Sustainable Highways – Oxymoron or Opportunity?

by

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Abstract

The concept of Sustainable Highways builds upon recent trends in transportation that embrace environmental stewardship, context sensitivity, and a life-cycle approach to asset management. It offers a positive, proactive approach to the development and delivery of highways and highway-related services. It considers conservation and community enhancement on the same plane as functionality and efficiency. It explores broad possibilities from an interdisciplinary and stakeholder perspective, and avoids converging prematurely on solutions that may be inappropriate or incomplete. The practical and conceptual aspects of Sustainable Highways are explored through policies and practices of leading state Departments of Transportation. The goal is to examine how planners, designers, environmental analysts, landscape architects, traffic engineers, construction managers and maintenance personnel perceive and pursue their respective roles, and how they plan and provide creative “win-win” solutions that add value in both functionality and environmental stewardship. Participants develop a heightened awareness of opportunities to provide sustainable outcomes that make streets and highways—from various perspectives—“better than before.”

Bio

Hal Kassoff is a Senior Vice President and Principal Professional Associate with Parsons Brinckerhoff, where he leads the highway practice area. Hal is a graduate Civil Engineer from CCNY with a Masters degree from Northwestern University in transportation planning. In leading PB’s sustainable development work as it applies to streets and highways, Hal has conducted numerous workshops and presentations in the U.S. and abroad on the subject of “Sustainable Highways: Oxymoron or Opportunity?” Hal previously served for 12 years as Maryland’s State Highway Administrator. During this period the SHA team delivered over $6 billion in capital projects throughout the state, including both reconstruction and numerous system expansion projects. During his 25 years at Maryland DOT, Hal had responsibilities for the state’s planning and financial involvement in the Washington DC Metro rail system, and served as Director of Planning and Preliminary Engineering for the State Highway Administration. Hal established SHA’s Environmental Design Division which was instrumental in defining and responding to the environmental and context sensitivity of many award-winning projects.

Hal has been active at the national level in the advancement of Environmental Stewardship and Context Sensitive Design. Recently, Hal led a team within PB that produced a reference guide entitled Concepts in Contextual Highway Design. He has spoken and written extensively on this and related subjects. Among many awards that Hal has received is the Outstanding Public Service Award from the American Society for Public Administration and the prestigious American Society of Civil Engineers’ Wilbur Smith Award for significant contributions to the field of highways.