

COMPLETE STREETS

local policy workbook



Smart Growth America
Making Neighborhoods Great Together



National Complete
Streets Coalition

www.smartgrowthamerica.org

This workbook was written by Stefanie Seskin, with contributions from Barbara McCann. We thank Rachael Kefalos Bronson, Nadine Doyle, Cynthia Hoyle, Renee Autumn Ray, Ryan Snyder, Catherine Vanderwaart, and Amanda Woodall for their thoughtful comments.

Photo credits

Page 9, clockwise from top left: Dan Burden, Walkable and Livable Communities Institute; Dan Burden, Walkable and Livable Communities Institute; Tiffany Robinson, www.pedbikeimages.org; Elly Blue, www.pedbikeimages.org

Page 16, from top: Amanda Inscore, www.news-press.com; Be Active Decatur, www.beactivedecatur.com

Page 26, from top: Seattle Department of Transportation; Dan Burden, Walkable and Livable Communities Institute

Page 40: Adam Darin, www.pedbikeimages.org

Page 51: all photos by Dan Burden, Walkable and Livable Communities Institute



Smart Growth America
Making Neighborhoods Great Together



**National Complete
Streets Coalition**

1707 L St NW Suite 250 • Washington, DC 20036

202-207-3355 • info@completestreets.org

www.smartgrowthamerica.org

August 2012, updated Spring 2013



The Complete Streets Local Policy Workbook is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 3.0 Unported License, permitting non-commercial use with attribution. Any of these conditions may be waived with permission.
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/>

table of contents

The Public Health Connection	5
Introduction	6
How to Use This Workbook	7
Types of Policies	8
Pursuing the Right Type of Policy	12
Policy Elements	15
Vision	16
Core Commitment	19
Users and Modes	20
Projects and Phases	22
Exceptions	24
Best Practice Elements	29
Network	30
All Agencies and Roads	32
Design Guidance and Flexibility	34
Context Sensitivity	36
Performance Measures	38
Implementation Next Steps	43
Additional Elements	48
Paper to Practice	50

the public health connection

It's no coincidence that Complete Streets efforts have taken off in places that are also working to prevent chronic disease. As residents, leaders, and public health organizations have worked together to encourage healthier communities, they've identified many existing streets as a barrier to more active lifestyles. Yet, when streets are 'complete' – safe, comfortable, and convenient for people walking, bicycling, riding public transportation, and driving – people of all ages and abilities have more opportunities to be active when they go from place to place, or when they exercise for recreation. That transforms streets from a public health barrier to an asset, enabling a greater return on the investment of public dollars..

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services created the Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) program to help communities achieve their health goals, fight obesity, and reduce tobacco use. Led by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, sites participating in the CPPW program employ a powerful public health framework for creating healthier environments: Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change – or PSE for short. PSE recognizes that making the healthy choice the easy choice is a sure route to success in promoting healthier behavior. These efforts will produce broad, high-impact, sustainable health outcomes for participating communities.

While CPPW communities selected different interventions as a means to achieve improved health outcomes, a great number chose Complete Streets as one of their focal areas. Some of these communities took their first steps to Complete Streets through CPPW, while others used the program to ensure effective implementation.

Within the PSE framework, this document aims to directly address the 'P' – by adopting a Complete Streets policy – and influence the 'S' – by starting to change the everyday decisions that influence our transportation system. Then, by building our streets with sidewalks, bicycle facilities, accessible transit stops, and other infrastructure investments that encourage active transportation, we will achieve the 'E'. While we looked nationally for examples and ideas to include in the following pages, many referenced policies are from CPPW sites that have worked on Complete Streets in conjunction with their community partners:

- Birmingham, AL (CPPW Site: Jefferson County)
- North Little Rock, AR (CPPW Site: North Little Rock)
- Baldwin Park, CA (CPPW Site: Los Angeles County)
- Dunwoody, GA (CPPW Site: DeKalb County)
- Cook County, IL (CPPW Site: Cook County, IL)
- Rochester, MN (CPPW Site: Olmsted County)
- Nashville, TN (CPPW Site: Nashville-Davidson County)
- San Antonio, TX (CPPW Site: San Antonio, TX)
- Seattle, WA (CPPW Site: Seattle-King County)
- La Crosse, WI (CPPW Site: La Crosse County)

This document is one of several ways in which the Coalition's work with CPPW sites is being shared more broadly, to help more places in the U.S. achieve healthier communities through engagement with transportation planning systems.

introduction

For decades, the fields of transportation planning and design focused on moving able-bodied adults in automobiles, creating a system that provides reasonably good mobility and convenience for millions of Americans. However, the needs of travelers outside that group, including younger or older people, those with disabilities, and those who travel by transit, bicycle, or foot, have been routinely overlooked. Neighborhoods lack safe places to walk or bicycle, and access to key community resources such as parks, shops, grocery stores, and schools is now dependent on access to an automobile. Thousands of people are injured or killed while walking or bicycling every year, in part due to the inhospitable built environment. Buses move down streets slowly and drivers – when not speeding along neighborhood streets – are caught in traffic jams on major arterials.

The Complete Streets movement aims to develop integrated, connected networks of streets that are safe and accessible for all people, regardless of age, ability, income, ethnicity, or chosen mode of travel. Complete Streets makes active transportation such as walking and bicycling convenient; provide increased access to employment centers, commerce, and educational institutions; and allow greater choice in traveling so that transportation doesn't drain a family's piggy bank.

The term Complete Streets means much more than the physical changes to a community's streets. Complete Streets means changing transportation planning, design, maintenance, and funding decisions. A Complete Streets policy ensures that, from the start, projects are planned and designed to meet the needs of every community member, regardless of their age, ability, or how they travel. Doing so allows a community to save money, accommodate more people, and create an environment where every resident can travel safely and conveniently.

Complete Streets can be achieved through a variety of policies: ordinances and resolutions; rewrites of design manuals; inclusion in comprehensive plans; internal policies developed by transportation agencies; executive orders from elected officials, such as Mayors or Governors; and policies developed by stakeholders from the community and agency staff that are formally adopted by an elected board of officials.

how to use this workbook

Rather than presenting a single model policy, we are offering a guide based on existing examples from around the country to help walk you through developing the right policy for your community. We strongly encourage you to think carefully about your community's needs, vision, and goals. Draw from existing best practices, but be sure to tailor that language to best fit your community.

This workbook is designed to be used in conjunction with our latest edition of *Complete Streets Policy Analysis*, where you can find many examples of well-written existing policy language, often in your own region or state. Remember: good language is not specific to the type of policy written, and inspiration can come from many sources.

In this workbook, you will find explanations of the various forms a Complete Streets policy may take and the elements of an ideal Complete Streets policy. We describe each element of an ideal policy and provide sample language that may inspire your own efforts. We also ask probing questions to help you write the best policy for your community.

The most successful policies are those that incorporate the thoughts and opinions of a broad group of stakeholders: transportation planners and engineers, elected officials, transit agencies, public health departments, and members of the community, to name just a few. In writing a policy, you may want to:

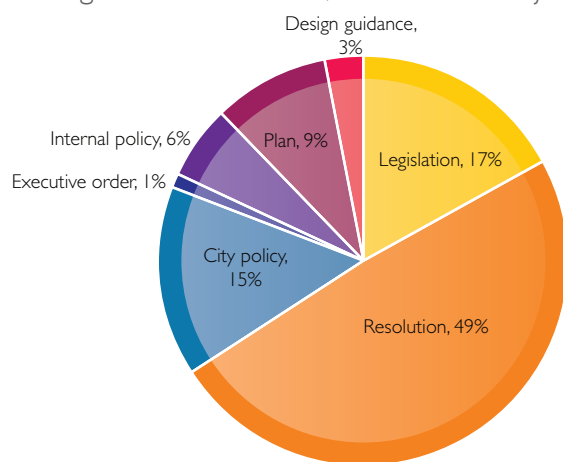
- Host a National Complete Streets Coalition workshop on Policy Development. This full-day, interactive workshop will help you bring together the right people and work with two nationally-recognized experts in Complete Streets to begin writing a policy and understand the implementation process.
- Host a half-day work session in-house, with representatives from various departments and organizations, to begin answering the questions contained within this workbook and collaborating on language.
- Convene a committee or sub-committee to develop policy language based on the examples provided below and circulate the draft to other stakeholders.

This workbook is intended to be used during the development of a *city* or *county* Complete Streets policy. Many of the same principles apply when developing a policy for regional agencies or states. For more on crafting state legislation, please see www.completestreets.org.

types of policies

The National Complete Streets Coalition recognizes many different types of policy statements as official commitments to routinely provide for the needs of all users and all modes present on the transportation network, including people of all ages and abilities on bicycles, walking, waiting for and riding buses, driving cars, and delivering commercial goods.

Through December 2012, more than 480 jurisdictions had formally committed to a



Complete Streets approach by adopting some form of a policy. Nearly half of these policies are resolutions and almost one in five are legally binding ordinances. The remainder is a mixture of policy types, including departmental directives, executive orders, plans, design guidelines, city policies, and tax levies. The most recent *Complete Streets Policy Analysis* report updates this information and provides links to the best examples of each of these policy types.

Council-driven

Ordinance Ordinances legally require the needs of all users be addressed in transportation projects and change city code accordingly. Ordinances may also apply to private developers by changing zoning and subdivision requirements. Ordinances require strong support from the community and elected officials, and are enforceable by law, making them difficult to overlook. City departments and commissions often approve ordinance language before it moves to the legislative branch, though broad partnerships between all the actors may not be truly developed during this process. With strong support from elected officials in place, ordinances are a worthy pursuit.

Resolution Issued by a community's governing body, resolutions are non-binding, official statements of support for approaching community transportation projects as a way to improve access, public health, and quality of life. Resolutions are often a very helpful first step, providing the political support for a Complete Streets approach. However, as they do not require action, they may be forgotten or neglected if an implementation plan is not created. If you do not yet have strong support from your elected leaders, a resolution is likely your best choice; be sure to include clear implementation steps (page 43) to avoid losing momentum.

Council-approved

Plans Complete Streets policies can be found within community comprehensive plans or transportation plans. The process of updating a plan, or adopting a new one, provides an excellent opportunity to engage all sectors of the community. Plans are a good home for basic Complete Streets policies, most often listed among the community's goals for the future, and they can provide some implementation guidance by identifying specific corridors in particular need of increased multimodal planning and design. To be truly effective within a plan, the Complete Streets approach must touch all aspects of the plan, not just be mentioned in one chapter, or restricted to one mode. For example, a policy should not be restricted to only the bicycle elements or applied only to streets included on a bicycle and pedestrian plan. Plans must also be well regarded by the community and inform the budget process, or else they risk gathering dust.

City policies A city council may also take action by adopting a Complete Streets policy as official city policy. Generally, this means that a Complete Streets policy is developed by an internal group of stakeholders, which may include representatives from planning, engineering, public works, economic development, health, and/or elected officials, or a broader group that includes residents and community stakeholders. This document is then taken to the full Council for discussion and a vote. These policies tend to be lengthier and more detailed than resolutions or ordinances, and can build partnerships between agencies, community members, and decision makers in a more robust way than resolutions or ordinances. Like resolutions, such policies are not legally binding; however, the community, political, and agency support for change tends to be very high, resulting in a shared, lasting push for implementation of the policy.

Design guidelines Communities may decide to integrate Complete Streets planning and design into new design guidance for their streets. Creating new guidance is a great way to ensure that each street project's design is compliant with Complete Streets goals. Manuals can take years to develop and can often happen without much public input. However, simply changing important details such as street cross-section standards can be done in a short time. The National Complete Streets Coalition encourages revisions to design guidance – including development of new standards if appropriate – as a next step in policy implementation.

Directives

Departmental policy A relatively uncommon, but still useful, policy adoption method is for a city department to issue its own Complete Streets policy directive. These policies are issued by the department head and usually created “in house” by that department. They are more detailed in procedure change than resolutions or ordinances. Though not mandated by law, such policies generally have good support from transportation professionals and are likely to be accompanied by changes in practice to ensure implementation. If departmental leadership is strong and committed to Complete Streets, but elected officials' support is wavering, this is a good option for your community.

Executive order Another uncommon policy is one issued by the city's chief executive, often the mayor. These executive orders are most helpful in defining the problem and directing department heads to make the necessary changes. Though such policies reflect strong political will, they only last as long as the current mayor sits in office, and may not have sustained support from other elected officials, decision makers, and the community. If you have a committed executive branch with oversight of departmental leadership, but weaker support from the legislative branch, this type of policy can enable departments willing to move ahead with Complete Streets changes.

Citizen vote

Tax levy Some communities have decided to pursue an additional tax that will fund transportation improvements. Usually approved by a general vote of residents, these levies have specific requirements and goals, which can include provisions to ensure Complete Streets: pavement maintenance; sidewalk development and repair; tree planting and care; transit enhancements; bicycle network implementation; improved pedestrian crossings; and other needed work. Though uncommon, transportation departments that show a commitment to improving streets for everyone can achieve wide public support for additional taxation. This type of policy is best considered if your community has used such measures in the past or if a broad-based advocacy campaign can support the initiative.

Ballot measure Rare, though possible, is a citizen-led campaign for a Complete Streets law enacted not by a body of elected officials but by direct ballot by the general voting public. These measures are, like ordinances, enforceable by law and more difficult to ignore. Campaigns in favor of ballot measures create a high level of community support for Complete Streets, but important stakeholders such as transportation departments and elected officials may be left out of the process. If your Council is unwilling to pass an ordinance, but your transportation agency is more supportive and a network of advocates can be activated, you may want to explore this option.



pursuing the right type of policy

The development of a Complete Streets policy should take into account existing policy, practice, and politics. Take some time to better understand how decisions regarding transportation projects are made in your community by first working to answer the following questions. As you write your policy, you will want to refer to these answers and refine them.

What is the decision-making process for transportation projects in our community? What departments are involved? Who -- names and titles -- makes the decisions at each step? *(Note: It may be helpful to draw a flowchart to illustrate how projects move through departments, noting how the process may change under different funding scenarios.)*

What plans, policies, and procedures guide transportation decisions?

What do those policies and procedures already say about accommodating all users? How can a Complete Streets policy strengthen them?

How are transportation projects selected for our Capital Improvement Program?

Who in the decision-making structure is already supportive of Complete Streets and can become a champion for adoption and implementation?

After thinking about how a Complete Streets policy can change and add value to your decision-making process, you can return to the question of the best type of policy to pursue. You should identify the type of policy that would be most effective in sparking change, while being realistic about the type of policy that can be passed and implemented successfully. Many communities begin with a simple resolution that then leads to a more complex internal policy. Or perhaps you'll discover that your community's transportation plan is due for an update, so a Complete Streets policy could be incorporated into that process. The following questions can help you determine the type of policy to pursue.

How do we change policy now?

How can we get community support for these changes?

What type of policy would give us the support we need to do things differently?

policy elements

The National Complete Streets Coalition promotes a comprehensive policy model that includes ten elements. Though the concept of “Complete Streets” is itself simple and inspiring, the Coalition has found, through research and practice, that a policy must do more than simply affirm support for Complete Streets.

The ten ideal elements refine the vision, provide clear direction and intent, are accountable to a community’s needs, and grant the flexibility in design and approach necessary to secure an effective Complete Streets process and outcome.

The ten elements can be divided into four distinct parts:

- ‘Pre-policy’ work of establishing a compelling **vision**;
- Creating a strong **core commitment** to providing for all users and modes in all projects;
- Rounding out that directive with supporting **best practices**; and
- Planning **next steps** for policy implementation.

Refer to the most recent *Complete Streets Policy Analysis* for additional policies that have particularly good language in each of these ten elements.

vision

Communities adopt Complete Streets policies for many reasons. Many local policies originate from a desire to improve safety for people walking and bicycling to their destinations and to encourage more walking and bicycling as a way to improve public health. Improving access to public transportation by making it safer, easier, and more attractive for all, including older residents and those with disabilities, is another driving factor in many communities. Safe Routes to School proponents also see Complete Streets as essential in providing complete, safe routes for children heading to school. Some towns have rallied around a more equitable vision for transportation that provides better access to employment and educational opportunities in all neighborhoods, regardless of income or ethnicity.

A strong vision can inspire a community to follow through on its Complete Streets policy. Just as no two policies are alike, visions are not one-size-fits-all either. Think about what can motivate your community to consistently plan and design its streets to be safe for people of all ages and abilities, regardless of how they travel. Draw from your community's history, including slogans, themes, mission statements, and past planning efforts.

What are the benefits of adopting a Complete Streets policy in our community?

What reason for adoption (such as health, safety, or providing transportation choice) will consistently rally support from the community, its transportation professionals, and its leaders?

What is our vision for Complete Streets?



core commitment

The heart of a Complete Streets policy is a clearly stated directive to include the needs of all people, regardless of how they travel, into the everyday transportation decision-making process. It also outlines explicit exceptions to the routine accommodation of those users. The elements below are the most important to include in your policy. This is the opportunity to refocus transportation priorities from moving vehicles to moving people and goods.

The strongest policies are those that are clear in intent, saying facilities that meet the needs of multiple users “shall” or “must” be included in all transportation projects, such as in Birmingham, Alabama’s resolution: “The City of Birmingham shall scope, plan, design, fund, construct, operate, and maintain all City streets to provide a comprehensive and integrated network of facilities that are safe and convenient for people of all ages and abilities traveling by foot, bicycle, automobile, public transportation, and commercial vehicle.”

Note that this statement does not itself use the term ‘Complete Streets’. Your central statement of intent should not refer to ‘Complete Streets elements’ as if such elements are separate from ordinary roadway planning. Simply be clear that your intent is to provide safe travel for everyone.

Over time, this clear statement of intent becomes a guidepost. Language that provides clarity in purpose makes it easier for those tasked with implementation to understand the new goals and determine what changes need to be made to fulfill the policy’s objectives.

users and modes

A Complete Streets policy must begin with an understanding that people who travel by foot or on bicycle are legitimate users of the transportation system and equally deserving of safe facilities to accommodate their travel. No policy is a Complete Streets policy without a clear statement affirming this fact, and it is therefore a requirement to include both modes – walking and bicycling.

A safe walking and bicycling environment is essential to improving public transportation. Explicitly stating intention to provide for public transportation customers and transit vehicles can create new partnerships and a transportation network that encourages healthy, active travel and reduces congestion.

Full integration of these modes into everyday transportation planning and design is the desired outcome of a Complete Streets policy. You may want your policy to direct accommodation of a fuller range of users, including motorists, drivers of commercial vehicles, emergency vehicles, equestrians, and others.

Beyond simply the category of users is a more nuanced understanding that not all people who move by a certain mode are the same. The needs of a father bicycling with a young child are different from those of a woman in her twenties speedily riding her bicycle to work. Older adults benefit from clear markings and signage when driving. People with vision impairments need audible and tactile stimuli to travel safely and independently, and those using wheelchairs need curb ramps and standard width sidewalks. An ideal Complete Streets policy considers this range of needs and recognizes the importance of planning and designing streets for all ages and abilities. It is also important to address equity issues, taking into account potential past systemic marginalization of certain communities because of race, ethnicity, or income.

Which users and modes will our policy include?

How will we address the needs of older adults, children, people with disabilities, minority populations, and lower income residents?

sample language:

To ensure that the safety and convenience of all users of the transportation system are accommodated, including pedestrians, bicyclists, users of mass transit, people with disabilities, the elderly, motorists, freight providers, emergency responders, and adjacent land users. . . . *(Bloomington-Monroe County Metropolitan Planning Organization, Indiana)*

Develop as many street projects as possible in an affordable, balanced, responsible, and equitable way that accommodates and encourages travel by motorists, bicyclists, public transit vehicles and their passengers, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities. *(Dubuque, Iowa)*

Refer to the most recent edition of the Complete Streets Policy Analysis report for more examples of how to incorporate all users and modes in a policy.

projects and phases

The ideal result of a Complete Streets policy is that all transportation improvements are viewed as opportunities to create safer, more accessible streets for all users. A strong Complete Streets policy will integrate Complete Streets planning into all projects beyond new construction and reconstruction, and direct application of a Complete Streets approach to rehabilitation, repair, major maintenance, and operations work.

Under this approach, even small projects can be an opportunity to make meaningful improvements. In repaving projects, for example, an edge stripe can be shifted to create more room for cyclists or a crosswalk can be added near a bus stop. In routine work on traffic lights, the timing can be changed to better accommodate pedestrians walking at a slower speed.

Complete Streets are achieved over time through single projects and through a series of incremental improvements. Policies should reflect this reality and encourage prioritization of projects to best make changes both big and small.

How will our policy address Complete Streets needs in scoping, planning, design, construction, operations, and maintenance?

To which types of projects will the policy apply: new construction, reconstruction, resurfacing, restoration, rehabilitation, operations, retrofits, and other maintenance work? Refer to your earlier discussions about how transportation planning and design decisions are made.

How can we ensure consultant contracts reflect our Complete Streets goals? How can that need be reflected in this policy?

sample language:

That bicycling, walking, and public transit accommodations is a routine part of the county design, construction, maintenance, and operating activities, and will be included in the everyday operations of the transportation system in Lee County. *(Lee County, Florida)*

In conjunction with projects relating to the design, planning, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or maintenance of Public Ways, departments, boards and commissions of the Metropolitan Government shall: a. Give full consideration to the accommodation of the transportation needs of all users, regardless of age or ability, including those traveling by private vehicle, mass transit, foot, and bicycle... *(Nashville, Tennessee)*

Complete Streets may be achieved through single projects or incrementally through a series of smaller improvements or maintenance activities over time. It is the Mayor and City Council's intent that all sources of transportation funding be drawn on to implement Complete Streets. The City believes that maximum financial flexibility is important to implement Complete Streets principles. *(Seattle, Washington)*

Refer to the most recent edition of the Complete Streets Policy Analysis report for more examples of policies that include all phases and types of projects.

exceptions

Making a policy work in the real world requires developing a process to handle exceptions to providing for all modes in each project. Determining exceptions during the writing process can reassure those who are doubtful about the policy, but if they are too broad they can make the policy meaningless.

There must be a balance achieved when specifying exceptions in policy language so that the needed flexibility for legitimate exceptions does not also create loopholes. The Coalition believes the following exceptions are appropriate with limited potential to weaken the policy. They follow the Federal Highway Administration's guidance on accommodating bicycle and pedestrian travel and identified best practices frequently used in existing Complete Streets policies.

1. Accommodation is not necessary on corridors where specific users are prohibited, such as interstate freeways or pedestrian malls.
2. Cost of accommodation is excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use. We do not recommend attaching a percentage to define "excessive" as the context for many projects will require different portions of the overall project budget to be spent on the modes and users expected; additionally, in many instances the costs may be difficult to quantify. A cap on amount spent for roadway improvements may be appropriate in unusual circumstances, such as where natural features (e.g. steep hillsides, shorelines) make it very costly or impossible to accommodate all modes. Any such cap should always be used in an advisory rather than absolute sense. For more on the issue of cost, be sure to reference the National Complete Streets Coalition's webinar and fact sheet.
3. A documented absence of current *and* future need. This exception can be problematic if the method for determining future need is not defined. Ensure that an accountable person or committee is tasked with approving this exception.

Many communities have included other exceptions that the Coalition, in consultation with transportation planning and engineering experts, also feels are unlikely to create loopholes:

1. Transit-specific facilities, such as bus shelters, are not required where there is no existing or planned transit service.
2. Routine maintenance of the transportation network that does not change the roadway geometry or operations, such as mowing, sweeping, spot repair, or when interim measures are implemented in temporary detour or haul routes. Be sure to check your internal procedures and policies regarding these activities so that facilities such as bike lanes are swept in a timely manner.

The primary objective of Complete Streets is to provide safe accommodation for all users of the transportation network. Additional exceptions begin to weaken this goal and may create loopholes too large to achieve the Complete Streets vision. Engineers and project managers are talented and creative problem-solvers and should be able to address project-level barriers in ways that still achieve an environment supportive of all users.

In addition to defining exceptions through good policy language, there must be a clear process for granting them. We recommend a senior-level department head, publicly accountable committee, or a board of elected officials be charged with approving exceptions, as appropriate for your community. Doing so ensures that as a policy moves into implementation, its intent is carried out and no exceptions are abused. The details of your exceptions process may be expanded upon in later documents and updated procedures, as part of implementing your policy.

What exceptions will be included in the policy?

How will they be approved, and by whom?

What kind of accountability measure will we use?

exceptions

sample language:

Facilities for all users will be considered in the construction, reconstruction, retrofit, repaving, and rehabilitation of City streets, except under one or more of the following conditions:

1. An affected roadway prohibits, by law, use by specified users, in which case a greater effort shall be made to accommodate those specified users elsewhere, including on roadways that cross or otherwise intersect with the affected roadway; or
2. The costs of providing accommodation are excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use; or
3. The existing and planned population, employment densities, traffic volumes, or level of transit service around a particular roadway as documented by [appropriate City plan or department] is so low that future expected users of the roadway will not include pedestrians, public transportation, freight vehicles, or bicyclists.

Documentation shall be publicly available and exceptions for City projects shall be granted by [accountable person or committee, e.g. City Manger, Director of Public Works, Complete Streets Advisory Committee]. For private projects, the owner shall document the exception and approval shall be granted by [accountable person or committee, e.g. City Council, Director of Planning].

Any exception to applying this Complete Streets Policy to a specific roadway project must be approved by the City Council, with documentation of the reason for the exception. . . . Exceptions may be made when:

- The project involves a roadway on which non-motorized use is prohibited by law. In this case, an effort shall be made to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists elsewhere.
- There is documentation that there is an absence of use by all except motorized users now and would be in the future even if the street were a complete street. (*Missoula, Montana*)

Refer to the most recent edition of the Complete Streets Policy Analysis report for more examples of exceptions language.



best practice elements

With the core of your Complete Streets policy now developed, you should think through the other factors that will shape how to achieve that directive. The following elements will ensure that your transportation decisions will create a comprehensive network of safe, multimodal streets that reflect best practice in design and are appropriate to the community context.

Though the National Complete Streets Coalition recommends that each of these elements be addressed in your policy, you may choose to include only those that speak most to your ability to fulfill them. If you are pursuing a resolution, you may choose to refer decisions about some of these elements to those charged with implementing the resolution's intent.

network

To truly enable safe travel, a community must plan for a network to support their movement across all modes. A good Complete Streets policy recognizes the need for more than one or two “complete” streets, instead striving for a connected, integrated system that provides transportation options to a resident’s many potential destinations.

A network approach is essential in balancing the needs of all users. Rather than trying to make each street perfect for every traveler, communities can aim for a comprehensive network of streets that emphasize different modes while still providing quality access for each one. Ensuring streets are connected and blocks are short makes travel easier for everyone; these goals should be considered in developing a Complete Streets policy.

How will the policy address the need to create a comprehensive, integrated network for all users?

Will the policy apply to private development and subdivisions?

Do we have specific goals for increasing connectivity?

What opportunities might be available to connect non-motorized networks?

Do we have existing documents to help guide network-related decisions, and if not, can we create them?

sample language:

(A) The City of Baldwin Park will design, operate, and maintain a transportation network that provides a connected network of facilities accommodating all modes of travel.

(B) The City will actively look for opportunities to repurpose rights-of-way to enhance connectivity for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit.

(C) The City will focus non-motorized connectivity improvements to services, schools, parks, civic uses, regional connection and commercial uses.

(D) The City will require large new developments and redevelopment projects to provide interconnected street networks with small blocks. *(Baldwin Park, California)*

Refer to the most recent edition of the Complete Streets Policy Analysis report for more examples of policies that address network and connectivity issues.

all agencies and roads

Creating networks can be difficult because many agencies have a stake in the funding, planning, and development of our streets. State, county, and local agencies, together with private developers, build and maintain roads. Typical Complete Streets policies cover all the roadways within a community's direct control but not those of outside parties.

At the local level, it is often key for private developers to follow a community's Complete Streets vision when building new roads or otherwise significantly altering the right-of-way. You may choose to include changes to zoning or subdivision codes or to right-of-way standards in your Complete Streets policy or implementation plan to ensure newly built or redesigned streets are aligned with your city's Complete Streets policy.

It is important to note that partnerships with other agencies are important to creating a truly multimodal network within and between communities. This means working with other levels of government and departments within your community, such as the regional planning organization and the public health department. Bringing everyone to the same understanding can be difficult, but including these stakeholders in your policy development process can help to develop stronger policy and provide opportunity for collaboration during implementation.

What departments, agencies, and jurisdictions have some control or interest in our streets? At what point(s) in our process do we include outside agencies, such as the state or county?

Do neighboring jurisdictions have Complete Streets policies, and how can we coordinate with them? How will we communicate our Complete Streets vision to them? What efforts can we make to ensure the network is complete for all users?

Will our policy include private development?

sample language:

All relevant County agencies will review and revise as necessary their plans, manuals, policies, processes and programs to foster the implementation of Complete Streets on roadways not under the jurisdiction of Highway Department but subject to financing, regulation of or otherwise involving an action by any county agency. Such projects shall include, but not be limited to, privately-built roadways and projects on non-county roadways funded in part or entirely by county funds. *(Cook County, Illinois)*

This policy requires consideration of complete streets elements by the Planning and Zoning Commission and Board of Zoning Appeals, in appropriate circumstances. Accordingly, the city strongly encourages all developers and builders to obtain and comply with, as appropriate, these standards.

This policy is intended to cover all development and redevelopment in the public domain with Festus... This also includes privately built roads intended for public use. As such, compliance with these principles may be factored into decisions related to the city's participation in private projects and whether the city will accept possession of privately built roads constructed after the passage of this resolution. The city administrator, on a case-by-case basis, may exclude routine maintenance from these requirements.

...It shall be a goal of the city to foster partnerships with the State of Missouri, Jefferson County, neighboring communities, and Festus Business Districts in consideration of functional facilities and accommodations in furtherance of the city's complete streets policy and the continuation of such facilities and accommodations beyond the city's borders. *(Festus, Missouri)*

Refer to the most recent edition of the Complete Streets Policy Analysis report for more examples as you begin to draft policy language that describes how you will work with other agencies an interested parties.

design guidance and flexibility

It is not necessary for the policy to require creation of entirely new design guidelines. Consider what design guidance your community already uses and whether it reflects current best practices. Communities adopting a Complete Streets policy should use the best and latest design standards available to them, such as existing design guidance from the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHTO), state Departments of Transportation, the Institute of Transportation Engineers, the National Association of City Transportation Officials, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG), or the Model Design Manual for Living Streets. In some cases, communities will use their own recently updated design guidance or augment it with national criteria. Note any design manuals, including those used by the community or those noted above, that could be referenced by your engineering and planning staff in your policy.

Intertwined with the need to use the best currently available guidance is the need for a balanced approach to transportation design that provides flexibility to best accommodate all users and modes given the unique characteristics of the surrounding community. Add language to your policy that recognizes the need for some roads to offer greater or lesser degrees of accommodation for each type of user, while still ensuring basic accommodation is provided for all permitted users.

What guidance or criteria do we use in street design? When were they last updated? Who is responsible for approving them? Do they differ with changes in funding source?

What manuals and guidance will our policy reference – American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials, U.S. Access Board, Institute of Transportation Engineers, National Association of City Transportation Officials, state Department of Transportation, Model Design Manual for Living Streets?

How can we address design flexibility and the need to balance all users within the policy?

sample language:

... To create a connected network of facilities accommodating each mode of travel that is consistent with and supportive of the local community, recognizing that all streets are different and that the needs of various users will need to be balanced in a flexible manner.

... The City will generally follow accepted or adopted design standards when implementing improvements intended to fulfill this Complete Streets policy but will consider innovative or non-traditional design options where a comparable level of safety for users is present. *(Rochester, Minnesota)*

... in keeping with the goals of proper accommodation of all forms of travel and in keeping with the design specification of the Master Street Plan, recognizing that all streets are different, and in each case, user needs must be balanced. *(North Little Rock, Arkansas)*

Refer to the most recent edition of the Complete Streets Policy Analysis report for more examples in addressing flexibility and referencing the best and latest in design guidance.

context sensitivity

An effective Complete Streets policy must be sensitive to the type of neighborhood and the land uses along roadways; this is related to the above discussion on flexibility in design. Being clear about this in the initial policy statement can allay fears that the policy will require inappropriately wide roads in quiet neighborhoods or miles of little-used sidewalks in rural areas. Including a statement about context can help align transportation goals and land-use planning goals, creating livable, strong neighborhoods.

How will the policy take adjoining land use and community context into account?

Does our community already have a vision for development that the policy can tie into?

How will the policy address the differences in applying a Complete Streets approach to rural, suburban, and urban areas?

How will local stakeholders, including adjacent residents and merchants and frequent users of the corridor, be involved in the planning and design process?

How can we encourage our streets to reflect and strengthen the unique qualities of our neighborhoods?

sample language:

The implementation of this Policy shall reflect the context and character of the surrounding built and natural environments, and enhance the appearance of such.
(Dayton, Ohio)

Solutions should be developed to fit within the context(s) of the community and those solutions should be flexible so that the needs of the corridor can be met. *(Dunwoody, Georgia)*

Refer to the most recent edition of the Complete Streets Policy Analysis report for more examples of policies that link transportation needs, adjacent buildings, and surrounding communities.

performance measures

As governments look to become more responsive, transparent, and accountable, performance measures are increasingly important to successful policy development and implementation. Including systematic collection and reporting of data into a Complete Streets policy can provide clarity on how a community's transportation projects are meeting citizens' needs and elected officials' goals for the transportation network. Performance measures ensure compliance with the policy, but also enable more informed decision-making by providing clarity to planners, designers, and engineers on expected outcomes.

Communities with Complete Streets policies measure success in a number of different ways, from system-wide multimodal performance measures to project-level indicators. Some community-wide measures may simply aggregate a project-level measure across many projects, such as the total number of accessible curb cuts, and others may address non-project specific issues, such as improved air quality. Below is a partial list of measures your community may want to include, starting from simple outputs to more challenging outcomes:

- Linear feet of new or reconstructed sidewalks
- Miles of new or restriped on-street bicycle facilities
- Number of new or reconstructed curb ramps
- Number of new or repainted crosswalks
- Number of new street trees/percentage of streets with tree canopy
- Percentage completion of bicycle and pedestrian networks as envisioned by city plans
- Efficiency of transit vehicles on routes
- Percentage of transit stops with shelters
- Percentage of transit stops accessible via sidewalks and curb ramps
- Multimodal Level of Service (MMLoS)
- Auto Trips Generated (ATG)
- Decrease in rate of crashes, injuries, and fatalities by mode
- Transportation mode shift: more people walking, bicycling, and taking transit
- Rate of children walking or bicycling to school
- Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) or Single Occupancy Vehicle (SOV) trip reduction
- Satisfaction levels as expressed on customer preference surveys

Given the complexity and range of performance measures employed, some policies will opt to focus on creation and deployment of new metrics during implementation, but the need for such measures should be mentioned in the policy document. You may want to do more research about performance measures; a good place to start is with the fifth chapter of *Complete Streets: Best Policy Adoption and Implementation Practices* from the American Planning Association.

performance measures

How will we know if the policy is achieving our goals? What performance measures are important for our community?

What are our current performance measures? Can we adjust any of them to help track how well we serve all users?

What kind of short-term performance measures should we track (e.g. miles of new bike lanes, increase in bus reliability, decreased crash rates)?

What kind of long-term goals should we look to achieve (e.g. improved air quality, lowered obesity rate)?

What departments and agencies can help with data collection and benchmarking?

performance measures

sample language:

Measure the success of this complete streets policy using the following performance measures:

- a. Total miles of on-street bicycle routes defined by streets with clearly marked or signed bicycle accommodation
- b. Linear feet of new pedestrian accommodation
- c. Number of new curb ramps installed along city streets
- d. Number of new street trees planted along city streets (*Roanoke, Virginia*)

Performance measurement will be by, but not limited to, the miles of bicycle routes created; new linear feet of pedestrian accommodation; increase in use of public transportation, bicycling and walking; the miles of connection added between trails; the increased efficiency of traffic flow through the use of sophisticated traffic control devices, turn lanes, traffic circles, and the leveling or decrease of transportation-related accidents. (*Bellevue, Nebraska*)

Refer to the most recent edition of the Complete Streets Policy Analysis report for more examples as you begin drafting policy language that enumerates new or existing performance measures.



The Coalition has identified four key steps to implement a Complete Streets policy effectively:

1. Restructure or revise related procedures, plans, regulations, and other processes to accommodate all users on every project. This includes incorporating Complete Streets into plans as they are updated, changing city code to support Complete Streets activities and related initiatives, and/or modifying procedural documents such as checklists and decision trees.
2. Develop new design policies and guides or revise existing to reflect the current state of best practices in transportation design. Communities may also elect to adopt national or state-level recognized design guidance.
3. Offer workshops and other educational opportunities to transportation staff, community leaders, and the general public so that everyone understands the importance of the Complete Streets vision and how they can aid implementation.
4. Develop and institute ways to measure progress and performance and collect and disseminate data on how the streets are serving all users. This is an opportunity to more fully explore the performance measures you discuss in the policy document.

implementation next steps

A formal policy commitment to Complete Streets is only the beginning. All types of Complete Streets policies should include discussion of the next steps to take toward implementation; preferably, the policy should state who will develop an implementation plan, and when it will be completed.

The tactics you will use to accomplish each of the four steps should reflect the specifics of your community and may vary from those in other communities. You do not need to fully detail how each step will be accomplished in your initial policy statement, but you should provide some rough direction and timelines to ensure accountability and action.

Consider assigning oversight of implementation to a committee of multiple stakeholders, such as representatives from relevant departments, elected officials, and advocates, or to a committee already in place. Committees can provide additional resources by holding educational events or researching tools for the community's use. You might also include a reporting requirement so that elected officials and the general public are regularly updated on progress.

One of the most important items to consider in implementation planning is how projects are selected and prioritized for funding. Too often, great goals are set by communities only to be thwarted by mismatched prioritization procedures that give extra weight to auto-centric projects and award little or no points, and in some cases deduct points, for projects that enhance access or mobility for those on foot, riding bicycles, or taking public transportation. Though rare to date, a powerful provision is to specify that changes will be made to the way transportation projects are prioritized, and thus chosen for construction.

implementation next steps

How detailed is the policy we are writing, and what parts of it will require further development during implementation planning? Who will coordinate those efforts? Should that person or group of people be named in the policy?

How does the policy specify the four steps to implementation? Does it empower implementation planners to make those decisions?

What other documents and procedures will need to be updated?

Do we need to change our project selection criteria?

Is there legislative action, such as modifying code, changing subdivision requirements, and modifying zoning, needed?

Do we need to reevaluate and modify our design guidance?

implementation next steps

What kinds of data do we need to collect, but don't now?

Are there new performance measures we will need to develop?

How can the policy support the provision of additional and ongoing educational opportunities about Complete Streets for our transportation staff, community leaders, residents, and other departments and agencies?

Will we establish a committee to direct implementation activity, and who will serve on it?

What accountability measures will we include to ensure these steps are taken?

What are we doing to take advantage of all funding opportunities?

implementation next steps

sample language:

The City views Complete Streets as integral to everyday transportation decision-making practices and processes. To this end:

1. The [*Department of Transportation, Department of Public Works, and the Department of Planning and other relevant departments, agencies, or committees*] will incorporate Complete Streets principles into the [*Comprehensive Plan, Transportation Master Plan, the Transit Plan, the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans, and other appropriate plans*] and other manuals, checklists, decision trees, rules, regulations, and programs as appropriate.
2. The [*Department of Transportation, Department of Public Works, or other appropriate agency*] will review current design standards, including subdivision regulations that apply to new roadway construction, to ensure that they reflect the best available design guidelines, and effectively implement Complete Streets.
3. When available, the City shall encourage staff professional development and training on non-motorized transportation issues through attending conferences, classes, seminars, and workshops.
4. City staff shall identify all current and potential future sources of funding for street improvements and recommend improvements to the project selection criteria to support Complete Streets projects.
5. The City shall promote project coordination among city departments and agencies with an interest in the activities that occur within the public right-of-way in order to better use fiscal resources.
6. An annual report will be made to the City Council by the [*Department of Transportation, Department of Public Works, Department of Planning, City Manager, or other city administrative body or committee*] showing progress made in implementing this policy.
7. A Complete Streets Advisory Council is hereby created to serve as a resource and a collaborative partner for City elected officials, municipal staff, and [*other City Boards, Committees and Commissions*].
 - a. The Council is to be composed of [odd number] voting members appointed by the Mayor with approval by the City Council who are interested in achieving Complete Streets and who want to explore opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and people with disabilities. Representatives shall be from [*name specific organizations and stakeholder constituencies, including transportation professionals, public health,*

parks, schools, groups representing older adults, people with disabilities, bicyclists, pedestrians, or transit users].

- b. *[Establish membership terms – usually two to four years, alternating term limits so that all members are not renewed on the same date.]*
- c. The duties of the Council shall include, but not be limited to, examining the needs for bicyclists, transit users, motorists, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities; conducting a baseline study of current practices and accommodations; developing appropriate inter-departmental performance measures including *[reference performance measures section]*; promoting programs and facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users; and advising appropriate agencies on best practices in Complete Streets implementation.
- d. The Council will meet quarterly, provide a yearly written report to City Council evaluating the City's progress, and advise on implementation.

The Departments of Public Works and of Planning shall be designated as the lead departments in implementing the Complete Streets Policy (hereinafter “the Lead Departments”), and they shall be assisted in this effort by the Wyandotte County Health Department.

The Lead Departments should jointly evaluate how well the streets and transportation network of the City are serving each category of users and how well they conform to the Complete Streets philosophy. The Directors of each Department are authorized to prepare recommendations for changes to standards, design criteria, planning ordinances or other guidelines that may be needed to further the goal of providing Complete Streets.

The Lead Departments are directed to actively solicit and incorporate the guidance of the community and community partners in preparing the evaluation and recommendations, including the guidance of the Mayor's Healthy Communities Task Force. *(Wyandotte County, Kansas)*

The Department of Transportation is directed to report to the Mayor and City Council annually, on the anniversary of the effective date of this Resolution, on the Department's progress towards implementing Complete Streets throughout Baltimore. These reports must incorporate performance measures established to gauge how well streets are serving all users... *(Baltimore, Maryland)*

Refer to the most recent edition of the Complete Streets Policy Analysis report for more examples as you draft your policy's next steps.

additional elements

Complete Streets policies are rarely developed outside of a community's other interests and activities, such as public health campaigns, safety initiatives, and master planning. You may find it helpful to couple your Complete Streets policy campaign with another popular initiative such as Safe Routes to School, building on existing momentum and community engagement. You may be able to reach a larger audience and establish a broader partnership among key community stakeholders.

As you move through the process of developing a Complete Streets policy, other related topics may arise, such as stormwater management. Cross-referencing your policy in these other processes can strengthen it. However, simplicity has its virtues in the policy arena, and a clear intent to provide for all users should not be lost in a broader debate.

Are there other notable pieces that we should include in our policy but are not covered by the ten elements discussed earlier?

Where do they fit?

How can we effectively cross-reference Complete Streets with other policy changes?

Will they complicate or detract from the Complete Streets directive?

sample language:

Green Complete Streets are streets that safely accommodate all users of the right-of-way, including pedestrians, people requiring mobility aids, bicyclists and drivers and passengers of transit vehicles, trucks, automobiles and motorcycles, while at the same time incorporating best management practices for addressing stormwater runoff. *(La Crosse, Wisconsin)*

4C. Landscaping and amenities are encouraged to provide shade, create buffers, and promote aesthetically welcoming environments within the public right-of way.

4D. San Antonio will encourage “green infrastructure” and Low Impact Development (LID) principles on Complete Streets to help manage stormwater runoff and provide landscaping amenities.

4E. Public Art integrated into the streetscape will be considered to help identify unique areas throughout the City and define the context in which the street exists as identified by community stakeholders.

4F. Cultural Corridors and other areas where “place-making” is important for economic development and community revitalization will make optimal use of the public rights-of- way to support private investment. *(San Antonio, Texas)*

Refer to the National Complete Streets Coalition website for additional information on other related elements you may want to include in your Complete Streets policy.

paper to practice

This workbook is meant to help communities of all sizes develop appropriate, actionable, and strong Complete Streets policies. Strong policies are the first step in changing how transportation decisions are made and how our streets look.

It is not the only step, however. The National Complete Streets Coalition is actively working toward creating a standard for policy implementation that will help communities like yours understand the variety of activities that will create lasting change. Keep up with our work at www.completestreets.org.



This tool was developed with support from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



Smart Growth America
Making Neighborhoods Great Together



**National Complete
Streets Coalition**

1707 L St NW Suite 250 • Washington, DC 20036
202-955-5543 • info@completestreets.org
www.smartgrowthamerica.org