Glossary of Context Sensitive Solutions and General Transportation Planning Terms

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The following glossary is derived from the professional experience of planning team members and several sources including:

- Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach, RP-036A; Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), approved 2010;
- Complete Streets Glossary of Terms; League of Michigan Bicyclists, 2011;
- Complete Streets Manual; Louisville Metro, 2008;
- Glossary of Issues; Grant Road Project, 2008;
- Glossary of Road Design and Construction Terms; Nebraska Department of Roads, 2002; and,
- Glossary; Sacramento Regional Transit website, 2012

[NOTE: words that are underlined in the definition of terms are also defined within this glossary.]

From ITE Manual

Accessibility—A term describing the degree to which something is accessible by as many people as possible regardless of physical ability or income level. In transportation design, accessibility is often used to focus on people with disabilities and their right of access to thoroughfares, buildings and public transportation. Accessibility also refers to transportation facilities that comply with Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG at www.access-board.gov) related to ADA. (Based on: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Access Management—Access management is defined as the management of potential interference between through-traffic and traffic entering, leaving, and crossing a major street. (Based on: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Access Management Standards—Access management standards typically control and regulate the spacing and design of driveways, medians, median openings, traffic signals and intersections on major streets to improve safety and efficiency of traffic flow and the safety of site access. Standards are sometimes integrated into an access management plan for a particular street segment; this may be done for the Broadway Boulevard Project. (Based on: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

ADA—The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 gives civil rights protections to individuals with disabilities similar to those provided to individuals on the basis of race, color, sex, national origin, age, and religion. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations,
employment, transportation, State and local government services, and telecommunications. This includes public streets and rights-of-way; see also “Accessibility” above. (Based on: Complete Streets Glossary of Terms)

**Alignment**—The location of a street right-of-way in relation to existing property boundaries, and the vertical location of a street in relation to topography, drainage, and curvature. (Based on: Glossary of Issues and Glossary of Issues)

**Arterial**—A street that typically emphasizes a high level of traffic mobility and a low level of property access. Arterials accommodate relatively high levels of traffic, often at higher speeds, than other types of streets and serve longer distance trips. Arterial streets serve major centers of activity of a metropolitan area and carry a high proportion of the total urban area travel. Arterials also serve significant intra-area travel, such as between central business districts and outlying residential areas, between major inner city communities or major suburban centers. Arterial streets carry important intra-urban as well as intercity transit routes. (Based on: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

**Average Daily Traffic (ADT)**—A measurement of the number of vehicles that use a street over a period of a year divided by 365 to obtain the average number of vehicles for a 24-hour period. (Based on: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

**Bicycle Boulevard**—A street that motorists may use that prioritizes bicycle traffic through the use of various treatments. Through motor vehicle traffic is discouraged by periodically diverting it off the street and through the use of traffic calming elements such as chicanes, bulb outs, and traffic circles. Remaining traffic is slowed to approximately the same speed as bicyclists. STOP signs and signals on the bicycle boulevard are limited to the greatest extent possible, except when aiding bicyclists in crossing busy streets. (Based on: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

**Bicycle Lane**—The use of a marked lane within a street cross section that is designed to accommodate bicyclists. (Based on: Glossary of Issues)

**Buffering**—Protecting the residential neighborhoods adjacent to a major street from noise and other potentially negative impacts, and the separation of pedestrians and uses fronting onto a major street from the traffic lanes within the street. (Based on: Glossary of Issues)

**Character**—The attributes, qualities, and features that distinguish an area, and give it a sense of purpose, function, definition, and uniqueness. (Source: Complete Streets Manual, Louisville Metro)

**Collector**—A street that typically balances traffic mobility and property access. Collector streets provide land access and traffic circulation within residential neighborhoods, commercial and industrial areas. Collector streets pass through residential neighborhoods, distributing trips from the arterials through the area to the ultimate destination. Collector streets also collect traffic from local streets in residential neighborhoods and channel it into the arterial street network. (Based on: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

**Community Livability**—Refers to the environmental and social quality of an area as perceived by residents, employees, customers and visitors, including safety and health, local environmental conditions, quality of social interactions, opportunities for recreation and entertainment, aesthetics and existence of unique cultural and environmental resources. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)
Complete Streets—A system of streets designed and operated to enable safe access for all users (pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and bus [transit] riders) of all ages and abilities along and across the street. (Source: Complete Streets Manual, Louisville Metro)

Context—The nature of the natural or built environment created by the land, topography, natural features, buildings and associated features, land use types and activities on property adjacent to streets and on sidewalks and a broader area created by the surrounding neighborhood, district, or community. Context also refers to the diversity of users of the environment. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS)—Collaborative, interdisciplinary process that involves all stakeholders to design a transportation facility that fits its applicable setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources while maintaining safety and mobility. CSS respects design objectives for safety, efficiency, capacity and maintenance while integrating community objectives and values relating to compatibility, livability, sense of place, urban design, cost and environmental impacts. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Control Vehicle—A vehicle that infrequently uses a facility and must be accommodated, but encroachment into the opposing traffic lanes, multiple-point turns, or minor encroachment into the roadside is acceptable. A condition that uses the control vehicle concept arises where occasional large vehicles turn at an intersection with low opposing traffic volumes (e.g., a moving van in a residential neighborhood or once per week delivery at a business) or where large vehicles rarely turn at an intersection with moderate to high opposing traffic volumes (e.g., emergency vehicles). (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Corridor—A transportation pathway that provides for the movement of people and goods between and within activity centers. A corridor encompasses single or multiple transportation routes or facilities (such as thoroughfares, public transit, railroads, highways, bikeways, etc.), the adjacent land uses and the connecting network of streets. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Cross Section—The organization of space within the right-of-way of a street, including vehicle travel lanes, pedestrian realm, local access lanes, bicycle lanes, and the median. (Based on: Glossary of Issues)

Crossings—Facilities that provide for pedestrians, bicyclists, and the disabled to cross streets at strategic points along its alignment; both at intersections with streets and in mid-block locations. (Based on: Glossary of Issues)

Curb Extension—An extension of the sidewalk into the street that reduces the distance pedestrians must cross and often calms traffic. (Source: Complete Streets Glossary of Terms)

Design Control—Factors, physical and operational characteristics, and properties that control or significantly influence the selection of certain geometric design criteria and dimensions. Design speed, traffic and pedestrian volumes, location and sight distance are examples of design controls. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Design Vehicle—Vehicle that must be regularly accommodated without encroachment into the opposing traffic lanes. A condition that uses the design vehicle arises where large vehicles regularly turn at an intersection with high volumes of opposing traffic (e.g., a bus route). (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)
Easement—A right to use or control the property of another for designated purposes. For example, drainage easement, planting easement, sight line easement, access easement, and slope easement are five types of easements in connection with streets. Easements may be either temporary or permanent. (Based on: Glossary of Road Design and Construction Terms)

Edge Zone—The area between the face of curb and furnishings zone, an area of required clearance between parked vehicles or traveled way and appurtenances or landscaping. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Environment—The natural and built places within or surrounding a community. The natural environment includes the topography, natural landscape, flora and fauna, streams, lakes and watersheds, and other natural resources, while the human/built environment includes the physical infrastructure of the community, as well as its institutions, neighborhoods, districts, and historical and cultural resources. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Excess Right-of-way/Development—The use of land acquired for a roadway alignment alignment but unneeded for the street’s right-of-way. The land may be used for a public use or sold for private use. (Based on: Glossary of Issues)

Frontage Zone—The distance between the throughway [of the sidewalk] and the building front or private property line that is used to buffer pedestrians from window shoppers, appurtenances and doorways. It contains private street furniture, private signage, merchandise displays, etc. The frontage zone can also be used for street cafes. This zone is sometimes referred to as the “shy” zone. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Functional Classification—A system in which streets and highways are grouped into classes according to the character of service they intended to provide [i.e.; arterial, collector, and local streets]. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Furnishings Zone—The area of the roadside pedestrian realm that provides a buffer between pedestrians and vehicles. It contains landscaping, public street furniture, transit stops, public signage, utilities, etc. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV)—Vehicles that can carry more than two persons. Examples of high occupancy vehicles are a bus, vanpool, and carpool. (Source: Transit Glossary)

Human Scale—How humans perceive the size of their surroundings and their comfort with the elements of the natural and built environment relative to their own size. In urban areas, human scale represents features and characteristics of buildings that can be observed within a short distance and at the speed of a pedestrian, and sites and districts that are walkable. In contrast, auto scale represents a built environment where buildings, sites, signs, etc. are designed to be observed and reached at the speed of an automobile. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Intermodal—Refers to the connections between transportation modes. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Intersection—Where two or more public streets meet. They are characterized by a high level of activity and shared use, multi-modal conflicts, complex movements and special design treatments. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)
Local Street—Streets with a low level of traffic mobility and a high level of land access, serving residential, commercial and industrial areas. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Mixed-Use—The combining of, or zoning for, retail/ commercial and/or service uses with residential or office use in the same building or on the same site either vertically (with different uses stacked upon each other in a building) or horizontally (with different uses adjacent to each other or within close proximity). (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Mixed-use Area—Areas comprised of a mix of land uses, scales, and densities that provide some level of internal pedestrian connectivity. The Urban Land Institute (ULI) defines mixed-use as “three or more significant revenue-producing uses with significant functional and physical integration of the different uses that conform to a coherent plan.” (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Mobility—The movement of people or goods within the transportation system. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Mode—A particular form of travel (e.g., bus, train, bicycle, walking, or automobile). (Source: Transit Glossary)

Mode Split—The proportion of people that use each of the various modes of transportation. Also describes the process of allocating the proportion of people using modes. (Source: Transit Glossary)

Multimodal—Refers to the availability of transportation options within a system or corridor whether it be walking, bicycling, driving, or transit. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Multi-use Area—Areas containing two or more land uses that may or may not be complementary and interactive, but that have little or no internal connectivity by any travel mode, and have little or no shared access or shared parking. Nearly all interaction between buildings in this type of area is by motor vehicle travelling on public streets rather than within large parking areas. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Peak Hour—That one-hour period during which the maximum amount of travel occurs. Generally, there is a morning peak and an afternoon peak and traffic assignments may be made for each period, if desired. (Source: Glossary of Road Design and Construction Terms)

Pedestrian Realm—The part of the street cross section designed to accommodate people walking along a street for a range of purposes including, access to uses and transit stops, moving from one neighborhood or district to another, and strolling or recreating. Design elements within a pedestrian realm can include sidewalks, landscaping, street trees, and building frontage. The pedestrian zone can be further described and designed through consideration of the zones that provide various functions in the pedestrian realm – edge zone, frontage zone, furnishings zone, and through zone. (Based on: Glossary of Issues)

Place/Placemaking—A holistic and community-based approach to the development and revitalization of cities and neighborhoods. Placemaking creates unique places with lasting value that are compact, mixed-use, and pedestrian and transit-oriented, and that have a strong civic character. (Source: www.placemakers.com and Chuck Bohl, “Placemaking” cited in Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)
Public Participation—A collaborative process that encourages stakeholders to participate in the formation, evaluation, and conclusion of a plan or transportation improvement project. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Right-of-way—The publicly owned land within which a street can be constructed. Outside of the right-of-way the land is privately owned and cannot be assumed to be available for street construction without acquiring the land through dedication or purchase. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Safety—A condition of being safe, free from danger, risk, or injury. In traffic engineering, safety involves reducing the occurrences of crashes, reducing the severity of crashes, improving crash survivability, developing programmatic safety programs and applying appropriate design elements in transportation improvement projects. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Sight Distance—Distance that a driver can see ahead in order to observe and successfully react to a hazard, obstruction, decision point, or maneuver; both an issue when a vehicle is traveling along a street and when entering a street where the “sight triangle” defines an area within which a driver needs to look in order to see approaching vehicles and safely enter the street. (Based on: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Single-use Area—Single-use areas may be corridors or districts which are predominantly comprised of a single type of land use. Often the scale of single-use areas, their lack of a mix of uses and their associated roadway networks tend not to be conducive to walking. Transportation in single-use areas is primarily by motor vehicles, although transit and bicycling can be viable modes. Single-use areas might contain large tracts of housing such as subdivisions or commercial, or industrial uses that rely on freight movement and therefore need to accommodate significant numbers of large vehicles. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Smart Growth—Land use development practices that create more resource-efficient and livable communities, with accessible land use patterns. It is an alternative to sprawl development patterns. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Stakeholders—Groups or individuals that have an interest (stake) in the outcome of the planning or project development process. Typical stakeholders include elected officials, appointed commissioners, metropolitan planning organizations, state and local departments of transportation, transit authorities, utility companies, business interests, neighborhood associations and the general public. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Through Zone—The walking zone [of a sidewalk] that must remain clear both horizontally and vertically for the movement of pedestrians. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Transit Frequency—The amount of time scheduled between consecutive buses or trains on a given route segment; in other words, how often the bus or train comes (also known as Headway). (Source: Transit Glossary)

Transitions—A change in, context, right-of-way width, number of lanes, or neighborhood or district; it may be appropriate for the design of the street to transition where the context, neighborhoods, or district character transitions to be context sensitive. Geometrically, transitions refer to the provision of a proper smooth taper where lanes or shoulders change width, lanes diverge or merge, or lanes have been added or dropped. (Based on: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)
Traveled Way—The public right-of-way between curbs, including parking lanes, and the travel lanes for private vehicles, goods movement, transit vehicles and bicycles. Medians, turn lanes, transit stops and exclusive transit lanes, curb and gutter, and loading/ unloading zones are included in the traveled way. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Values—Attributes and characteristics regarded by a community as having ultimate importance, significance, or worth. Community values encompass the natural and built environment, its social structure, people and institutions. The term often refers to a set of principles, standards, or beliefs concerning the elements of the community that are of ultimate importance. (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Vision—Part of the process of planning a community that involves residents looking into the future, thinking creatively and establishing what they want their community to be in a 20- or 50-year planning horizon. A vision describes an ideal picture and guides goal setting, policies and actions by helping to understand community concerns, prioritize issues, determine necessary actions and identify indicators to measure progress. Successful visions include a future that:

- Balances economic, environmental and social needs from a long-term perspective in terms of decades or generations instead of years;
- Incorporates the views of a wide cross-section of the community; and,
- Tracks its progress in reaching the future.

(Source: www.communitiescommittee.org; cited in Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Walkable—Streets and places designed or reconstructed to provide safe and comfortable facilities for pedestrians, and are safe and easy to cross for people of all ages and abilities. Walkable streets and places provide a comfortable, attractive and efficient environment for the pedestrian including an appropriate separation from passing traffic, adequate width of roadside to accommodate necessary functions, pedestrian-scaled lighting, well-marked crossing, protection from the elements (e.g., street trees for shade, awnings, or arcades to block rain), direct connections to destinations in a relatively compact area, facilities such as benches, attractive places to gather or rest such as plazas and visually interesting elements (e.g., urban design, streetscapes, architecture of adjacent buildings). (Source: Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Walkable Communities—Walkable communities possess these two attributes: first, by location, in a mixed-use area within an easy and safe walk of goods (such as housing, offices, and retail) and services (such as transportation, schools, libraries) that a community resident or employee needs on a regular basis. Second, by definition, walkable communities make pedestrian activity possible, thus expanding transportation options, and creating a streetscape that better serves a range of users—pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and automobiles. To foster walkability, communities must mix land uses and build compactly, and ensure safe and inviting pedestrian corridors. (Source: www.smartgrowth.org; cited in Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach)

Water Harvesting—The approach to designing landscaping and a street or site that seeks to infiltrate and treat stormwater runoff to the extent feasible from the surrounding streets and to use this runoff for watering landscaping. (Based on: Glossary of Issues)