



Center for  
Public Health Law  
Research

# **Research Protocol for CityHealth: Complete Streets**

**Prepared by Center for Public Health Law Research**

June 2025

## RESEARCH PROTOCOL

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# CityHealth: Complete Streets

- I. **Dates of Protocol:** December 19, 2022; December 1, 2023; October 30, 2024; November 21, 2025.
- II. **Scope:** Compile statutes and ordinances on Complete Streets policies across 75 cities, their respective counties, 33 states and the District of Columbia. CityHealth examines policies that have been determined to help people lead healthier and happier lives. Complete Streets policies aim to create safer streets that are accessible to everyone and prioritize vulnerable populations. This is a cross-sectional dataset capturing currently effective law valid through June 1, 2025.
- III. **Primary Data Collection**
  - a. **Original project dates:** June 2022 – December 2022
  - b. **Data collection methods:** The team building this dataset consisted of three team members: two legal researchers (“Researchers”) and one supervisor (“Supervisor”).
  - c. **Databases used:** Searches conducted using WestlawNext, city and county code databases; the laws were then collected from state-specific legislature websites. County and city laws were collected from official government websites, municode.com and amlegal.com.
  - d. **Search terms:** “complete streets”
    - i. Key word searches were supplemented by examination of the table of contents of each relevant section of the law identified.
    - ii. Once all the relevant laws were identified in each jurisdiction, a master sheet was created for each jurisdiction that summarized the relevant laws within the scope at each jurisdictional level. This summary included the statutory history for each law and the effective date for that version of the law.
  - e. **Information about initial returns and additional inclusion or exclusion criteria:**
    - i. Only mandatory Complete Streets policies were included, voluntary policies were excluded.
    - ii. Guidelines, plans, and similar documents were excluded unless they were explicitly adopted by an ordinance or otherwise made enforceable. References to guidelines were not enough to include the guidelines themselves in the legal text but those references could be used to cite and answer the questions about the adoption, incorporation, or development of guidelines.
      1. Guidelines may be included if they contain a clear complete streets policy. In that situation we would include the only the policy portion of the guidelines.
    - iii. Laws about grants or complete streets funds that were optional for cities to participate in were determined to be out of scope.

## IV. Coding

- a. **Development of coding scheme:** The Researchers and Supervisor drafted coding questions and circulated them for review until all parties felt they had been sufficiently refined. Once the coding questions were finalized, they were entered into the MonQcle software. For each city, the state law also was researched for preemption specifically. When researching counties, if a city spans multiple counties only the county seat was researched.
- b. **Coding methods:** The Researchers and the Supervisor were responsible for coding the 75 cities, including the respective state and county laws. Each jurisdiction was researched and coded independently.
- c. **Coding Rules for Specific Questions:**
  - i. **What specific users does the policy addressed?**
    - 1. If the policy referenced “trucks” then it was not enough to code for “commercial vehicles” unless trucks were further defined as including commercial or freight vehicles.
  - ii. **Does the policy reference the adoption of specific design guidelines?**
    - 1. Adoption means already created guides (regardless of where they came from) that are referenced in the policy as being incorporated, adopted, or other similar language.
  - iii. **Does the policy require the development of internal design policies and guides?**
    - 1. Development means policies will be created based on requirements stated in the policy.
  - iv. **Does the policy require the revision of internal design policies and guides?**
    - 1. Revision means that the guidelines already exist, and the policy requires the guidelines to be edited to be in agreement with the policy.
    - 2. When a policy references integration of the policy into the guidelines that indicates a revision.
  - v. **Does the policy explicitly prioritize vulnerable users?**
    - 1. To code this question as “yes” the policy does not need to actually say “prioritized,” but must have direct language indicating that these groups are being particularly considered. When coding we were looking for acknowledgement or reference to multiple vulnerable groups. People with disabilities are considered a vulnerable group but references to complying with the ADA aren’t enough to code this question as “yes”.
  - vi. **What types of projects must comply with the Complete Streets policy?**
    - 1. All three answer choices will be coded when the policy says, “all projects”, “all construction projects” and other similar language.
  - vii. **Does the policy reference compliance of all maintenance projects?**
    - 1. Exclusion of “ordinary maintenance” is will not prohibit a city from getting credit for this question so long as the policy requires compliance with “major maintenance” projects.
      - a. For example, Seattle’s policy excludes “ordinary maintenance”, which they define as “activities designed to keep assets in serviceable condition (e.g., mowing, cleaning, sweeping, spot repair and surface treatments such as chip seal)” but

the policy references compliance with “major maintenance” projects and was therefore coded as “yes”.

**viii. Does the policy reference compliance of all ongoing operations?**

1. Making an exception for “ordinary operations” will not preclude a city from getting credit for this question.

**ix. Does the policy reference the development of an inclusive community engagement plan?**

1. Primarily we were looking for engagement with the community with actionable steps being directed.
  - a. For example, Seattle’s policy received credit for this question based on the following:
    - i. “Consult with local jurisdictions in the design and planning phases. Consultation with local jurisdictions must include public outreach and meetings with interested stakeholders in the predesign phase for the purpose of clarifying community goals and priorities through community design exercises prior to developing any designs or visualizations”

**x. Must the performance measures be published?**

1. Published means publicly available. Publishing does not include reporting just to a board or agency.

**xi. Does the policy include explicit exemptions?**

1. **In the 2023 update the following coding rule for this question was added.**
  - a. If a city’s policy contains all or some of the Smart Growth America’s (SGA) exemptions (including additional exemptions beyond SGA’s) then they will still receive credit for this question. A caution note will also be added to further clarify any differences.
  - b. If they have none of SGA’s exceptions, then the question will be answered as a no and a caution note will also be added to further clarify.

**xii. Does the policy encourage compliance from private development projects?**

1. Encouraging compliance is either requiring private developers follow the policy or providing assistance or guidance to help private developers to follow the policy.

**xiii. Does the policy establish a timeline for the review of project selection criteria?**

1. “Project selection criteria” in this question refers to using complete streets as a way to decide which projects will receive funding (see [SmartGrowth America](#), page 30).

**xiv. Does the policy establish a timeline for making improvements to project selection criteria?**

1. This question is asking does the city have an established a timeline for incorporating any of the changes identified by the review in the question above.

**d. Quality control:** The Supervisor oversaw the overall quality of the data by downloading the data from the MonQcle into Microsoft Excel and reviewed it for missing answer choices, and errors in the coding. Any issues identified in the original coding review was sent to the Researchers for their review.

The Supervisor also compared the data to the 2022 Preview Assessment. The 2022 Preview Assessment was conducted in 2021 and was a preliminary assessment of the 2.0 policies.

Additionally, the Supervisor conducted the city review phase. During the city reviews, the Supervisor contacted officials at either the city or county level and officials were given the opportunity to review the individual policy score and provide additional laws or policies. Issues or discrepancies in the research or coding were discussed by the team and resolved accordingly.

## V. 2023 Assessment

### a. Changes to criteria and scoring:

- i. **Explicit Exemptions:** Following discussions with the subject matter expert, Temple, and CityHealth, it was determined that the following coding rules would apply to this question.
  1. If a city's policy contains all or some of the SGA exemptions (including additional exemptions beyond SGA's) then they will still receive credit for this question. A caution note will also be added to further clarify any differences.
  2. If they have none of SGA's exceptions, then the question will be answered as a no and a caution note will also be added to further clarify.
- b. **Updates:** Cincinnati, Henderson, Lexington, Portland had substantive updates to their policies. Cincinnati's score changed from no medal to silver. Henderson changed from no medal to bronze. Lexington from no medal to gold. Portland from silver to gold.
- c. **Quality Control:** Chicago, Cincinnati Columbus, Henderson, Portland, Orlando, Lexington, and St Paul were redundantly coded. Any divergences were discussed with the researchers and supervisor, and subsequently resolved.
- d. **City Review Phase:** Following the completion of the research and coding, all 75 cities were contacted via one or more representatives to review the findings. All feedback was discussed between Temple, CityHealth and the subject matter expert. If necessary, any coding changes were made.

## VI. 2024 Assessment

### a. Updates

- i. New or additional policies were found in Baltimore, Bakersfield, Honolulu, Los Angeles, Newark, Nashville, San Antonio, and St. Louis. Amendments to already collected laws were found in Seattle, Atlanta, Durham, Albuquerque, St. Paul, Minneapolis.
  1. **San Diego:** A new policy for San Diego was identified during the 2024 update. However, after discussions with CPHLR, CityHealth, and the subject matter expert, it was determined that the policy was not in scope as it is not a mandatory policy requiring compliance.
- ii. The following cities had score increases:
  1. Nashville
    - a. Moved from no medal to silver medal.
  2. Newark
    - a. Moved from no medal to silver medal.
  3. San Antonio
    - a. Moved from no medal to gold medal.
  4. St Louis
    - a. Moved from no medal to bronze medal.

**b. Quality Control**

- i. Bakersfield, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Nashville, Newark, St. Paul, San Diego were redundantly coded. The divergence rate was 0.99%. Any divergences were discussed with the researchers and supervisor and subsequently resolved.
- c. **City Review Phase:** Following the completion of the research and coding, all 75 cities were contacted via one or more representatives to review the findings. All cities had two weeks to response and provide feedback or additional information. All feedback was discussed between Temple, CityHealth and the subject matter expert and any necessary coding changes were made accordingly.

**VII. 2025 Assessment**

**a. Updates**

- i. Substantive changes to the law were found in Anaheim, Bakersfield, Fresno, Irvine, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, Newark, Oakland, Phoenix, Riverside, Sacramento, Saint Paul, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, Santa Ana, St. Louis, Stockton, and Virginia Beach
- ii. The following cities saw increases to their scores:
  1. Baltimore, increased from Silver to Gold
  2. Oakland, and Phoenix increased from No Medal to Silver
  3. St. Louis increased from Bronze to Silver
- iii. Non-substantive changes to the law were found in Chicago, Colorado Springs, Mesa, New York, and Seattle.

**b. Quality Control**

- i. Los Angeles, Newark, Sacramento, St. Paul, St. Louis, Virginia Beach were redundantly coded. The divergence rate was 0.0%. Coding responses were shared with the subject matter expert for review.
- c. **City Review Phase:** Following the completion of the research and coding, all 75 cities were contacted via one or more representatives to review the findings. All cities had two weeks to response and provide feedback or additional information. All feedback was discussed between Temple, CityHealth and the subject matter expert, and any necessary coding changes were made accordingly.