

POLICY BRIEF

Complete Streets



Everyone deserves the opportunity to live a healthy, full life — but not everyone in our country has an equal opportunity to achieve this. CityHealth, an initiative of the de Beaumont Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, promotes a package of tried and tested policies that ensure all people in our largest cities have access to healthy choices.

Together, with visionary city leaders, we can make sure that all people have access to a safe place to live, a healthy body and mind, and a thriving environment. Policy solutions like Complete Streets can help make communities safer and resolve critical health disparities — now and decades down the road.

Streets should be designed and maintained to meet all our needs. Whether you walk, bike, roll, drive, or use public transit, we all deserve streets that are safe. Tragically, people in the United States are struck and killed, maimed, and seriously injured by vehicles on unsafe streets at alarming rates. All people from all neighborhoods should have access to Complete Streets that help them get where they need to go, live, play, and grow.

THE SAFE STREETS CHALLENGE

- Between 2010 and 2019, drivers struck and killed 53,435 people while walking throughout the United States — more than 14 people per day, on average.
- Over that same period, the number of people struck and killed while walking each year increased by 45 percent. 2018 and 2019 were the two most deadly years since 1990 for the number of people who were killed by drivers while walking.
- While traffic deaths impact every community in the United States, older adults, people of color, and people walking in low-income communities bear a higher share of this harm.

A HEALTHY SOLUTION: COMPLETE STREETS

- **Decreases Injuries and Death** — When cities have a variety of transportation options, it reduces motor vehicle-related injuries and deaths, improves the health of our environment, and stimulates economic development.
- **Promotes Healthy Living** — People who live in neighborhoods where they can easily walk anywhere get 35-45 minutes more of physical activity per week. This helps prevent chronic disease and obesity.
- **Ensures Accessibility** — Complete Streets policies ensure that all people, regardless of age, ability, income, race, ethnicity, or where they live, have safe and convenient ways of getting around — as well as opportunities for active living.



AN INITIATIVE OF

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Going For Gold

CityHealth annually rates Complete Streets policies in cities with criteria that set the “gold standard” in each policy area. These criteria were developed with input from national experts, are backed by evidence, and work to reduce or remove systemic barriers to health equity. Medals are awarded to cities that meet the elements necessary for the best quality policy (gold), a good quality policy (silver), and a passable quality policy (bronze). Cities with no policy, or that don’t meet the minimum threshold for a bronze medal, receive no medal.

COMPLETE STREETS MEDAL CRITERIA	Bronze	Silver	Gold
1. City has a complete streets policy.	✓	✓	✓
2. Policy requires compliance.	✓	✓	✓
3. Policy balances pedestrians, bicyclists, and at least two other modes.	✓	✓	✓
4. Policy references the adoption of specific design guidelines, and/or requires the development or revision of internal design policies and guides.	✓	✓	✓
5. Policy explicitly prioritizes vulnerable users.	✓	✓	✓
6. Policy requires compliance of all new construction and reconstruction or retrofit projects.	✗	✓	✓
7. Policy references compliance of all maintenance projects and ongoing operations.	✗	✓	✓
8. Policy assigns a department to oversee implementation.	✗	✗	✓
9. Policy references the development of an inclusive community engagement plan.	✗	✗	✓
10. Policy requires the collection and publication of performance measures, including performance measures that account for equity.	✗	✗	✓
11. Policy includes explicit exemptions.	✗	✗	✓
12. Policy encourages private development projects comply.	✗	✗	✓
13. Policy establishes a timeline for the review and improvements to project selection criteria.	✗	✗	✓

TUCSON'S COMPLETE STREETS

Prior to passing a Complete Streets policy, only 54% of Tucson's streets had sidewalks and residents in low-income neighborhoods were three times more likely to get killed while walking. In 2019, Tucson unanimously passed a strong Complete Streets policy that prioritizes vulnerable residents while focusing on safety, accessibility, land use, equity, environment, and economic vitality. Local leaders have worked hard to create a complete transportation network to ensure that roadways are safe and accessible for everyone in the community.