

January Urban Design Summit

Precedents

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Throughout the country, transportation projects have become increasingly complex as projects increase in size and as the project planning has become more inclusive of varying points of view. The reconstruction of urban freeways presents a different set of considerations than when these facilities were initially constructed. Established neighborhoods, development interests, and civic leaders view these projects not just as functional facilities, but also as influences on property values and economic development. As a result, more and more projects are incorporating Urban Design programs. Project Pegasus has followed this trend with a preliminary study that has investigated issues and opportunities associated with a potential Urban Design program. In the process, the study identified trends, analogies, and relevant examples from several other completed projects as a way of highlighting the relevance of Urban Design considerations for Project Pegasus.

Within Dallas, the reconstructed US 75 (North Central Expressway) illustrates how Urban Design enhancements can be incorporated to achieve distinctive results. It also represents similar geometric configurations and a general sense of Urban Design applied to a facility of comparable scale to Project Pegasus. In the roadway's northern reaches, between IH 635 (LBJ Freeway) and Park Lane, it runs at or above grade somewhat similar to the Stemmons corridor. From Park Lane to downtown, the North Central Expressway runs below grade, similar to the IH 30 Canyon section. The new High Five interchange, at LBJ Freeway and the North Central Expressway, includes structural enhancements within a complex geometry similar to the Mixmaster interchanges. North Central Expressway and the High Five are precedent-setting Urban Design projects for TxDOT, reflecting characteristics intended to uniquely define the North Central Expressway corridor and the interface with the LBJ Freeway. Direct replication of any particular aspect of these projects may or may not be appropriate to Project Pegasus. They do however provide a broad range of examples of creative concepts and community cost-sharing solutions for Urban Design improvements within the relevant local agency jurisdictions.



In a similar vein, TxDOT is undertaking an aggressive program to implement similar improvements throughout the Houston metropolitan region. Dramatic arched signature bridges and related improvements have been completed along US 59 in the West University District of Houston. Other improvements have occurred at the IH 45/Beltway 8 interchange in the Greenspoint District. Reconstruction projects are underway along the IH 610 West Loop near the Galleria District. These projects are indicative of the trend to design context sensitive solutions that lend a unique identity appropriate to the adjacent neighborhoods and business districts. Although all of the projects mentioned are on federal interstate routes, TxDOT has not funded all aspects of the design and construction. Each project has relied on public-private partnerships in one form or another. Without such collaboration, it is unlikely that successful outcomes would have been realized. As constructed, however, the design of these projects accomplish multiple objectives ranging from timely delivery of regional mobility improvements to aesthetic enhancements complementing community investment and neighborhood stability.

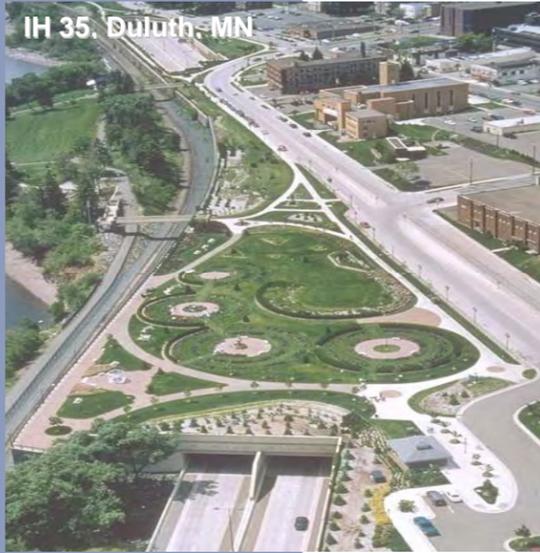
In other TxDOT District area, such as Austin, Corpus Christi, El Paso, San Antonio, Wichita Falls, and Fort Worth, examples have been built that represent a variety of Urban Design treatments unique to each location. These communities and transportation districts have accomplished commendable results despite the same financial challenges faced by all communities and agencies today. As a result, some projects emphasize one aspect such as landscaping while others emphasize a different component such as enhanced bridge structures, pavement types, or street furniture. These projects demonstrate that Urban Design programs are achievable by communities and local interests of all types. They also highlight a variety of solutions inherent in context sensitive design whereby the outcomes respond to local context, characteristics, and community interests.

Comprehensive Urban Design improvements cannot always be achieved. For the most part, the improvements that are achieved are part of, or associated with, the initial transportation facility construction. Phasing of improvements can be undertaken separate from a reconstruction project, but can be complicated by additional cost,



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complexity, and the dangers associated with additive construction within an active right-of-way. Furthermore, many design opportunities become unfeasible unless they are addressed in the initial development phase of project design. Determinations as to the method of integrating multi-objective design are the outcome of carefully conceived advance planning and investment.



IH 35, Duluth, MN

The trend toward Urban Design inclusion is also represented in project examples nationwide as communities and transportation agencies work together to achieve projects of lasting quality. In the process, designs are being developed for the various physical components that make up these transportation corridors. Retaining walls, bridges, signs, lights, and other appurtenances are receiving custom designs that break the mold of decades of standardized design. Complementary landscaping, wayfinding signs, and civic artwork projects are being realized with funding through public and private sources.

Business entities and agencies are working together to find resources for capital funding, ongoing maintenance, and improvement upgrades. Planning agencies are preparing land use and development guidelines to encourage development along and around their highways. Some communities have gone as far as coordinating developments over the top of highways. Projects such as this take the form of air rights development, sometimes with large, enclosed spaces such as convention centers.

Other cities have created bridge deck parks, which enable the fabric of the city to span the facility and completely mask the highway below. Once again, these results are not derived from the actions of any one individual or agency. They require collaboration and commitments from multiple parties over extended periods of time. By exploring Urban Design opportunities and establishing corridor "pockets" early in a project, time is afforded to obtain stakeholder input and the commitments necessary to achieve meaningful results.



Trinity Railway Express, Fort Worth



Squaw Creek Freeway, Phoenix, AZ



US 75 Central Expressway, Dallas



US 75 at IH 635, Dallas



Pima Expressway, Phoenix, AZ

