

## CONTEXT SENSITIVE SOLUTIONS For Adopt-A-Landscape



In 2005, The Michigan State Transportation Commission formally adopted a Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process as an integrated part of the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) mission to provide the highest quality integrated transportation services for economic benefit and improved quality of life. Under CSS, MDOT solicits dialogue with local governments, road commissions, industry groups, land use advocates, and state agencies early in a project's planning phase. This dialogue helps to ensure that interchanges bridges, bike paths and other transportation projects “fit” into their communities. The CSS approach results in projects that respect a community's scenic, aesthetic, historic, economic, and environmental character.

Therefore, it is necessary that Adopt-A-Landscape applicants notify and, if necessary, engage all property owners and/or stakeholders that are impacted by the proposed site adoption. The level of engagement and type of information required for each application will vary with the size, location, and level of adoption activity. The Transportation Service Center (TSC) Construction Permit Staff can help determine the necessary level of engagement and documentation needed to permit the adoption of the landscape area.

Typical levels of engagement are as follows:

### **Informal A**

Informal adoption of landscapes completely contained within the adjacent boundary of the MDOT Right-of-Way, and which do not impact neighboring properties, will likely not need formal stakeholder engagement. In the majority of these instances it will be sufficient to obtain a letter of consent from the local municipality of jurisdiction for the proposed adoption.

Impacts to a property owner may include items such as: plant material within a foot of the adjacent property line, landscape material that overhangs or will overhang the property line, landscape material that may interfere with view sheds, and other potential view or physical encroachments.

### **Informal B**

If the proposed adoption plan indicates potential impacts on one or more adjacent property owners, but less than five, then a moderate informal level of engagement is in most cases sufficient.

Informal B engagement activities should include as a minimum:

- Letter of consent for the Adopt-A-Landscape plan from each affected property owner.
- Letter of consent for the Adopt-A-Landscape plan from the local municipality of jurisdiction.

If necessary, additional engagement activities that may be used include:

- Informal meeting with adjacent property owners and municipality of jurisdiction.

### **Formal C**

If the proposed Adopt-A-Landscape plan impacts more than five property owners but less than 10, and is not adjacent or part of an interchange, a moderate formal level of stakeholder engagement is in most instances necessary. Landscapes of this size are likely to have a visual and functional effect on the surrounding properties and can begin to have an influence at a corridor level as to character and view sheds.

Formal C engagement activities should include as a minimum:

- Letter of consent for the Adopt-A-Landscape plan from each affected property owner.
- Letter of consent for the Adopt-A-Landscape plan from the local municipality of jurisdiction.
- Informal meeting with adjacent property owners and municipality of jurisdiction.

If necessary, additional engagement activities that may be used include:

- Workshop on the design of the Adopt-A-Landscape.
- Consultation with MDOT professional staff.

### **Formal D**

An adoption that is within an interchange right-of-way, and is a gateway to a community, may have multiple local groups and governmental agencies that have a stake in what happens in this location. In these instances, a formal public meeting, and possible workshop activities may be necessary to ensure proper stakeholder engagement and project acceptance.

Formal D engagement activities should include as a minimum:

- Public meeting to discuss, obtain feedback, and approval on the proposed Adopt-A-Landscape plan. Meeting must be advertised in a local newspaper.
- Letter of consent for the Adopt-A-Landscape plan from the local municipality of jurisdiction.
- Official meeting minutes indicating approval attached to the application.

If necessary, additional engagement activities that may be used include:

- Workshop on the design of the Adopt-A-Landscape.
- Consultation with MDOT professional staff.

In all cases MDOT reserves the right to reject an application, or return the application for further CSS follow-up with stakeholders, if it deems there is sufficient public resistance or questions regarding the proposed adoption project. Sufficient proof of compliance with this portion of the application is also at the discretion of the (TSC) Construction Permit Staff but will include, at a minimum, letters of acceptance of the proposed project by adjacent landowners to the adoption site and the local governmental agency of jurisdiction.