



AN INITIATIVE OF

the de Beaumont Foundation + Kaiser Permanente



COMPLETE STREETS POLICY ACTION GUIDE

How to use this action guide

This Action Guide is a resource for elected leaders, policy-makers, and advocates interested in creating or improving a Complete Streets policy. Whether you're sitting at the policy drafting table or calling for change as an advocate, this guide is designed to help you build a strong policy that protects and benefits all users. While no two places are exactly alike, this guide draws on decades of research and experiences from cities and towns from across the country. There are currently **1,700 policies in Smart Growth America's atlas** and **26 cities have earned Complete Streets policy medals from CityHealth.**

To begin, read through each section of this guide, think critically about your city, and follow the prompts. Your draft policy should be based in reality, recognizing the environment it will need to be implemented in, but also aspirational — what should the future of mobility look like for your community?

One approach, many benefits: Complete Streets provide safety, health, and so much more!

Transportation is a major source of racial and social segregation in the United States. Along with housing and education, it dramatically shapes where and how people live, the opportunities they have, and the hardships they face. And yet, the impacts and potential improvements in this sector are frequently overlooked.

Since the mid-20th century, American towns and cities have been planned and developed around automobiles. Roads and streets were viewed as mere runways to transport vehicles as fast as possible from one place to the other, often overlooking the needs of those within communities who watched as people tried to get to anywhere but there. This has resulted in a transportation system that is **inefficient, bad for the environment, unhealthy, and dangerous.**

But there is another way. Complete Streets is an approach to planning, designing, and building streets and communities that allow all people — regardless of age, ability, income, race, or ethnicity — to safely, comfortably, and conveniently access homes, employment centers, schools, shops, health facilities, and other destinations by foot, bicycle, public transportation, car, or truck. Put simply, Complete Streets are streets for everyone. Rather than prioritizing vehicle speed, Complete Streets prioritize people and their safety, access, and well-being. Decision-makers across the country are beginning to realize the numerous and diverse benefits of the Complete Streets approach. Complete Streets can lead to more active lifestyles, cleaner and healthier environments, economic gains, and less injuries and deaths from traffic violence. In addition, Complete Streets are inherently more equitable than the traditional car-centric approach because they are designed to accommodate all users regardless of factors such as race, wealth, age, gender, or ability. Complete Streets tackle harmful legacies of the past while creating a brighter future for all community members.



Complete Streets
may look different in
each place, but they
are for **everyone!**

KEY STATISTICS:

- Around **20 pedestrians are killed** on America's roadways every day, and that number increases every year.
- **Black pedestrians are killed at twice the rate of White pedestrians.** The rate for American Indians and Alaska Natives is over 3 times as high.
- The pedestrian fatality rate in lower income communities is **triple the rate** compared to higher income communities.
- One in three **Americans have weight-related illnesses**, and rates for Latino and African Americans are nearly 50 percent. Less than **one in four American adults** meet the recommended amounts of physical activity.

Want more resources on Complete Streets? See the following:

- [SGA's resources on Complete Streets](#)
- [CityHealth on Complete Streets](#)
- [U.S. Federal Highway Administration on Complete Streets](#)

The importance of a coalition

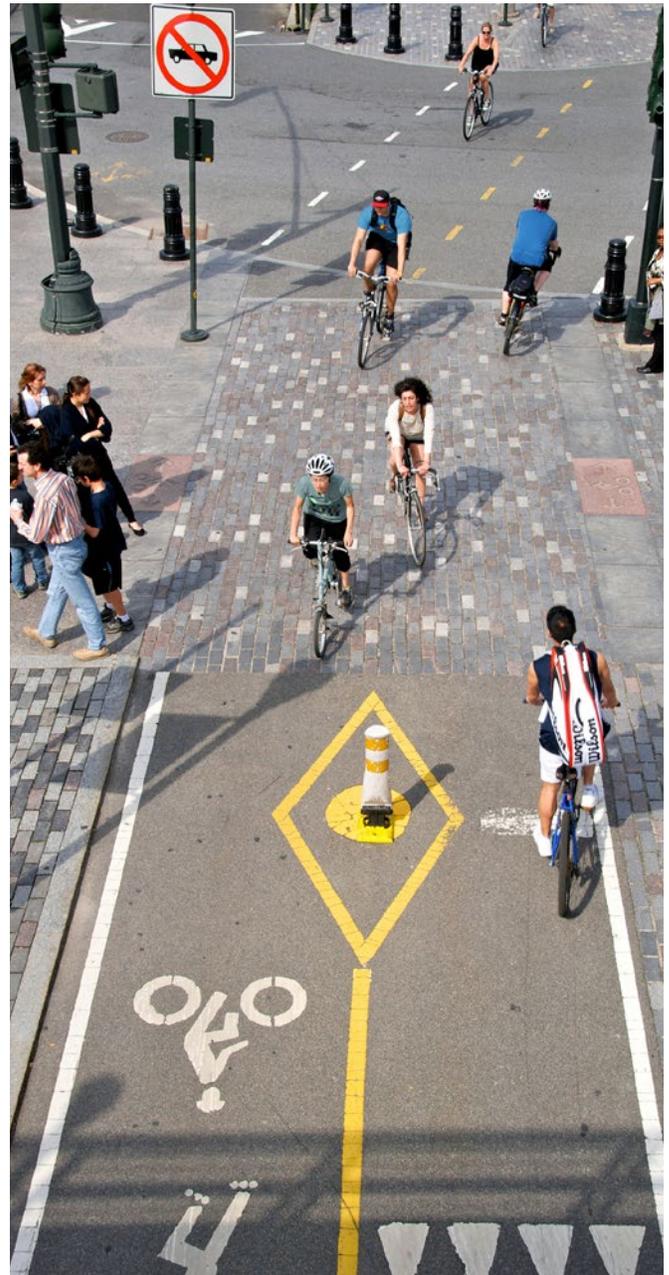
Complete Streets policies address how streets are designed and operated, but they involve so much more than that. Think of all the ways that moving around a community informs how you engage with that community. It is important to include a diverse range of stakeholders in the conception, drafting, and championing of a Complete Streets policy. The first step is to identify the stakeholders who are most impacted (positively or negatively) by transportation policies, and who has the authority to make decisions. This includes community organizations (e.g., transportation advocates, neighborhood-based groups, housing advocates, artists, disability advocates, businesses, and more) as well as elected officials and any relevant government agencies (e.g., transportation, public works, public health). Participation from diverse stakeholders will ensure that the policy created is more robust and will serve the community's diverse needs. It will also help facilitate policy adoption and implementation.



Members of the Complete Streets Coalition in El Paso after the passage of the Complete Streets policy.
Photo courtesy of the American Heart Association

The faces of a movement: El Paso

After years of stagnation on Complete Streets in El Paso, a Complete Streets Coalition was formed in 2020. The coalition, led by the American Heart Association, brought together and engaged a wide range of community stakeholders, all relevant city departments, and local elected officials. Despite challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic, the coalition created a strong Complete Streets policy that was adopted unanimously by the city council in 2022. [Click here](#) for more about this coalition and a full list of members. Other successful cases of diverse coalitions coming together around Complete Streets come from cities like [Tucson](#) and [Kansas City](#).



Policy type options: not all are created equal

Complete Streets policies come in a variety of forms. For maximum impact and long-term viability, it is best to craft a strong and binding policy. While there are multiple options for policy types, some are stronger than others. For example, a legally binding law/ordinance generally has more impact and is harder to undo than a resolution or even an executive order that can be undone by a future executive. Your ability to create a binding policy may be constrained by certain factors, but you should be as bold and ambitious as possible in choosing the type of policy.

Inventory of Complete Streets policies in the United States according to [SGA's Policy Atlas](#) (as of June 2023) and strong examples of each type:

POLICY TYPE	TOTAL COUNT
<p>RESOLUTION</p> <p>Non-binding, official statements of support from a jurisdiction's legislative branch for approaching community transportation projects as a way to improve access, safety, public health, quality of life, equity, etc. Sacramento City Council Resolution NO. 2019-0460</p>	741
<p>POLICY</p> <p>Statements adopted by an elected body (e.g., city council). May be developed by an internal group of stakeholders, such as representatives from departments of planning, engineering, public works, health, and/or elected officials, or a broader group that includes residents and community stakeholders. Policies tend to be lengthier and more detailed than resolutions or ordinances. Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government Complete Streets Policy</p>	503
<p>LAW/ORDINANCE</p> <p>A binding law that mandates Complete Streets approaches. Processes may vary, but city departments and commissions often approve ordinance language before it moves to the legislative branch. Kansas City Complete Streets Ordinance</p>	284
<p>PLAN</p> <p>Documents that project near and medium-term plans and goals for transportation and land use. Common examples include comprehensive plans or transportation plans. City of Saint Paul Complete Streets Action Plan</p>	101
<p>INTERNAL POLICY</p> <p>Created and issued "in house" by a government department. 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. City of Portland Bureau of Transportation Complete Street Policy: Director's Statement</p>	49
<p>DESIGN MANUAL/GUIDES</p> <p>Documents that help engineers determine appropriate characteristics of roadways. Used in all phases of transportation projects. Honolulu Complete Streets Design Manual</p>	48
<p>EXECUTIVE ORDER</p> <p>High-level directives issued by the city's chief executive (often the mayor). Executive orders help define problems and direct department heads to make necessary changes. Memphis Shelby County Executive Order No. 01-2013</p>	16
<p>TAX ORDINANCE</p> <p>A legislative or voter-approved ordinance to fund Complete Streets projects. Transportation Levy to Move Seattle</p>	3
<p>TOTAL</p>	1745



PRO TIP

As the table above shows, resolutions are very common. While they are relatively easy to pass, their actual impacts are usually limited. They may ultimately amount to dusty paper tigers with laudable goals, but little teeth. Whenever possible, municipalities should aim to create an ordinance or policy. A strong piece of legislation will have clear roles and responsibilities, measures for internal and external accountability, and demonstrate the path to implementation.



Why do we need another policy?

We already have some policies and ordinances on the books that deal with traffic control and bike lanes. Why do we need to create a new policy?

Cities, towns, and counties have a multitude of laws, policies, rules, and programs and some of those may already deal with Complete Streets components. Nonetheless, it is important to create a unified policy that unequivocally articulates a clear vision and commitment to Complete Streets. Internally this will help guide departments and agencies in their work. If Complete Streets policy elements are scattered and inconsistent they can be misunderstood or ignored, and lead to a patchwork transportation network that does not properly serve anyone. Externally, having a clear and publicly available document helps the community understand and appreciate Complete Streets which can build public support and allow them to hold government actors accountable.

We are already implementing Complete Streets with miles of protected bike lanes and addressing access to a variety of services. Why do we need to create a new policy?

A strong Complete Streets policy can help turn individual projects into a complete network and provide confidence

that prioritizing safety and accessibility does not become a passing fad. Institutionalizing changes to processes, systems, and project selection will make sure communities continue to see innovative approaches to transportation needs for years to come.

We've already implemented or committed to a Vision Zero goal, why do we need a new Complete Streets policy?

Complete Streets and Vision Zero have much in common. In fact, the National Complete Streets Coalition has formally endorsed Vision Zero. Both promote a fundamental paradigm shift in the way we do transportation, specifically the prioritization of safety and eliminating traffic injuries and fatalities. However, even if you are already committed to Vision Zero, it is important to create a comprehensive Complete Streets policy as well. Complete Streets policies go beyond the shared goal of safety into many complementary goals and outcomes: land use; health benefits; equity; environmental impact; and economic development. These two approaches are highly complementary, and we have found that the places experiencing the greatest successes have adopted both.

DRAFTING A STRONG COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

11 Easy Steps to Creating a Great Policy



- 1 Write a vision and commitment statement demonstrating the intent to create a complete, connected transportation network that allows all users to comfortably travel to and from destinations safely**

The vision and commitment statement will succinctly make the case for why Complete Streets are important overall and to your community. Anyone who reads the policy should easily understand why it exists and how it intends to change the world you live in. There should also be no ambiguity about the need to prioritize active modes of transportation. This section is often found in the beginning of a Complete Streets policy, however the vision and intent should be reflected throughout the document.



PRO TIP

It is important to use binding and enforceable language such as “must,” “shall,” or “will” rather than weaker terms like “may” or “consider.” In drafting this section, try to avoid weakening modifiers such as “where feasible,” or “whenever possible.”

LOUISVILLE’S COMPLETE STREETS VISION

Louisville’s Complete Streets policy (ordinance No. 61, series 2022) policy begins as follows:

Complete Streets means a comprehensive and connected transportation network that is designed, implemented, operated, and maintained in an equitable way to allow for safe use by all users, of all ages, incomes, and abilities. Complete Streets design standards facilitate the development of a safe, reliable, efficient, integrated, and connected multimodal transportation system that promotes access, mobility, and health for all users, and ensures that the safety and convenience of all users of the transportation system are accommodated, including private vehicles, public transportation, pedestrians, bicyclists, assisted device users, motorists, emergency responders, freight providers, and adjacent land users.

2 Define which projects, programs, and interventions (including new construction, reconstruction/retrofit, maintenance and ongoing operations) will be subject to the policy

For Complete Streets to be truly effective, it is important to build a comprehensive network. Piecemeal projects are not enough. A short and isolated sidewalk or bike path does little to improve mobility for users. Complete Streets must touch every part of the network and allow people to get around in a safe, efficient, and dignified manner. Thus, the scope of a Complete Streets policy should be as broad as possible. It should clearly specify that all projects, programs, and interventions are to follow the policy. Furthermore, Complete Streets should be the default approach for all phases, not something extra to add at the end of a project. This means Complete Streets are central to planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance. If the jurisdiction of the policy is left open, or unstated, it can open the door for uncertainty, corner cutting, and significant omissions.

The policy should use unambiguous language and spell out the applicability to all projects, programs, and interventions. It is important to include new construction, reconstruction/retrofit, maintenance, and ongoing operations. Often Complete Streets elements such as pedestrian access or accessibility are overlooked during a construction project, even if it lasts for months or years. By including these details, a strong Complete Streets policy will reinforce the need to accommodate all users. For

example, if a curb ramp is blocked during a construction project, an alternative ramp should be created nearby to ensure that people with limited mobility can still access sidewalks. Possible exceptions to this all-encompassing description are short-term interventions and routine maintenance such as mowing, sweeping, or spot repair.

TUCSON'S POLICY COVERS ALL PROJECTS

Tucson's Complete Streets policy includes a section called "Commitment in all projects and phases" that states:

All transportation projects are potential opportunities to make the transportation network safer, as well as more accessible, convenient, affordable, and reliable. Therefore, this Complete Streets Policy shall inform decision making throughout all phases of all transportation projects. This includes new construction and reconstruction/retrofit projects as well as maintenance projects and ongoing operations like resurfacing, repaving, restriping, rehabilitation, and signal upgrades.

Construction and repair work can create a burden especially for people walking, biking, or using wheelchairs or other mobility devices. Therefore, the City shall require that all public departments and private contractors provide accommodations for people using all modes of transportation to continue to use the street safely and efficiently during any construction or repair work that infringes on the right-of-way, sidewalk, bicycle lanes, transit stops, or accessibility infrastructure such as curb ramps.



No temporary accommodations during construction on this Salt Lake City sidewalk mean pedestrians must walk in the street

3 Describe the balance and prioritization of different modes of travel (emphasizing non-motorized mobility)

The transportation *status quo* means prioritizing cars and drivers at the expense of everyone else. A strong Complete Streets policy must shift this paradigm to promote a more balanced mode share at the collective level, and more options at the individual level. That is, travel in cities and towns should be more evenly balanced so private car trips are not the only means of transportation, and active transportation can become a safe and convenient option for all community members.



PRO TIP

Your policy should list different modes of transportation that make up your transportation network. You should specifically highlight walking and biking because pedestrians and cyclists are currently among the most vulnerable users. Other modes may include transit, private vehicles, micromobility, ride-share, emergency vehicles, and more.

EL PASO PRIORITIZES ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION AND VULNERABLE USERS

El Paso's Complete Streets policy addresses these needs as follows:

The City shall consistently support, plan, design, construct, and operate an interconnected street network that safely accommodates all anticipated users and transportation modes. Attention shall be given to the safety and comfort needs of the most vulnerable individuals on our streets – people walking, biking, taking transit, exercising and using wheelchairs or other mobility devices as well as other individuals with visual or hearing disabilities – while still balancing the needs of those driving private, commercial, freight, and emergency vehicles. This policy recognizes that all modes cannot receive the same type of accommodation on every street; the overarching goal is that everyone has the ability to access the transportation system and travel throughout the network in a safe and comfortable manner. To accomplish this goal, the City is committed to prioritize transportation investments which make walking, biking, public transit, and shared mobility safe, attractive, and viable travel options in El Paso.



Street designed to accommodate multiple types of users.

4 Adopt or create specific design guidelines

Complete Streets policies are crucial for establishing the vision, priorities, and processes related to the system of transportation practices. However, they generally do not include detailed design guidance such as lane widths, intersection designs, and speed limit rules. For these and other specifics, engineers rely on design guidelines. For this, you can adopt guidelines produced by national organizations such as the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO). Be sure to adopt the most recent version of the guidelines because they are regularly updated. However, you can also create your own guidelines based on previous internal standards and/or by modifying other guidance documents. In any case, the guidelines adopted should be aligned with the Complete Streets policy (e.g., protecting vulnerable users and prioritizing safety over speed). The Complete Streets policy should state which guidelines are to be adopted as well as a timeline for their implementation.

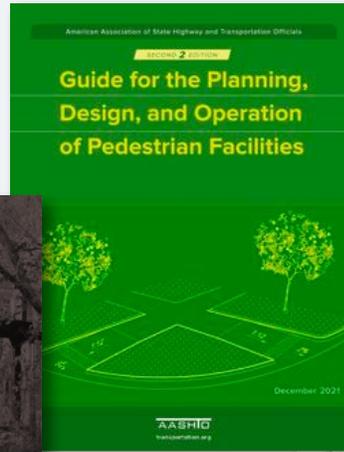
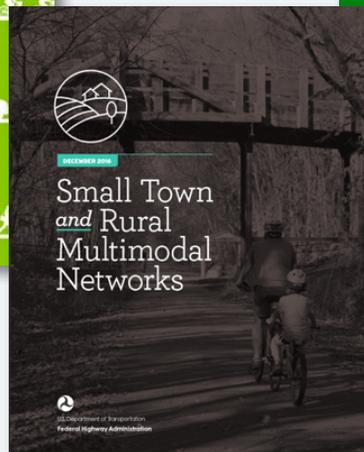
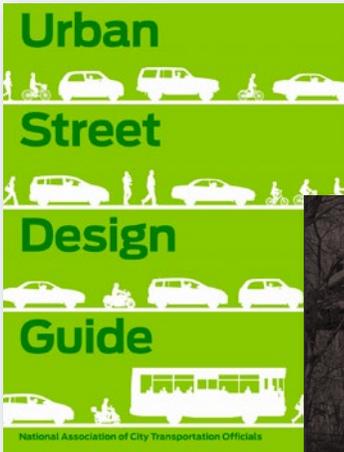
SACRAMENTO CITES A SUITE OF DESIGN GUIDELINES

Sacramento's 2019 Complete Streets policy states the following:

The City of Sacramento shall approach every transportation improvement and project phase as an opportunity to apply a Complete Streets framework to create safer, more accessible streets for all roadway users, while upholding the City's Design Procedures Manual, including Section 15 – Street Design Standards. All street designs shall comply, at minimum, with the:

- City's Street Design Standards on new streets, except where the Public Works Director or their designee approves exemptions for unique conditions, and include walking and bicycling facilities and installation of street trees on existing streets as appropriate;
- Bicycle Master Plan;
- Area and Specific Plans;
- Pedestrian Crossing Guidelines;
- Signal Timing Policy; and
- Work Zone Detour policies

Below are examples of state-of-practice guidelines that may be used in Complete Streets policies. Click on images for links to each resource:





5 Describe vulnerable users and how they will be identified, protected, and prioritized

Historically, America’s transportation development has been **highly inequitable**. Uneven prioritization and investment have meant that some communities and social groups receive many amenities and attention, while others face neglect, hazards, and hardships. Your Complete Streets policy should acknowledge these disparities and identify which groups are the most vulnerable. This can include specific neighborhoods or neighborhood types (e.g., low-income and minority communities) and types of users (e.g., older adults, cyclists, and people with disabilities).

Beyond simply naming vulnerable areas and users, however, the policy should establish an accountable, measurable definition for priority groups or places and clearly state how they will be prioritized.

HOWARD COUNTY DEFINES AND PRIORITIZES EQUITY

Howard County Maryland’s Complete Streets policy includes the following:

Equity will be measured using the Vulnerable Population Index method, a system developed by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council which is compliant with the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Executive Order 12898, ‘Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations.’

The Vulnerable Population Index uses U.S. Census Bureau data to measure the percentages of the following population groups in each census tract:

- Poverty
- Non-Hispanic, Non-White
- Hispanic
- Limited English Proficiency (LEP)
- Disabled
- Elderly
- Carless

When the percent of the seven population groups in each census tract is higher than the county mean, this tract is counted as vulnerable. Tracts with even greater disparity receive additional weight. Data from each group is combined to create a composite score to measure the degree to which each tract is vulnerable.

Priority shall be given to projects in census tracts that are within the top 20-25 percent of scores on the Howard County Vulnerable Population Index.



A bus stops to pick up a rider who is standing on a green, yellow and white platform on the pavement near a four-laned intersection.



6 Describe which entities/departments will be responsible for implementing the policy

Successfully creating Complete Streets requires coordination from numerous governmental agencies as well as external stakeholders. It is important for the policy to spell out who is responsible for specific pieces, what level of coordination is required, and when and how outside parties must comply. Without this clarity there can be confusion, buck passing, finger pointing, or suboptimal implementation.

Exactly what coordination and collaboration look like around Complete Streets will vary depending on the level of policy being adopted. For example, states, metros, cities, and counties each have different levels of authority over streets and roads. For the local level (cities and counties), policies should describe how private developers will be compelled to comply with the Complete Streets policy. At the state and metro levels, the policy should describe how they will steer greater shares of funding to projects that address the needs of all modes and users. In any case, however, it should be clear which agencies will be responsible for implementation. This should be something more specific than “the city.”

JOPLIN’S COMPLETE STREETS COMMITTEE

Joplin’s Complete Streets ordinance includes a section titled “Jurisdiction” which states the following:

Implementation of the Joplin Complete Streets ordinance will be carried out cooperatively with-in all relative departments in Joplin and, to the greatest extent possible, among private developers, and state, regional, and federal agencies. Joplin shall, when applicable, work to encourage collaboration across jurisdictions within its borders on appropriate projects.

Implementation of the Joplin Complete Streets ordinance will be carried out by the Complete Streets Committee. The Complete Streets Committee will be made up of internal City of Joplin staff and community members from the following groups:

- Department of Public Works
- Department of Planning, Development and Neighborhood Services
- Department of Parks and Recreation
- Joplin Police Department
- Department of Health
- Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Joplin Trails Coalition
- Trails and Connectivity Working Group
- Two representatives from neighborhoods which have experienced historic underinvestment, poor health outcomes, or can be otherwise categorized as low-income neighborhoods.
- Two representatives from the general public



Orange cones mark a space where three construction workers are rolling out white tape for a brand new bike lane on a single-lane, two-way road in front of a large, marble building.

7 Describe a robust and inclusive community engagement plan that specifies actionable steps and potential barriers to engagement

As mentioned, transportation development under the current *status quo* is highly inequitable from multiple perspectives. Broadly, it prioritizes certain users and geographical areas while leaving others at a disadvantage and high risk. A strong Complete Streets policy should seek to shift these trends and create a more just and equitable transportation system. An important first step is to understand the lived experiences of the network's users. This includes particular measures to engage the communities that are most vulnerable/at risk. The policy should describe how the needs, preferences, and priorities of different communities will be incorporated into the Complete Streets development, and care should be taken to include those that have been neglected and underserved in the past such as communities of color and low-income areas.

The most vulnerable and underserved groups may vary depending on the place, but each policy should clearly identify which groups should be prioritized and how they will be engaged. Specific, actionable steps should be included along with any potential barriers to engagement. For example, some common obstacles include lack of time and resources, language barriers, and general distrust of government agencies based on past experiences. The

policy may include details of the strategy, or call for the creation of a separate plan for community engagement. If a policy calls for the creation of a separate plan, there should be a timeline and details as to who is responsible for it to ensure accountability.

TUCSON'S ROBUST COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY FOCUSES ON UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

To create their Complete Streets policy, the City of Tucson, spurred by community stakeholders, made **intentional efforts to incorporate equity** into discussions with community members and these efforts were reflected in the **final policy** which was adopted in 2019. The final Complete Streets policy calls for the creation of a community engagement plan:

"Create a plan to ensure robust, meaningful, and inclusive community engagement, with a particular emphasis on engagement of communities that have traditionally been underrepresented in city planning and decision-making processes. The plan shall include specific strategies for overcoming barriers to engagement associated with race/ethnicity, income, age, disability, English language proficiency, vehicle access, and other factors linked to historic disenfranchisement."

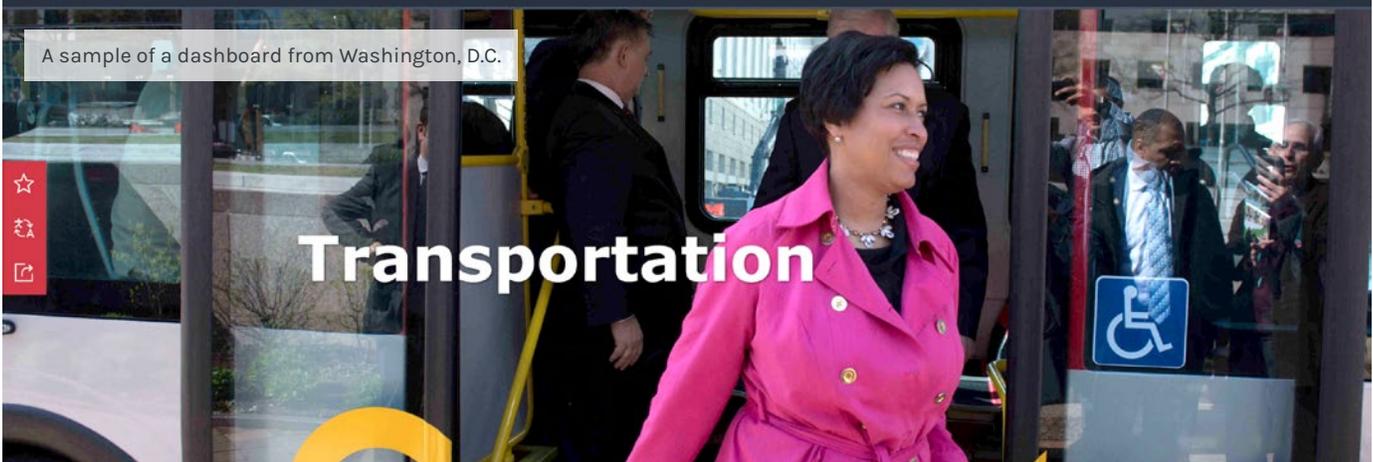


Supporters and members of Tucson's Living Streets Alliance outside of the city council chambers after a Complete Streets agenda item was discussed, posing with signs in support of Complete Streets

Galleries ▾ By the Numbers ▾ Foundational Data ▾ Data Category ▾ Customize Open Data DC ▾ Data Governance ▾ Other Data Catalogs ▾

Help ▾

A sample of a dashboard from Washington, D.C.



Transportation

We are committed to achieving an exceptional quality of life in the nation's capital through more sustainable travel practices, safer streets and outstanding access to goods and services. We invite you to browse the data below, jump into government apps, create your own and share in our progress by engaging in some of our green programs.

Local Roadway Blocks	Blocks with a Bike Lane	Closed Pothole Service Requests (Last 30 Days)
8,456	1,440	562
Total DC Functional Classification as "Local" Roadway blocks. These are line segments intersection-to-intersection excluding "breaks like alleys." Source: Roadway Block	Total Roadway Blocks with at least one bike lane. These can be conventional, buffered, protected or contraflow lanes. Source: Roadway Block	Closed Pothole investigation and repair in the last 30 days. These take approximately 3 business days, weather permitting, for completion. Source: All 311 City Service Requests - Last 30 Days

8 Describe performance measures, strategy, and mechanisms that will produce actionable data that accounts for equity and is made publicly available

It is crucial to measure and track your progress towards Complete Streets for internal efficiency, learning, and project prioritization as well as for external transparency and accountability.

A Complete Streets policy is an opportunity to ensure that performance measures are accurately reflecting the goals and priorities of the community's vision. A strong Complete Streets policy will include the types of things that will be measured, who will be responsible for collecting data, and how that data will be made publicly available. There is not a magic number of metrics to measure or a perfect formula because the needs, goals, and capacities of each place will be different.

As mentioned, each agency should determine the metrics and data that are appropriate for them. Below are some



PRO TIP

Your agency should collect a combination of quantitative and qualitative data. There should also be data about all aspects of Complete Streets including processes, implementation, and impact. Some examples of commonly used metrics include: number of crashes/fatalities, miles of bike lanes, and travel times by different transportation modes. This is also an important area to consider equity. Whenever possible, data should be disaggregated by race, income, gender, and other factors to make sure progress is being made towards equity goals.

examples of the metrics mentioned in strong Complete Streets policies. In addition, each agency considers equity in measurements and their public reporting.

Performance measures from three places with strong Complete Streets policies

Louisville, KY	Howard County, MD	Cleveland, OH
Lane miles dedicated to active transportation	Safety/Public Health: Number and location of fatalities by road type and mode of travel, and by age and gender as data are available	Pre- and post-usage data by transportation mode
Linear feet of new pedestrian accommodations	Safety/Public Health: Number and location of serious injuries by road type and mode of travel, and by age and gender as data are available	Pre- and post-project crash data
Number of new curb ramps installed along city streets	Access: Miles of sidewalk, trail, and bicycle infrastructure installed or repaired	Pre- and post-project speed data
Crosswalk and intersection improvements	Access: Number of curb ramps installed or repaired	Feedback from the community via community engagement exercises
Rate of crashes, injuries, and fatalities by mode	Access: Number of crosswalks installed or repaired	Citywide linear feet of sidewalks built
Rate of fatalities, by age, gender, race, ethnicity, and income	Access: Number of transit stops with sidewalk access installed or repaired	Citywide number of ADA accessible curb ramps built
Percentage of funding allocated to projects that include pedestrian, bicycle, and/or transit infrastructure, by neighborhood	Access: Percentage of transit stops with marked crosswalks within 150 feet	Citywide miles of bicycle facilities built by type
Percentage of Transportation Projects taking place in low-income and moderate-income communities	Access: Percent of Bike Howard short term network completed	Citywide number of public transit accommodations built by type
	Access: Percent of population with direct access to a low-stress bike network	Citywide number of trees planted
	Access/Place: Connections to important destinations, including schools, libraries, parks, community centers, village centers, social service centers, significant health care facilities, and government centers	Citywide number of pedestrian refuge islands installed
	Access/Economy: Connections to employment centers	Citywide number of curb extensions installed
	Equity: Percentage of new roadway projects or roadway repairs in priority communities	Citywide number and type of crosswalk intersection improvements
		Number of new construction or rehabilitation building permits issued along project routes
		List of documented exceptions from Complete and Green Streets Policy



9 Describe specific exceptions to the policy

As mentioned, it is important for Complete Streets to be the default approach to **all** projects and processes. However, completely shifting the paradigm away from car-oriented development is not always easy, and there will be obstacles. It is important to clearly and narrowly define possible exceptions to limit resistance, foot dragging, and opposition.

The National Complete Streets Coalition approves the following exceptions (and only these):

- Accommodation is not necessary on corridors where specific users are prohibited, such as interstate freeways or pedestrian malls. Exclusion of certain users on particular corridors should not exempt projects from accommodating other permitted users.
- Cost of accommodation is excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use.
- A documented absence of current and future need.
- Emergency repairs such as a water main leak that require an immediate, rapid response; however, temporary accommodations for all modes should still be made. Depending on the severity of the repairs, opportunities to improve multimodal access should still be considered where possible.
- Transit accommodations are not required where there is no existing or planned transit service.
- Routine maintenance of the transportation network that does not change the roadway geometry or operations, such as mowing, sweeping, and spot repair.
- Where a reasonable and equivalent project along the same corridor is already programmed to provide facilities exempted from the project at hand.

Keep in mind that the policy must describe a clear process for reviewing and approving exceptions. This includes making proposed exceptions publicly available prior to review and specifying who is responsible for granting them.

10 Describe how private development projects will be encouraged, incentivized, and guided to comply with the policy

Complete Streets are about more than just street design. They inevitably impact and depend on the land and people around them. Thus, it is important to have strong collaboration and participation from multiple stakeholders, including not just government agencies, but also private developers, businesses, and more.

The language used in this section will depend on the agency and their level of authority over private sector actors. Ideally, the policy should state that private developers will be required to follow the Complete Streets policy and its principles. However, it may also state that compliance will be encouraged and suggest ways that private sector actors will be incentivized or guided in this regard.

MILWAUKEE’S POLICY INCLUDES PRIVATE SECTOR ACTORS

Milwaukee’s Complete Streets policy states the following:

This Complete Streets Policy shall apply to all public and private entities doing work in the public way and on City-owned transportation facilities, including, but not limited to, streets, sidewalks, alleys, bridges, trails, and the Riverwalk. The City will encourage the owners and operators of other highways, private streets, sidewalks, alleys, trails, and parking lots to also adhere to the Policy through funding requirements and development review processes.



PHOTO CREDIT: CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

11 Describe the timeline for the review and improvements to the project selection criteria

If a Complete Streets policy fails to actually change how an agency operates, it is not very useful. To ensure that a new or updated Complete Streets policy leads to significant improvements in street design, it must change the decision-making and project selection processes behind the scenes. This is an area that is often obscured from public view, but all levels of government have some sort of prescribed process in place for selecting transportation projects for funding and construction. Historically, there is a heavy focus on prioritizing the movement of vehicles (e.g., speed or number of cars that can be moved through a corridor). These criteria must be reoriented to prioritize Complete Streets principles. The Complete Streets policy should clearly state how and when a new projection selection criteria, which prioritizes Complete Streets and equity, will be developed.

ROLLING MEADOWS GETS SPECIFIC ABOUT PROJECT SELECTION

The Complete Streets policy of Rolling Meadows, Illinois states:

During Rolling Meadows’ annual budgeting process, projects that advance Complete Streets and the performance standards outlined in Section 7 will be prioritized for funding. Rolling Meadows will also consider universal and equitable investment in underserved neighborhoods throughout Rolling Meadows which lack existing infrastructure that encourages walking, biking, and transit trips, as well as areas where data indicate crash risk and health disparities. Projects will be reviewed and recommended by the Capital Improvement Committee during Rolling Meadows’ annual budgeting process.

Potential barriers/obstacles to implementation and solutions

Creating a great Complete Streets policy is a crucial step in developing a more equitable and sustainable

transportation system that works for everyone, but a policy alone cannot guarantee success. Each agency will inevitably encounter obstacles along the way. Some common obstacles and recommended approaches are as follows:

Obstacle	Solutions
Turnover of staff and stakeholders over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a policy that envisions the future, not just the current reality and that outlines an approach adopted, not just practices to do • Create manuals and training materials to ensure new staff understand Complete Streets and how to implement them
Uncertainty about who is responsible for doing what	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearly delineate roles and responsibilities for Complete Streets and frequently hold meetings (preferably an ongoing committee) to evaluate progress and challenges • Outline internal and external accountability measures such as public reporting, processes for public input, etc.
Critics may oppose the Complete Streets policy and seek exceptions to it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build a broad base of support with numerous stakeholders including community/neighborhood organizations, businesses, schools, and more • Clearly describe all possible exceptions (according to this guide) to narrow the scope and improve enforcement • Use the data and metrics collected to regularly and publicly demonstrate the success of the Complete Streets policy
The public is unaware or uninterested in Complete Streets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct public awareness campaigns and events • Collect relevant data and publish it in user-friendly formats • Make the case for Complete Streets by linking it to related benefits of health, economy, climate, etc.
Complete Streets may be viewed as an extra expense for tight municipal budgets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calculate and consider the long-term impacts. Complete Streets projects generally have high return on investment and provide a broad array of benefits • Explore newly available federal funding opportunities such as Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act





COMPLETE STREETS POLICY CHECKLIST

Complete Streets offer an alternative to car-centric development and can help create cities and towns that are more healthy, environmentally sustainable, safe, equitable, and accessible for everyone. The benefits of Complete Streets are numerous and significant, and a strong policy is a great way to ensure success.

If you followed the recommendations in this guide, you should have a strong Complete Streets policy draft. Here's a checklist to make sure your policy is on a path to success.



OUR POLICY:

- Lays out a clear vision about the goal of creating a complete, connected transportation network that allows all users to safely travel to and from destinations
- Defines which projects, programs, and interventions (including new construction, reconstruction/retrofit, maintenance and ongoing operations) will be subject to the policy
- Describes the balance and prioritization of different modes of travel, with an emphasis on non-motorized mobility
- Specifies the design guidelines that will be adopted and/or created
- Describes vulnerable users and how they will be identified, protected, and prioritized
- Designates entities or departments that will be responsible for implementing the policy
- Describes a robust and inclusive community engagement plan
- Describes performance measures, strategy and mechanisms that will produce actionable data that accounts for equity and is made publicly available
- Lists the specific, and limited, exceptions to the policy
- Indicates how private development projects will be encouraged, incentivized, and guided to comply with the policy
- Includes the timeline for the review and improvements to the project selection criteria