



Complete Streets for Active Communities

Make your streets meet the needs of all transportation users!

Complete Streets is a catchy name for a basic concept: that all streets, except perhaps limited access highways, should be designed and built for all users. This means pedestrians and bicyclists, transit users, people with disabilities, and yes, people using motor vehicles.

For example, consider the streets in your neighborhood. If you live in a community built after World War II, your streets were most likely designed and built primarily for motor vehicles. Ask yourself: are there sidewalks along the streets in my neighborhood? If there are sidewalks, is it safe for young children to use them? Is it safe for older folks to use them? Or, do the cars travel too fast; are the sidewalks right against the streets; are the sidewalks too narrow; are the sidewalks uneven and in need of maintenance? Next, consider crossing the streets in your neighborhood. Are there marked crosswalks? Are there pedestrian crossing signals? Is there a lot of fast-moving traffic? Do cars stop for pedestrians trying to cross streets? Then consider whether there is room on your streets for bicyclists. Do your streets have marked bike lanes or wide shoulders? Would you feel safe riding a bike on your streets? Would it be safe for ten year old

children to ride bikes on your streets? Streets and sidewalks are built with public funds, and should therefore accommodate all members of the public. Complete streets are those that do – the young and old, the physically able and the physically challenged, moms and dads pushing strollers, kids on bikes, as well as cars and buses and trucks. Keep in mind that in any given community, approximately 30 percent of the residents cannot or have chosen not to drive. They may be too young, they may have decided to “give up the keys” due to aging issues, they may

be physically handicapped, or they may have simply made a lifestyle or economic choice not to have and operate a car. The point is that nearly a third of the residents in your community are likely getting around by methods other than operating their own motor vehicle. They need places to walk or bicycle. They need complete streets.

DO YOU HAVE COMPLETE STREETS?

So, what is a complete street? It is a street designed for everybody, not just drivers of motor vehicles. How can you tell if you have complete streets in your neighborhood? The easiest way to tell is to see who using your streets. Do you see children walking to school? Do you see groups of adults walking for exercise? Do you see parents pushing strollers on the way to local stores? Do you see kids and grown-ups riding bikes to local parks? If the answer to most of these questions is yes, you probably have complete streets. If not, you probably don't.

What are good examples of complete streets legislation?

- Specifies that “all users” includes pedestrians, bicyclists, transit vehicles and users, and motorists, of all ages and abilities.
- Aims to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network.
- Recognizes the need for flexibility: that all streets are different.
- Is adoptable by all agencies to cover all roads.
- Applies to both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations, for the entire right of way.
- Makes any exceptions specific and sets a clear procedure that requires high-level approval of exceptions.
- Directs the use of the latest and best design standards.
- Directs that complete streets solutions fit within the context of the community.
- Establishes performance standards with measurable outcomes.