Context Sensitive Design (CSD) is 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 (FHWA CSD Website Homepage).

CSD is a philosophy; it's a way of doing business for DOTs. It should apply to every project, but how it will affect a project depends upon the scale of that project. A graphic from Tom Warne's keynote talk at that 1998 conference "Thinking Beyond the Pavement" talks about a new definition of design excellence as being one where there is a real balance of interests in terms of mobility, safety, enhancement of the natural environment, and preservation of community values.

Included in the notebooks are the Qualities for Excellence in Design (from the FHWA website) and the Characteristics of the Process to yield excellence. First, the project satisfies the problems and needs as agreed to by a full range of stakeholders. This agreement is forged in the earliest phase of the project and is amended as warranted as the project develops. Second, the project is a safe facility for both the user and the community. This is a concept with multiple perspectives to it. Third, the project is in harmony with the community and preserves environmental, scenic, aesthetic, historic, and natural resource values of the area. Fourth, the project involves efficient and effective use of resources, time, budget, and community resources of all involved parties. This is particularly important in terms of the concepts of public involvement. Fifth, the project is designed and built with minimal disruption to the community. Sixth, the project is seen as having added lasting value to the community, again, a quality that relates to the community's opinion about the value of the project. Seventh, the project exceeds the expectations of both designers and stakeholders and achieves a level of excellence in people's minds.

The next group of principles deals with the actual process of CSD. Establish a multi-disciplinary team early with disciplines based on the needs of the specific project and with inclusion of the public. Understand the landscape, the community, and valued resources before beginning engineering design. Involve a full range of stakeholders with transportation officials in the scoping phase, clearly define the purpose and needs of the project, develop a Vision or statement of project goals and reach consensus on the scope before proceeding. Tailor the highway development process to the circumstances, design a process that examines multiple alternatives, and that results in consensus on approaches. Secure a commitment to the process from top agency officials and local leaders. Communication with all stakeholders needs to be open and honest, early and continuous. Tailor the public involvement process to the project and include informal meetings. And use a full range of tools to communicate information about project alternatives such as visualization.

**Skills needed to implement CSD:**

1. **Communication** - Most important skill in CSD. Elements of communication - body language, words, tone.

2. **Listening** - Critically important for consensus building.
3) **Early Communication** - Develops a spirit of cooperation and honesty

4) **Deal with Perceptions** - Perception is reality

5) **Consensus** - Does not necessarily indicate agreement, but that people agree they can "live with" the concept of solution

**Public Involvement Process:**

1) Develop a Public Involvement Plan?
   a. Think strategically about goals for public involvement
   b. Use the plan to communicate the process, decision points, and who makes the decisions
   c. Identify public involvement techniques to use based on the goals identified
   d. Develop a schedule of planned activities
   e. Identify staff and budget resources needed to accomplish these activities
   f. Update as needed

2) **Public Involvement Techniques** - Resource - Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-making, FHWA publication.

**What are the Problems & Needs?**

Look at community, environmental, and transportation needs and gain consensus.

**What is the Vision?**

Develop a Vision for the Project - A statement of desired characteristics of a place at a specified future time, often 10 to 20 years. This statement should address transportation needs, community values and goals, and environmental values. This helps to build consensus.

Case Study - Claymont, along historic Philadelphia Pike

Case Study - Roundabout at Towson, MD

Case Study - Mount Rainier, MD

Case Study - Smiths Bridge, DE

Case Study - Sharpsburg, MD

**Public Involvement Lessons:**

1) Barrier to CSD: Attitudes about public involvement

2) Every project should have a public involvement plan, size of plan depends upon size of project

3) Consider performance measures for public involvement