ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE TRANSPORTATION STANDING COMMITTEE
June 28, 2007
1:32 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Kyle Johansen, Chair
Representative Mark Neuman, Vice Chair
Representative Mike Doogan

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Anna Fairclough
Representative Craig Johnson
Representative Vic Kohring
Representative Woodie Salmon

OTHER LEGISLATORS PRESENT

Representative Bob Buch

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

STATE TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

FRANK MCQUEARY, President
Anchorage Road Coalition
Anchorage, Alaska

JACK LETTIERE, President
American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials;
Secretary, New Jersey Department of Transportation
New Jersey

JENNIFER WITT, Regional Planning Manager
Central Region
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities

Anchorage, Alaska

TOM DOUGHERTY, Engineer/Architecture
Construction/Operations
Central Region
Department of Transportation & Public Facilities
Anchorage, Alaska

JIM LAMSON, Design, Engineering & Construction
Project Management & Engineering Department
Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS)
Municipality of Anchorage (MOA)
Anchorage, Alaska

ACTION NARRATIVE

CHAIR KYLE JOHANSEN called the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:32:49 PM. Representatives Neuman and Johansen were present at the call to order. Representative Doogan arrived as the meeting was in progress.

State Transportation Issues

CHAIR JOHANSEN announced that the only order of business would be a discussion on state transportation issues. He asked Representative Buch to inform members about today's agenda.

1:33:28 PM

REPRESENTATIVE BOB BUCH, Alaska State Legislature, told members the first speaker would be Frank McQueary, who would outline context sensitive systems (CSS). The discussion would focus on community road development, particularly on collector and feeder streets and on codes and infrastructure development. He noted that the Anchorage road systems have been under serious scrutiny lately. The committee is looking at some community development designs that have been promoted nationally.

1:35:07 PM

FRANK McQUEARY, President, Anchorage Road Coalition, gave the following presentation:

> Thank you, Bob. For those of you who don't know me I'll give you a little bit of background. I am not an engineer and I am not a highway designer. I am the President of the Anchorage Road Coalition. My

background is actually [indisc.] at multiple levels. I was in banking here in Anchorage for a number of years. I've also run a trucking company and worked my way through school as a grade checker and road construction projects and my father was a highway construction engineer. So there's a certain genetic affiliation with the process and certainly as a user both in the commercial sense in trucking and an individual with a high degree of interest.

The Anchorage Road Coalition was formed primarily out of dissatisfaction with a number of projects that had been designed and built here in Anchorage on the level of the collector streets, which are both access and mobility streets but should have a high degree of emphasis on access and safe access, whether it is for school children or people going to and from work and getting to their home neighborhoods. A group of us became involved first with the Strawberry Road issues and then with projects we discovered all around town and, as we started researching, we discovered that there was a "c change" going on in the profession in terms of philosophy of design, particularly with urban streets. Now statewide we're talking a lot more than urban streets, but as we got into looking at what the profession was trying to do with a process called CSS, we realized that it would ... help solve some of the problems we saw with what was happening in Anchorage, but it also would have a great deal of applicability with some of our rural projects as well.

I am going to show about 12 minutes of a slide show that was done by the President of AASHTO. His term, I think, was in 2005. His name was Jack Lettiere. He speaks obviously from the pinnacle of the profession as the President of the American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials [AASHTO] that's been sort of the lead agency and professional organization and wrote the Green book with [indisc.] between designing, managing and constructing the interstate highway systems. Jack probably speaks with more credibility than I do so I think the first few minutes of this slide show will be very informative and hopefully useful for this committee.

1:38:03 PM

[THE FOLLOWING IS AN AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION OF JACK LETTIERE ON VIDEO]

Hello, my name is Jack Lettiere, President of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and Secretary of the New Jersey Department of Transportation. Welcome to this video, "Contact Sensitive Solutions for the Transportation Professional." The transportation strategies for the next 50 years are going to be very different than the conventional strategies from the last 50 years. This video is intended to help transportation professionals adjust to the new transportation paradigm of contact sensitive solutions and to introduce this subject to others as well.

Since the 1950s, transportation professionals have predominantly focused on raising levels of service for motor vehicle users by widening roads. The Texas Transportation Institute studied 70 metropolitan areas over 15 years and found that the conventional strategy of expanding roads had had virtually no impact on congestion. The Institute confirmed that metropolitan areas that spent heavily on increasing motor vehicle carrying capacity were no less congested than those that spent nothing on widenings.

Although counter intuitive to many, our profession's longstanding popular assumption that widening roads eases congestion is false. However, over the decades, the unsuccessful battle with congestion has directly and indirectly resulted in harm to others in a number of ways. Arguably, pedestrians, the litmus test for good cities, have suffered the most due to our past motor vehicle focus, sprawling cities, poor pedestrian facilities, and hostile street environments. Through 20/20 hindsight, our profession now realizes that a century ago, American cities were as pedestrian-friendly and as transit-friendly as European cities but through a series of deliberate choices, we retrofitted and expanded our cities in a highly motor vehicle oriented way. Many cities are so poorly designed now that motor vehicles have effectively become prosthetics, without which people could simply not function effectively.

Expansive highways built to rural and natural lands opened up vast areas for developers. Beautiful meadows and forests were covered with tract housing and strip development. Farms, along with some of our most fertile lands and ecosystems, were lost. Sprawl, the unintended but real consequence of our transportation system, happened. The system was unfortunately equated with failure by our profession and, despite colossal public funding and effort over the last 50 years to beat congestion; the conventional transportation strategies are less than ineffective. The more motor vehicle capacity that was built, the bigger the problem became.

With half a century of experience, the profession's epiphany was that it was not the roads were really failing, but the conventional transportation paradigm. In a nutshell, the input into the conventional model was levels of service for motorists and forecasts of even more congestion unless the roads were widened. The models were simplistic facsimiles of reality, presuming all else being equal. However, all else was not equal and people began driving further than they had ever driven before, more than doubling their vehicle miles traveled per capita in a mere 35 years between the years of 1960 and 1995.

As areas became more motor vehicle oriented, pedestrian and bicycle travel became less safe and less popular. As a result, people increasingly replaced pedestrian and bicycle trips with motor vehicle trips, exacerbating the problems. New motor vehicle dependent development patterns responded: low density tract housing, big box retail, and warehouse schools became common land uses that responded to the large scale of the road building efforts. Public transit was simply not feasible in these types of areas due to the low concentrations of people and the long travel distances. The conventional antidote of road widening could not keep up to sprawl due to limited space, money and public support.

Furthermore, the deteriorating road infrastructure from early road building boom times needed professional attention and increasingly scarce government funding for repairs. Climate and cities were affected by our development patterns and asphalt

expanses raising the city temperatures in the summer months due to what are known as heat island effects. Heat, tailpipe emissions and other pollutants contributed to smog, which became a serious health issue, reducing the quality of life for people and occasionally killing them, as happened to this freezer truck full of people and about 700 others in Chicago's 1995 heat wave.

Our motor vehicle dependency and resulting development patterns have contributed greatly to a countrywide inactivity and obesity epidemic according to the Center for Disease Control in adults and children. It is a startling statistic that an average 11 year old boy today is 11 pounds heavier than an average 11 year old boy in 1973. Consequently, diabetes has grown to become a huge problem in adults and children, along with a host of other lifestyle and environmental diseases, including various cancers, asthma, heart disease, and depression. Children born after the year 2000 have a shorter life expectancy than their parents, due to lifestyle and environmental diseases overtaking the ability of our medical industry to counter them. To add fuel to the fire, most credible sources predict that the world demand for oil will out pace the ability to extract and refine oil within about 10 years.

In the meantime, we have built cities with the most highly inefficient transportation and land use patterns in the history of the world in terms of energy and land consumption per capita. Left unaddressed, it will not take long for economic problems associated with this wastefulness to weaken us internationally. The cumulative effects of deforestation, CO_2 emissions, and generally messing with natural systems is contributing to global problems. Melting ice caps, rising ocean levels, expanding deserts, droughts, and extreme weather events may be Mother Nature's way of giving us a hint that it's time to change our ways.

So let's talk about context sensitive solutions. Context sensitive solutions are an integral part of smart growth.

1:45:16 PM

Context sensitive solutions include context sensitive design in which projects are designed to suit the context but they also include solutions that do not require anything to be designed at all. For example, changing policies to require street trees or mixed use zoning requires no design. Context sensitive solutions involve working with the community, working within the various levels of context, ranging from the general need to reduce motor vehicle dependency to the specific context of a location and applying the principles of smart growth.

We will review some of the most important aspects of context sensitive solutions, starting with approaching context sensitive solutions with objectivity. We need to recognize some of our own profession's historic biases and fix them. For example, a highway capacity manual, though sold as a technical document, contains language and value sets that are inherently biased to be pro-motor vehicle. This should come as no surprise due to its inception during the golden age of the motor vehicle. For example, the common use of the word "improvement" when discussing a street project is biased in favor of the beneficiaries of the project against those and that which is harmed. In this case, the widening project benefits motorists while harming the urban forest, the residents, and residential property values. The use of such value based words indicates a bias intentionally or not by the user and results in a lowering of credibility with an objective audience. Perfectly accurate and objective substitutes exist and need to be used.

Similarly, the idea that changing the type of street from a collector street to an arterial street is an upgrade indicates a bias. Audiences that share the bias might not notice, however, and an audience that is looking for a different outcome would perceive the bias. Critics may scoff at this as being just politically correct, however if a speaker or writer wants to be and appear to be an objective professional, then he or she simply needs to avoid biased language. "Efficient" is a highly misused word when involved with widening strategies. Motor vehicle carrying capacities may have increased but as we have

already discussed, energy and land inefficiencies have also increased and congestion has remained unchanged.

The concept to speed is key to context sensitive solutions. The first idea is to recognize the plain physics involved with speed – that the effects of different speeds are not proportional to the speed. For example, a driver going 20 miles per hour would have a stopping sight distance of about 150 feet but the stopping sight distance at 40 miles per hour is not simply double, it's actually about 600 feet.

Similar non-linear relationships are involved with other phenomena. For example, the likelihood of a pedestrian dying in a collision with a car increases dramatically with speed. Some drivers drive faster than the street's designed speed, consequently the effects of different design speeds on non-motorists, such as shop owners and pedestrians, is more than a nominal change in design speed. A change of 30 miles per hour to 40 miles per hour design speed would be perceived as more like the difference between 35 miles per hour and 45 miles per hour design speed, which is much more impactful due to the non-linear effects of rising speeds. Oppositely, changes in design speeds from 40 miles per hour to 30 miles per hour or 30 miles per hour to 20 miles per hour results in much better environments for non-motorists.

The second idea about speed has to be in context. Conventionally, design speeds were the lowest on local streets, higher on collector streets, higher on arterial streets and highest on highways. In a context sensitive solutions environment, the functional classification does not dictate design speed. Instead, design speed is a function of the context. For example, it is okay to have design speeds of 50 miles per hour on a highway outside of town, but in town design speeds of 25 miles per hour are appropriate. Just outside each end of town there's a transition area for changing from the high rural design speeds to the town's low design speeds.

100 years ago and earlier, local collector and arterial streets operated at the same speeds - the speed of a walking horse. As a result, even the busiest streets had retail fronting them, residential

uses alongside, pedestrian traffic and transit. It was a very modern and incorrect idea that big streets and cities also had to be fast streets. It is mainly the negative effects of high motor vehicle speeds in cities that caused retail uses, residential uses, and pedestrians to gravitate away from the big streets. Consequently, for our urban areas to be successful, it is important to employ lower design speeds.

There are two types of safety from a design perspective.

1:51:05 PM

The first type is conventional design safety where we provide care zones for giving bridge abutments, etcetera, so that when drivers leave the road and collide with other objects or otherwise lose control of their motor vehicles, the least harm comes to them and their passengers. The second and newer type is behavioral design safety where we design the street to result in safe driver behavior, lower speeds and fewer collisions. Behavioral design safety is typically included as part of context sensitive design projects in urban areas. Some people know it as traffic calming. Our ideas about design safety have changed over the years outside and inside of cars. Consider seatbelts, for example.

1:52:02 PM

MR. McQUEARY stopped the video and offered to provide copies of it to members. He noted the discussion of behavioral design indicates a vast change in the way the profession is beginning to design streets. It is occasioned by the fact that a lot of information is now available with the interstate highway system's 40-year history. The results of applying design standards based on moving the largest number of cars as rapidly and efficiently as possible to urban streets can now be seen. That design standard has not worked. Typically the wide, fast approach to urban collector streets and arterials has not improved mobility and has negatively impacted neighborhoods.

MR. McQUEARY told members he spoke with Steve Soenksen, the state's Safe Routes to Schools coordinator. Mr. Soenksen's statistics show that nationally, 22 percent of the trips on national highways are school related. He said that school

transportation planning has taken place in isolation from land use planning and with inadequate coordination with other professions and disciplines. School districts often build schools on the least expensive land available, which means students will be bussed over longer distances. Twenty-something years ago, 80 percent of students walked to school; now fewer than 20 percent do. A major reason for that decrease is the type of transportation networks that were designed.

MR. McQUEARY told members the largest study done on highway safety was done by Robert Noland, a professor at London Imperial College. Mr. Noland compiled data from all 50 states over 14 years. The number of accidents and deaths has decreased during the last 40 years; therefore the profession assumed that was the result of safer roads. Mr. Noland's model included factors such as seat belt use, safer cars, emergency medical services, demographics, drunken driving laws, etcetera, and concluded that lane widening was actually less safe because the permissive, forgiving design results in inattentive drivers. He concluded that lane widths of 12 feet and more have resulted in more severe accidents.

MR. MCQUEARY said some of the ideas developed for highway design, such as sight design, are not working as well as expected and often do not work on an urban street environment. He explained that removing a hill to improve sight distance results in drivers increasing their speed because they feel safer. He noted that many lessons are being learned about urban street design. The CSS says that street design requires multidisciplinary input, not just financial considerations.

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MR. MCQUEARY said it is important to establish a project's goal. He recently spoke to Jeff Ottesen who is in charge of capital projects for the Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF). Mr. Ottesen said this year all federal funds will not be sufficient to complete the deferred maintenance on the national highway road system. He said the state needs to begin to require that all state agencies cooperate to extract the most value out of each dollar for roads. He said he has had an ongoing debate with Mark Neidhold, head of design. Mr. Neidhold believes in "CSD" but believes DOT&PF should implement it. He told members:

> Well, they can implement, they can control their employees but that doesn't mean that they're going to

get the time they need from Public Safety or from the Department of Environmental Conservation or other agencies. Here in Anchorage ... we're lucky we have in the police department Nancy Reeder (ph) who is the head of traffic control. She spends an inordinate amount of time participating in discussions like this and is an avid fan of CSS, and avid fan of roundabouts, understands what the impacts of poor design are because she has to deal with both picking up the pieces and parts of people after the accidents and trying to enforce speed limits that don't make any sense in terms of the design. If you design a road that looks like it's built to drive 60 miles per hour, quite a few people are going to go that fast. If it looks like it's designed to go 80 miles an hour and they feel comfortable, they are going to go that fast. So part of CSS is designing the scale of the street to get the desired behavior. That's the behavioral design that Jack Lettiere was talking about.

We're still in transition. The legislative approach or the executive order approach will get us where we need to go faster. We're going to get there eventually but we can speed up the process and probably save some money and save some lives or at least get better value from the money we're spending if we do it now. I've been talking to Bob for a couple of years about it. Last year we did some presentations to the Senate Transportation Committee. We're hoping that this next year that either legislation or an executive order will be implemented. I think there are some people here from – Jim Lamson from the Municipality, who I believe has started a CSS program ....

2:01:37 PM

REPRESENTATIVE DOOGAN asked whether the CSS planning process is in use elsewhere.

MR. McQUEARY said it is. The Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) second strategic goal is to have CSS implemented in all 50 states by the end of the year. The program began in 1998 at a national symposium. Currently, 25 states have statutory or executive order implementation. Some form of CSS is implemented at the policy level or program level in almost every state. Anchorage's AMATS has nominally adopted CSS but has not done

much in terms of implementation. Alaska DOT&PF uses some of the CSS techniques on freeway connection design. He said the implementation is broad outside but slow in Alaska. At AASHTO's convention last fall, it set up state training programs for state engineers to accelerate the process of adoption.

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REPRESENTATIVE DOOGAN asked if a sufficient track record exists to determine the effect of the CSS program on planning and project costs.

MR. McQUEARY said he believes sufficient information is available to determine that context sensitive systems cost no more and probably save money. He told members U.S. Highway 93, which runs through the northern states, had been embroiled in controversy for 23 years. A CSS team brought the various interest groups to the table and got it built. He noted he has heard similar stories anecdotally. The states that have seen the most success have said it costs no more, minimizes controversy, and provides a higher degree of satisfaction when projects are completed. He also felt it restores government credibility with the public.

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REPRESENTATIVE DOOGAN said he would like to see statistics because it seems counter intuitive that involving more people in a planning process will take less time and cost less. He noted this system might work better on bigger, more controversial projects.

2:07:58 PM

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH said he would work with Mr. McQueary to get some hard statistics for the legislature to consider next year.

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MR. McQUEARY offered to provide data to the committee.

2:09:19 PM

JENNIFER WITT, Regional Planning Manager, Central Region, Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, introduced herself and Tom Dougherty, Construction Group Chief, and said Mr. Dougherty has worked closely with communities and

stakeholders on design-build projects including the Parks-Glenn Interchange and the Glenn-Bragaw Interchange.

2:11:01 PM

MS. WITT told members she would like to frame the CSS discussion in terms of recent efforts in Anchorage and the challenges that process has created. She continued:

> What is CSS? ... It is a collaborative – I'd like to read it for the record – a collaborative interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources while maintaining safety and mobility – and I want to emphasize maintaining and not at the expense of safety and mobility. CSS is an approach that considers the total context within which a transportation improvement project will exist. ... From my perspective within the department, is that it is not synonymous with traffic calming nor is it synonymous with design by popular votes and we have some examples here where it shows that indeed often it is not the cheapest option but that doesn't mean it doesn't get implemented.
>
> The next handout I'd like to bring your attention to is the description of the Anchorage Bowl 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan that was featured by the Federal Highway Administration as a case study and a successful application of context sensitive solutions on the transportation planning front. It focuses primarily on the process and the involvement of specific stakeholders in getting community, basically, consensus on developing a highway to highway connection. This is documenting too, for the record, as the project moves into development, the expectations and the needs and the values of the communities that it impacts. Those who have been here for a long time may be able to remember when the Glenn Highway was widened to four lanes and brought right through Mountainview into the heart of downtown, as well as I and L Street, as well as Ingra Gambell. Those are two major connections through town and actually were built directly through neighborhoods.

This last long range transportation plan recognized that as well as looking at all of the data, the safety data, it's no surprise that our most congested locations are also the locations of the highest number of accidents and severity of accidents, as well as the locations where the neighborhoods are really pursuing traffic calming, such as in Fairview and in Mountainview so that's no accident. So all of these things are really focused on the need to get to a way to preserve the neighborhoods, reconnect them, as well as provide for the transportation and the movement needs within the community and get them out of the neighborhoods.

And so this is just a summary of that and actually we are moving forward with this expectation for development for a cut and cover, basically, [indisc.] to connect Fairview over the top. Tom will address a little bit of the process that he's gone through with the very first phase of this highway-to-highway connection being the Glenn-Bragaw Interchange.

You had asked about – Representative Doogan – the challenges that we have and it seems counterintuitive that people would get very involved at the planning stage and that is absolutely correct. Anybody here that has worked in transportation planning knows how hard it is to generate that level of interest and this chart, the first one in the stapled handout, shows the amount. The amount - the bisecting lines of increasing public interest as you get out of the planning, through the programming, and actually into construction, some people really don't take notice or want to participate until they see the bulldozers out there during construction and yet their ability to influence those decisions commensurately decrease over time as we get closer so that is the challenge: how to motivate the public to get involved early on in project development.

Another challenge that we are faced with in this profession is the fact that projects take a long time to reach construction and this problem is exacerbated in Alaska when we have a 20 year, 25 year history of relying pretty much exclusively on the federal highway process for project delivery. We're starting to see a little bit of a difference now, and Tom can talk about

it too, the dynamics you have in involving and keeping the interests of stakeholders from project inception to project delivering and that is something we can talk about with this design-build project on the interchange.

This chart demonstrates the linear format of a federal highway project. Once oil had taken a dip in the '80s, we turned exclusively to the federal highway program and we are the only state that does that. It does have a very linear process in that I can tell you right now that if we had used federal highway funds on the Glenn-Bragaw Interchange, we would still be doing environmental impact statements, same with the Abbott Loop road extension. So, using other funding sources allows a lot more compressed timeframe, but this is one of the challenges we have. How do you generate and maintain that interest over time when you have a turnover in neighborhoods and populations and things like that?

The other challenge we have, and I'd just like to bring your attention to the bar chart on this page here ...

2:17:15 PM

MS. WITT continued:

... is the lack of a good and well defined road hierarchy. A lot of the examples that Mr. McQueary had referred to were [indisc.] within neighborhoods and on collector streets. The challenge we have is that our major arterials and our local roads over time have been forced to serve both functions. Ideally, Tudor Road and Muldoon Road would have been developed with very, very limited access and, consequently, not be having to serve the through movements around town as well as providing direct access to the commercial businesses as well as the several homes that are located immediately adjacent to the road.

With that comes problems and we've been able to get away with that for a very long time but as we've grown as a community, the Mat-Su Borough is experiencing this as well, where you start experiencing a high level of accidents and as the congestion increases,

the conflicts increase. So that is one of the challenges here and we may refer back to this card.

Another challenge, and this is one that has become very relevant to roads here, within Anchorage is improving existing roads that do indeed function as collectors. Unfortunately, these roads are oftentimes originally developed in an older neighborhood where homes immediately access the road. I used some examples from Eagle River. That's where I got the pictures of this, a couple of them. Baranof Street was developed as a dirt road to provide access to a school and the municipality came in and paved it and provided the sidewalk and lighting for the school. Meadow Creek Drive is one that was developed initially as a dead end road but it was extended farther. It connects to another arterial and it needed to be retrofitted because it was not only a school bus route, but also a people mover route and so this is one where the municipality came in and shoehorned in, basically, a sidewalk that is heavily used now. Business Boulevard in Eagle River was one that was developed in a commercial district and, at the time of development, the landowners were not required to put in sidewalks so it was a very, very expensive retrofit that accommodates an attached sidewalk on one side and a separated trail on the other.

So the challenge in the biggest application of some of the context sensitive solutions that are gaining ground right now are on these types of facilities. The collector road is where there is a lot of attention and, again, in Anchorage we're doing much better on developing our collector street system. The problems that we have in the Mat-Su Borough are that we lack collector streets and that our arterials are starting to be congested with high levels of accidents. I have missed one of the pages here. The black and white one is talking a little bit about what are some of the techniques that have been bantered about. What are some of the things that work?

2:20:29 PM

There has been a lot of work done in the Fairview neighborhood. These are actually traffic calming techniques that are appropriate for neighborhoods but

are not appropriate for the facilities. We do need to have roads and protect facilities whose main purpose is to get people from Point A to Point B without providing access to the lands immediately adjacent. Fairview has it all. They have the diverters where basically it used to be a wide road. They have problems with pedestrian traffic, speeding, crime and so now to get through Fairview is a little bit of a trick. Diverters are where you totally cut off access but provide pedestrian movement through there. The curved bold-outs certainly help decrease the distance for the pedestrians crossing the road and it also gives some visual – the horizontal visual and vertical effect that Mr. McQueary had referred to. Entryway signs into a neighborhood [are] done there.

The next one was actually taken in the Turnagain area where the city has done raised intersections and speed bumps as a way of traffic calming, getting people to slow down within the neighborhoods. Another thing is the chicane, or basically a curve, developed into a road specifically to help slow traffic and notify the drivers that they are in a different place. That again is in Fairview.

With that, I'd like to turn it over the Tom Dougherty to talk about the projects we've done and who have been some of the stakeholders that we've had to work with that were critical to project implementation and success.

2:22:12 PM

TOM DOUGHERTY, Engineer/Architecture, Construction/Operations, Central Region, Department of Transportation & Public Facilities, told members he spends most of his time dealing with the complaint side of projects, but has also been involved in three high profile projects that followed CSS guidelines. He agreed with Mr. McQueary that each project has to be looked at on a case-by-case basis because CCS guidelines can save time, which can also lower costs. He noted the stakeholders in a major highway design are very different than stakeholders in an urban road design. He said, regarding the Glenn-Parks Interchange, the freeway was built through the wetland area in the mid 1960s. He remarked:

A lot of the resource agencies were waiting to get another bite at us when we came back through again and it's a bit of a challenge. For about a year and a half we met every two weeks with all of the stakeholders. There's Fish and Game, there's the DNR, there's Fish and Wildlife, and there was the Native group in Eklutna. There were a whole bunch of different stakeholders that wanted to see this done differently the next time. Basically we got them all together and we had them on board from the beginning. This job went fairly well, even to the end where the contractor – it was a design build type situation and the contractor came up with an innovative solution himself, which saved us about another 7 acres of wetland involvement on that project so I think that one, taking everything into account and starting from beginning to end, my understanding of, had nothing but good reviews on how that project turned out.

Another one of the big stakeholders on that job was the traveling public and we did a lot to try to accommodate the traveling public during the construction, as well as when it was all done, there was – I would say 99 percent of the people I've talked to are happy with it. There's one group out there that aren't quite happy. That's the people that travel from Wasilla to Palmer. There's a stop sign .... We incorporated things like the local artistry. I get nothing but rave reviews about that and again, that was something we planned into it from the beginning at a very low cost to the project ....

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MR. DOUGHERTY turned to the next slide of the Glenn-Bragaw Interchange. He told members he first met Mr. McQueary at a community meeting about the interchange. The affected stakeholders in that project were identified early. Pedestrian access throughout that area was very important. The public was presented with different ideas about connecting the two neighborhoods. The process went well and a good solution resulted. DOT&PF also worked with the owner of the Red Apple Market to help keep his business going during the construction. He said the impact to the traveling public should be minimal.

2:28:29 PM

MR. DOUGHERTY told members that DOT&PF received awards from FHWA for the way CSS was incorporated into its process. He said he agrees with Mr. Neidhold that DOT&PF is embracing CSS on many of its projects and that it is the way to go to prevent last minute surprises.

2:29:07 PM

AN UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER asked if using the CSS techniques works for DOT&PF.

2:29:20 PM

MR. DOUGHERTY said he believes CSS is a successful way to develop a project.

2:29:49 PM

REPRESENTATIVE DOOGAN noted two elements to the cost. The first is how the CSS process affects the project planning cost and second, how it affects the actual project cost. He asked if the CSS planning method has resulted in design changes that increased the project cost.

MR. DOUGHERTY said it has not resulted in design changes in his experience because the design decisions are made after taking input from the stakeholders. It prevents finishing 90 percent of a project's design and having to start over.

2:30:56 PM

REPRESENTATIVE DOOGAN asked if DOT&PF had to redesign a lot of projects before it began using the CSS process.

MR. DOUGHERTY said there have not been a lot but it only takes one such project.

MS. WITT referred to the chart that shows projects taking a long time and said the successes Mr. Dougherty cited are under the red bars. The department did not follow the linear process of a federal aid project on those projects but, within two to three years of working with the same group, it progressed from inception to construction, which is very rare. She continued:

> The problems we have when we get to 90, 95 percent design is when we have a protracted and very long development process because of the type of

environmental document required or because of the lack of funding and the inability to move forward with a federal aid project very smoothly. ... As an example, the C Street extension that has just been completed is one that when I came on with DOT almost 20 years ago was being planned and been planned for many years but had been proposed and designed with hits and starts. So it's taken 20 years, my entire career, to see the project built. That is the type of project that is very difficult to do and keeping the momentum up with effective stakeholder involvement when it takes so long and when you have a changeover in who lives out there, what the development patterns have been, what the impacts will consequently be. It's also one - now that it's complete it's functioning actually very well as intended. It's more of an expressway type facility, meaning few driveways, limited breaks every quarter of a mile. That is a big thing in the success with the CSS examples that Tom has cited has been with a non-federal aid project.

2:33:16 PM

REPRESENTATIVE DOOGAN noted that Mr. Dougherty's list of stakeholders included state and federal agencies. He asked if this process is necessary to keep bureaucrats from impeding forward progress on projects.

MR. DOUGHERTY said in his experience, it has been very important to bring the resource agencies into the process early.

MS. WITT added that it also depends on the type of project. The primary stakeholders in the Parks Glenn Interchange were the resource agencies; it was important to have them involved from the beginning. That project was funded with a congressional earmark so it could move forward very quickly.

2:34:27 PM

JIM LAMSON, Design, Engineering & Construction, Project Management & Engineering Department, Anchorage Metropolitan Area Transportation Solutions (AMATS), Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), told members CSS means different things to different people. The MOA has been trying to identify and include stakeholders early in the planning process for two or three years. The planning process takes longer, but if all of the issues can be evaluated from the beginning, the designers can

move more quickly so less money is spent on that part of the process. He noted the solution to a CSS project determines whether it will cost more or less. He said that he has worked on 8 or more collector street upgrades; most have worked well but some have been challenging. He said bringing more people to the table early and taking a broad disciplinary approach to determining the needs is helpful and provides a better project.

2:36:42 PM

REPRESENTATIVE DOOGAN asked if the CSS method was used to design the changes to Arctic Boulevard and the changes contemplated to Fireweed Lane. He commented that every business owner in his district is "up-in-arms" about that project.

2:37:39 PM

MR. DOUGHERTY thought the MOA was developing those projects.

2:37:55 PM

MR. LAMSON said the majority of the Fireweed project is a state facility. Several years the state worked on a design that was tabled. It was then reintroduced and taken over by the MOA. The MOA took a CSS approach and involved many members of the public. He believes the problem with that project has been finding consensus on a design. He said the goals and values of the stakeholders are very different. Arctic Boulevard is a municipal project; the state is involved because it manages construction on all federally funded projects. He was not sure how community involvement worked in the design of that project. Regarding the Spenard Road project, he said that a challenge with this process is that one group may leave happy but another group will enter the process and raise concerns. He said it is likely that a project design could be completed more quickly without public input but at the final stage, the project will "hit the fan."

REPRESENTATIVE DOOGAN said he is trying to determine whether project problems are lessened by using this approach or caused by using it, or whether the changes are driven by the traffic planners rather than the users. He remarked that the solution lies with how the project is defined so he is skeptical to use CSS as a template for every transportation project. He thought simply using CSS could cause problems with certain projects. He asserted:

But if the problem is that involving the stakeholders in the design has stopped the design, then if there is some practical reason for changing the design, that's a problem.

If it's simply a difference of opinion between the people who make primary use of the roads and the traffic planners, that's a different kind of a problem. So I'm not sure how or if this particular system of planning projects was used here, should have been used here, or would have improved things had it been used here. The reason I'm asking these questions is I'm trying to use something I'm familiar with as a model here to figure out – I mean this all sounds good in the abstract, but what happens when you actually use it on a project in which there are widely varying differences of opinion about what should happen here based on what your use of that particular stretch of road is.

2:42:32 PM

CHAIR JOHANSEN told members the committee would get more information from Mr. McQueary before the next hearing, which will be in Juneau and discuss the issue further. There being no one else wishing to testify, he invited Representative Buch to close the meeting.

2:43:22 PM

REPRESENTATIVE BUCH said Randy Scott of Chair Johansen's office would act as the liaison for information sharing. He stated one of the reasons he has been interested in this topic is because the Strawberry Road project has been [in the design phase] for 15 years and construction may begin within the next year. His thought about CSS was not to use it as a boiler plate, but as a tool in the toolbox to be used when applicable. He does not believe any one format will work in every situation. However, changes need to occur and he organized the meeting to create an interchange of ideas.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Transportation Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 2:46:24 PM.