solutions taskforce within the Transportation Research Board sponsoring and co-sponsoring several CSS related sessions at the annual TRB meeting in Washington, D.C. There are other conferences that will be following. Tim has already talked about CH2M Hill, contracts with the Federal Highway Administration to deliver a course, and of course the Center for Transportation and the Environment does along with some other universities, so check with your local DOT and find out how you can seek training in this area, that’s very important. Once again, thanks for your participation and good luck in your endeavors to implement Context Sensitive Solutions: A Better Way.

Back to you, Katie.

McDermott: Thank you, Leigh. And thanks to our panel, and thank you for being an important part of today’s program. I’d also like to acknowledge the many downlink sites across the country that tuned into today’s broadcast, and I must also recognize the efforts of the Agency for Public Telecommunications, as well as the North Carolina Information Highway, who helped produce today’s live broadcast and web simulcast. And just a few quick reminders before we leave you. As Leigh mentioned, you can continue the discussion on CSS through CTE’s “After the Program” bulletin board. So please go to our website if you’d like to participate in that, and we’ll keep that bulletin board open for two weeks. And videotapes and DVDs of this broadcast are also available from our website. You can order them online. You can also view this broadcast in its entirety through CTE’s webcast archive. And online versions of the handout and the panelists’ slide presentations will be kept available for download as well. Please remember to complete the evaluation form and turn it in to the site coordinator before you leave, if you’re at a downlink site, or participating via the web please complete the online evaluation form. And finally, we invite you to regularly visit our website and check out our newsletter for more information about CTE’s upcoming programs, and we hope you’ll join us on December 16, when we’ll be addressing “Transportation and Public Health: The State of the Science.” Well, that’s our program for today, it’s been a pleasure being with you and goodnight from Raleigh, North Carolina.

[THEME MUSIC]

[END OF RECORDING]