

# **The Public Agency Official in Their Natural Habitat**

**How to Understand  
This Odd Creature**

**Agencies may look  
monolithic...**



**...but aren't!**



- Many different divisions/groups/sections
- and may not talk to one another!

# Structure of "typical" state transportation agency

- Design
- Construction & Maintenance Districts
- Planning / Programming
- Transit
- Motor Vehicle Licensing/Registration
- Highway Patrol
- Highway Safety

# Design

- **the “development” area**
- **Create plans, specifications, standards**
- **Functional areas:**
  - **Roadway design**
  - **Traffic engineering/design**
  - **Structures/bridges**
  - **Project management**

# Districts

- the “day to day” area
- Recommending and prioritizing state highway improvements & projects in geographic area
- Construction oversight and inspection
- Maintenance of state highways
  - and sometimes other roads as well

# Planning

- **the “big picture” area**
- **Study and project future needs**
- **Funding and revenue projection**
- **Develop long-range transportation plans**
- **but little control over construction / maintenance / operations**
- **State pedestrian & bicycle coordinator is typically in this planning area**

# Why Do Agency Employees Act The Way They Do?

- **Authority**
- **Responsibility**
- **Accountability**
- **Liability**
- **Institutional Culture**



# Authority

- **Wide varieties in discretionary authority - depends on:**
  - **Location in agency**
  - **Management structure / style**
  - **Degree of oversight**

# Responsibility

- **Agency employees really want to do the "right thing"**
  - **...it just depends on the definition of "right thing"**
- **and for which user group**
- **YOU can help shape that definition**

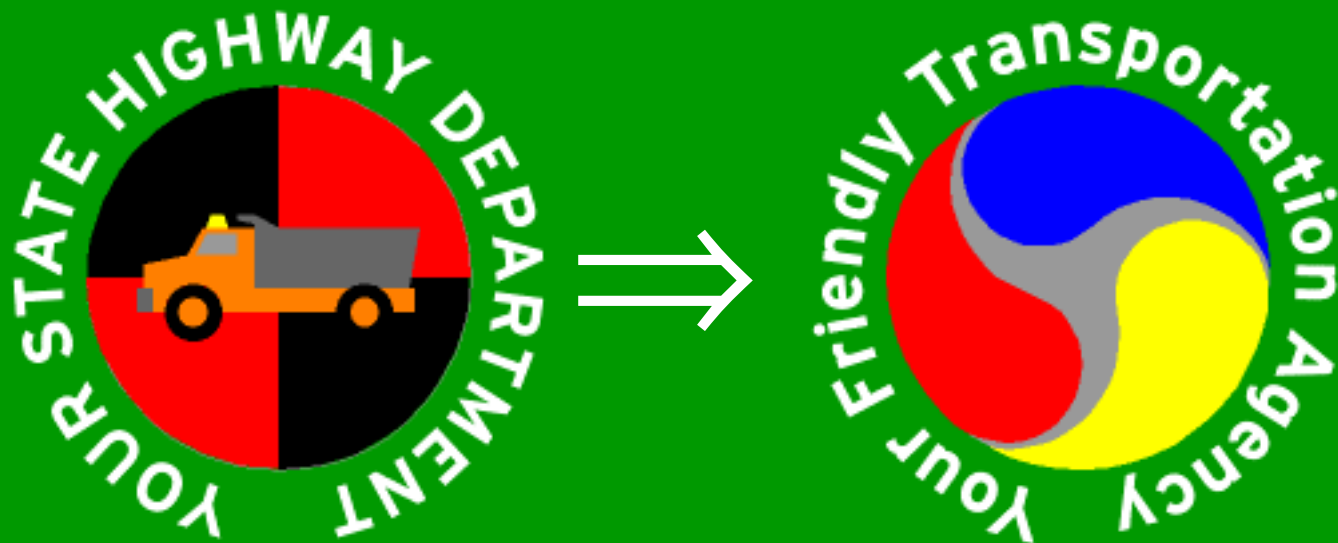
# Accountability

- **Agency and its staff are accountable to:**
  - **Governor / executive branch staff**
  - **Transportation Board/oversight group**
  - **Legislature**
  - **Public**
    - **Face to face**
    - **Public meetings & hearings**
    - **Requests via elected officials**
    - **Claims & litigation**

# Liability

- **Liability is a very real issue**
  - Millions in settlements/judgments in a single state
  - Violating accepted design standards & guidelines can dig a big hole
- **However, misperceptions exist**
  - Designation does not create liability
  - Segregation doesn't decrease liability

# Institutional Culture



- The logo may have changed...  
...but did the thinking change?

# Don't ask too much of your friends inside the agency

- They might sympathize...  
...but have loyalty to agency
- Policies may "tie the hands" of staff
- May not have authority/ability
- Design standards & guidelines are a good thing
  - and can be your friend too!

# Money, money, money!



- **Just because something's eligible for funding doesn't mean it will be funded**
- **Funds typically programmed 3-5 years in advance**

# **Need to develop relationships with staff across the entire agency**

- **Districts**
- **Roadway Design**
- **Traffic Engineering**
- **Maintenance**
- **Planning**



# Example: Engineer's Ride

- **Organized by Coalition of AZ Bicyclists**
- **Provided rental bikes for ADOT engineers**
- **Led them on ride over varying conditions**
  - **Wide lanes**
  - **Narrow lanes**
  - **Bike lanes**
  - **even rumble strips!**

# Engineer's Ride

- **Engineers got "behind-the-handlebars" view of cycling problems**
- **Experienced firsthand the impacts of road design on bicyclists**

# What's Most Productive?

- **Developing relationships in all areas of agency**
- **Facilities that agree with accepted standards / guidelines**
- **Mainstreaming**
  - **Get bicycle-friendliness into standards, guidelines, policies**
  - **don't need to keep pushing for the same things over & over**
  - **even affect areas you don't have influence over**

# What Isn't Productive?

- **Requesting facilities that violate accepted standards/guidelines**
  - (remember who will get dragged into court here!)
- **Antagonistic relationships**
  - You may get what you want, but probably not in the way you want