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The use of guidelines abroad: Vermont case study

Marco Facchinetti

The research over international case studies many times gives the possibility to understand and to study things that in our country it is difficult to study, to create, to invent, meanwhile in other countries the same things are already in practice, due to historical, economic, cultural very complex reasons. Looking at international contexts offers many good case studies in the field of relations between infrastructural and territorial planning, above all studying the relations between roads design and territorial planning and design.

Even in Italian researches and studies it is clear that road design should not be limited to road section and to the land that every road occupies with its layout: a road it is not only a system to move the highest number of people in the fastest way. The interest for environmental impacts, production of noise and pollution, the land consumption show how a road project is strictly linked to many other aspects of planning, and above all to many other dimensions, such as environmental, cultural and economical aspects.

Two key aspects

One of the most interesting results of this research is the discovering of how the enlargement of the capacity of every road project to involve many other aspects of territorial planning is becoming every day practice in foreign countries, and how this enlargement has been codified, written, published and presented using guidelines, manuals and handbooks, the same kind of products that with many difficulties in our country is only the result of

excellent researches. Manuals and design guidelines are able to put into everyday use good practices, to create the same standards of design and planning for the whole country, helping minor contexts to learn the best lessons and to put them into practice, not only working on road layout, but also, and with more interest, managing the relations between roads system and territorial development. The countries studied by this research, and this is almost the second important key point discovered, just producing guidelines and manuals are experimenting a strong relation and a very good coordination between different levels of government. Many times, technical aspects are strongly regulated by central governments manuals and rules, giving the possibility to the administrations to put into practices, according to their own characteristics the guidelines suggested by other levels of government. Many times, in the case studied, only technical aspects are regulated by laws, deciding to coordinate the geometrical layout of roads, giving much more freedom to plan the aspects related to the relations between roads and surrounding places. In this way, one of the reason of the success of design handbooks and manuals is not only due to the good practices included and suggested but it is due to the strong and democratic relation that produced manuals.

The research shows this way at least these two interesting aspects. Road project deserves a wider field of interests, it can be much more than a simple layout for a road, if there is agreement over the idea that a road is part of a network of transportation but above all part of a territorial system. Road design should involve many more aspects, such as

environmental considerations and territorial, economical and cultural possibilities of development and transformation. Secondly, only through strong relations between all the levels of government, from State administration to local municipalities, able to involve local actors and the most important leader of economic development, it is possible to give sense to what is included in the manuals. Otherwise, without a strong link and a useful cooperation it is hard to put into practice every guideline. Italian practice knows how difficult is to change the rigid national Road code, or how many differences there are between national decision and local contexts ability to put them into practice.

Vermont Interstate Interchange Design Guidelines

Intended for use by municipalities, land developers and public officials, this guidebook promotes ways to support growth at interchanges that is consistent with state land use goals and other state policy initiatives. It was created as a resource for understanding growth patterns by visualizing the pattern of land use that will likely result in the absence of meaningful planning, and by illustrating more compact and land-efficient design and development. It explains the consequences of incremental, uncoordinated decision making, and offers strategies for implementing a compact growth pattern, while addressing the land uses that are recognized to be necessary or desirable at interchanges. The guidebook was developed and distributed for use as an educational and planning tool for those seeking to manage land use and growth pressures in their communities.

The contents of the

guidebook are intended to illustrate how the application of various planning principles might affect a site development and the resulting impacts on the community. The scenarios depicted in the guidebook are conceptual and demonstrate the possible use of alternative development approaches. The contents are not intended as and should not be construed or applied as a statement of the regulatory policy of the State of Vermont, and do not supersede the policies and requirements of adopted municipal and regional plans and bylaws. Vermont's interchanges (or areas within them) can be grouped into the following six categories that represent different growth contexts and development conditions.

A. Nearby village or downtown. A village or downtown is located within 1.5 miles of the interchange. There is undeveloped land between the Type A interchange and the village/downtown. Development in this context presents the opportunity to expand the village fabric in an interconnected, compact pattern at an urban or village density.

B. New or emerging growth center. A village or downtown is located near the Type B interchange but cannot be expanded in a contiguous pattern because of development constraints. A satellite growth center, with a mix of uses that complement rather than compete with the traditional center can be developed on land near the interstate. This category is a subset of the village/downtown type. It is difficult to identify which interchanges fit this type without a more detailed analysis of building constraints and opportunities at each site.

C. Regional arterial highway-Potential strip development. The intersecting highway

functions both as a regional corridor and connector to a town center in the Type C interchange. There is a significant volume of traffic and increasing amount of commercial strip development along the highway.

D. Connector road. For the Type D interchange, the intersecting highway or access road carries primarily local traffic or traffic headed to a downtown more than 1.5 miles away. Growth pressure is less intense and the existing settlement, which takes a linear form, is sparse. To encourage the historic settlement pattern and channel most new commercial uses to the town center, limits would be needed on new commercial uses at the interchange.

E. Rural, interstate-related. Existing development in the rural Type E locations is primarily limited to interstate-related uses such as traveler services, and transportation and trucking facilities. Since they do not need to be visible from the road, buildings are distributed in a dispersed rather than a linear pattern.

F. Limited access highways. Lack of access to land on intersecting highways prevents development at these interchanges, which are most often located at the intersection of two controlled access roads. The guidebook is organized into two sections. The first, *Planning Guidelines*, examines existing conditions at interchange areas and addresses the special planning issues to be considered to fully address growth there. This section also describes strategies for planning at the municipal and regional levels and some of the state resources that are available. The second half presents *Design Guidelines* for development at interstate interchange areas. These include design concepts to help new development fit into the various Vermont

contexts found at interstate interchanges. Included are recommendations on siting, building, and landscaping development at interchange locations. The Planning section is intended primarily for use by local and regional planners in preparing and adopting plans and regulations for land around interchanges. The *Design Guidelines* are directed to a broader audience. They may be used by developers and landowners beginning work on designing development projects, local planning commissions crafting standards for the review of projects, and citizens interested in learning about desirable development patterns at the state interchanges. Rather than using the guidelines to evaluate specific projects, the guidelines are designed to help communities and regions prepare policies that are specific to the unique setting and context of each of the state 52 interchanges.