

DESIGN

Issue Statement

Inconsistent application and/or interpretation of design standards, policies, and practices.

Discussion

Until recently, for the most part, ODOT delivered projects through a centralized design organization located in Salem. Recent changes to ODOT structure and delivery practices have occurred as follows:

- Decentralization of ODOT (design functions relocated to the Regions)
- Increased use of consultants in project delivery
- Use of new and different delivery methods (such as design/build)

This divergence in approach to project delivery has brought more designers with new and different ideas, methods, and practices into the project delivery system, which has resulted in increasing inconsistency in application of design standards and practices.

At the same time, ODOT has lost a significant portion of its experienced staff to the consulting industry, resulting in a loss of technical knowledge and experience. Additionally, decentralization may be encouraging ODOT designers to operate more autonomously, leading to a wider interpretation of standards, or even the establishment of new “local interpretation of standards” that are not necessarily known or practiced statewide.

In addition to delivering projects with its own staff, ODOT also has a large program being delivered by alternative means for which it provides design oversight and review.

With these changes, it is increasingly important to ensure the distribution of current design standards, practices and policies as well as to document existing practices that are currently unwritten. Design practices also need to recognize the differences between mandatory and advisory standards, guidelines, and designer preference

Well defined standards and practices lead to consistent use of proven technologies, details, and materials that result in products that meet or exceed ODOT performance requirements in the field.

Flexibility, when and where appropriate, can promote innovation and cost effective solutions that can in turn become new standards for statewide use and benefit.

(The amount of rigidity or flexibility in standards is dependent on many things, such as the type of facility (Interstate versus State), and is outside the purview of this committee.)

The tasks then are as follows:

- Provide consistent application of established standards and practices.
- Define the line between tradition and innovation, and establish procedures for implementing new standards.

Failure to address this disparity of standards will lead either to increased project development costs, and delayed project delivery, or to the construction and acceptance of potentially inferior facilities if desired standards cannot be implemented.

Work Plan Outline

1. Identify method of defining standards at the beginning of a project
2. Establish roles and responsibilities for reviewers and establish lines of communication between designers and reviewers.
3. Identify or clarify when and how exceptions to standards are allowed, and the procedures for receiving approval for the exception.