



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Memorandum

Subject: ACTION: Context-Sensitive Design

Date: January 24, 2002

From: Mary E. Peters
Administrator

Reply to
Attn. of: HIPA-20
Seppo Sillan
366-1327

To: Directors of Field Services
Resource Center Managers
Division Administrators

As you know, I believe it is important for FHWA to identify the most critical areas where we can make a difference. So that we can all concentrate our effort on the critical areas, we jointly selected the "Vital Few," which are: Safety, Environmental Stewardship and Streamlining, and Congestion Mitigation.

Context-Sensitive Design (CSD) is an approach that places preservation of historic, scenic, natural environment, and other community values on an equal basis with mobility, safety and economics. I am asking for your support and assistance in advancing CSD as an element of our Environmental Stewardship and Streamlining efforts.

A transportation facility is an integral part of the community's fabric and it can help define the character of the community or it can destroy it. A context-sensitive approach to planning and designing transportation facilities will help us to better understand that role and properly address it.

Our State departments of transportation (State DOT) partners and we in the FHWA should view CSD as an opportunity to connect with the communities and the constituents that we serve. We should seek to institutionalize the principles of CSD with the same commitment that drove the implementation of the Interstate Highway System. We are in an era that calls for innovative thinking, improved coordination, cooperation, interdisciplinary decision-making, streamlined implementation, and community acceptance. These are lofty but necessary goals. I encourage each of you to work tirelessly in partnership with your State DOT and other partners toward initiating CSD concepts where they do not exist, and toward sustaining them where they do.

If you have questions, we are prepared to offer technical assistance to your staff and the State DOT, you may contact Seppo Sillan, (202) 366-1327, seppo.sillan@fhwa.dot.gov or Harold Peaks, (202) 366-1598, harold.peaks@fhwa.dot.gov.