

POLICY STATEMENT



ASSOCIATION OF PEDESTRIAN
& BICYCLE PROFESSIONALS

Expertise for Active Transportation

POLICY STATEMENT: COMPLETE STREETS

Overview of APBP Policy Statements

The Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP) supports the community of professionals working to create more walkable, bikeable places through facilitating the exchange of professional and technical knowledge and by promoting fundamental positions that are broadly acknowledged and acted upon by APBP members.

APBP Policy Principles:

- APBP represents the professional expertise and practical experience of its members in transportation policy discussions to advance active, healthy, and sustainable communities.
- APBP recognizes the impacts of systemic and institutionalized racism, and we recognize our responsibility to identify and address inequities.
- APBP endorses active transportation as an integral part of transportation systems through all stages of planning, design, funding, and implementation.
- APBP supports connected, convenient, accessible, and safe streets and pathways in every community and planning with the input of every member of a community.
- APBP advances a safe system approach that leverages active transportation to create equitable access for everyone in every place.

Position:

APBP supports the Complete Streets approach and recommends that municipalities, agencies, and advocates adopt and strive to implement projects in alignment with this framework.

APBP believes that the Complete Streets approach reflects a commitment to a shared vision for a safer, and more accessible transportation system that responds to the needs of communities that have not been fully served through traditional transportation planning while also advancing healthy communities, resilience, and economic vitality¹.

APBP recognizes the need to design streets for all potential users that include people of all ages and abilities, transit riders, drivers, and people walking, biking, and rolling, ensuring they can reach the places they need and want to go. Prioritizing these vulnerable road users is essential because they face the greatest risk on streets with record-high levels of fatalities and injuries.²

¹ <https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/knowledge-hub/news/the-people-driving-the-complete-streets-movement-forward/>

² [Pedestrian fatalities at historic high - Smart Growth America](#)

APBP encourages jurisdictions to evaluate existing policies and practices and to update their planning, design, and project delivery processes to fully realize the benefits of Complete Streets. APBP also emphasizes that proactive Complete Streets planning strengthens implementation by helping communities align available funding with the priorities established in their Complete Streets approach.

Definition:

The U.S.-based National Complete Streets Coalition, of which APBP is a member, highlights that this is both a process and an approach that “... integrates people and place in the planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of our transportation networks. This helps to ensure streets are safe for people of all ages and abilities, balance the needs of different modes, and support local land uses, economies, cultures, and natural environments.”³

The Complete Streets approach is not a one-size-fits-all solution.⁴ It extends beyond a single street type and relies on a combination of elements that respond to the surrounding context, including nearby destinations, activity generators, the character of adjacent development, safety considerations, and other issues and opportunities identified through analysis. In fact, a variety of designs and treatments can and should be employed to serve users and uses in a variety of land use and traffic contexts. Some roadways (such as limited-access highways) may not have bicycle or pedestrian accommodations within the right-of-way. Furthermore, the Complete Streets approach is distinctly different from streetscaping, placemaking, and urban design (although it is compatible with those concepts).

Application:

Any municipality that provides, manages, or funds roadway infrastructure can develop and adopt Complete Streets policies, guidelines, and/or procedures. The Complete Streets approach has gained strong momentum across communities of all sizes because it provides a clear framework for designing streets that serve everyone. According to the National Complete Streets Coalition, more than [1,700 Complete Streets policies](#) have been passed in the United States.⁵ To date, 35 states, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia have adopted a Complete Streets policy. In Canada, some municipalities and provincial governments have adopted Complete Streets policies or integrated Complete Streets principles into their Official Plans and Transportation Master Plans. The benefits of this approach are being experienced across these communities with Smart Growth America reporting that 70% of Complete Streets projects reduce crashes within communities. Furthermore, adoption of this framework has long-term benefits such as increased activity at local businesses, environmental benefits where short trips are replaced by alternative modes, improved air quality, helping reduce barriers, and integration of land-use planning and community priorities

The Complete Streets approach encourages a system-wide framework that applies to all roadways within an agency’s jurisdiction, regardless of size or context, and reduces barriers to community participation in transportation decisions. Because every community is different, each policy is an opportunity to clearly express the vision and priorities when adopting a Complete Streets policy and implementation plan⁶. Whether through local policy adoption or participation in regional frameworks, municipalities can translate these principles into walkable, bike-friendly, transit-supportive, and safe streets that still support efficient vehicle travel. Alignment comes from grounding the policy in an evaluation of existing issues and opportunities while also establishing an

³ <https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/program-of-work/complete-streets/>

⁴ <https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/program-of-work/complete-streets/effects-of-complete-street-policy/>

⁵ [Complete Streets: What, why, and how? - CityHealth — Helping everyone live healthy, full lives](#)

⁶ [How to Create Complete Streets, From Policy to Practice](#), by League of American Bicyclists, 2024

aspirational vision for what mobility should look like in the future.

Recommendations:

The Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP) highlights practical ways transportation agencies can embed the Complete Streets approach into their work. This includes incorporating the approach into policy frameworks, planning, and implementation, supported by case examples that demonstrate the benefits achieved in cities that have adopted these policies.

Actions that agencies can take to integrate the Complete Streets approach:

- A. Develop and Adopt a Complete Streets Policy**
- B. Accelerate Implementation of Complete Streets Policy Framework**
- C. Evaluate and Monitor Progress of Planning, Design, Implementation, and Funding Practices**

A. Develop and Adopt a Complete Streets Policy

Municipalities are encouraged to develop Complete Streets policies and may work with transportation agencies, regional and local public policy agencies to achieve their goals. The Complete Streets Action Guide by CityHealth provides guidance on how the vision, goals, and objectives can be defined. A clear statement ensures consistency across projects, guides decision-making, and helps overcome the inertia of car-centric planning.

To achieve a network-wide level of implementation of Complete Streets criteria, many agencies find a valuable first step is to develop a Complete Streets plan, design guide, or design manual that focuses on the particular characteristics of their community and includes predefined street types with associated design parameters, decision-making guidance, and a method for weighing and resolving tradeoffs in constrained environments.

The National Complete Streets Coalition (NCSC) outlines 10 key aspects an ideal policy may include:⁷

1. **Establishes a vision** that reflects the community's goals and calls for a network-wide framework.
2. **Prioritizes underserved communities**
3. **Commitment in all projects and phases:** Applies to new, retrofit/reconstruction, maintenance, and ongoing projects.
4. **States any expectations clearly by defining** exceptions narrowly and establishing a clear process that requires senior-level approval and public notification before any exception is granted.
5. **Mandates Coordination** among government departments and partner agencies.
6. **Adopts excellent design guidance** as well as sets a time frame for their implementation.
7. **Proactive Land use and context sensitivity** for current and future land use and transportation needs.
8. **Monitors performance and progress** through performance standards that are specific, equitable, and available to the public.
9. **Outlines project selection criteria** that are specific and encourages project selection and funding prioritization for multimodal corridors and Complete Streets implementation.
10. **Guides implementation strategy and encourages monitoring of progress** through feedback mechanism.

Earlier this year, examples of Complete Streets policy statements were evaluated by Smart Growth America, and top-scoring policies⁸ were adopted in 2023 and 2024. Here are four examples that reflect how various municipalities are adopting plans and adapting them to the needs of their communities:

⁷ The Elements of a Complete Streets Policy (2018) <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/elements-complete-streets-policy/>

⁸ [Best Complete Streets Policies Report 2025 - Smart Growth America](#)

1. **City of San Antonio, Texas, Complete Streets Policy, adopted in 2024:** San Antonio demonstrates how municipalities can update and strengthen past policies by forming a **multi-sector coalition** that includes disability advocates, environmental groups, public health partners, and numerous City departments. The city created a **Technical Review Task Force** responsible for vetting policy updates and monitoring performance measures, ensuring that implementation remains aligned with community needs, climate realities, and safety goals.

This model shows practitioners how deliberate coalition-building and formalized oversight structures can guide consistent, long-term implementation.

2. **Nashville, Tennessee, Green and Complete Streets Policy, adopted in 2024:** Nashville refined its long-standing Complete Streets work by developing a **Complete Streets Implementation Guide** that aligns every transportation project with Complete Streets principles from project initiation through design and construction. Their updated policy includes **prioritized project scoring based on community data** such as high-injury network analysis and demographic disparities.

Nashville's process shows municipalities how to internalize Complete Streets as a **project delivery process**, not a single design type.

3. **City of Clyde, Ohio Complete Streets Policy, adopted in 2023:** Clyde, a rural community of only 6,300 people, used walk audits, direct outreach, and lived-experience storytelling to shape a policy centered on people with disabilities, older adults, and low-income families. Their coalition used CDC public health funds to conduct community-driven audits and created a policy with specific design features like accessible signals, median crossings, and wheelchair-friendly sidewalks.

This example shows smaller municipalities how to apply Complete Streets principles through low-cost, community-led processes and targeted investments aligned with local realities.

4. **Milwaukee, Wisconsin Complete Streets Policy, adopted in 2018:** Milwaukee was awarded the third best Complete Streets Plan of 2018 by the Complete Streets Coalition. Its Complete Streets program is notable for emphasizing context-sensitive streets and for a strong implementation committee composed of both city staff and outside organizations. Milwaukee continues to monitor progress annually. The report presents data for the entire city and for designated Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Areas (NRSAs), which are groups of connected Census tracts where at least 70% of residents earn 80% or less of the city's median income.

B. Implementation of Complete Streets Policy Framework

A Complete Streets commitment is only the starting point; the policy must outline concrete implementation steps that directly influence what projects move forward and how they shape the transportation network.

Examples across the United States and Canada have demonstrated that implementing Complete Streets adds little to no expense to agency transportation budgets (compared to incomplete streets) and can, in fact, lower capital expenses by encouraging shifts to active transportation and transit⁹. An example of this is Harris County and the [City of Houston's Build 50 Challenge](#), a rapid implementation program that aimed to build 50 miles of bikeways in 12 months.

⁹ <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/cost-of-complete-streets/>

Major Cities: New York City, Philadelphia, Austin, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington DC

Many other cities in America adopted Complete Streets policies and developed design manuals or plans over the past decade. Examples for the cities below provide a good sampling of these efforts:

- New York City: [Strategic Plan](#) and [Sustainable Streets Plan](#)
- [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania](#) Policy
- [Austin, Texas](#)
- [Chicago, Illinois](#)
- [San Francisco, California](#) and SF Better Streets
- [Seattle, Washington](#)
- [Washington DC](#)

State Departments of Transportation

State DOTs can be a key partner in promoting Complete Streets across a larger number of communities. Starting with context-sensitive design in the late 20th Century, and smart growth and smart transportation policies in the early 21st Century, state DOTs have been ratcheting up their efforts in this arena as well. The DOTs listed below provide a good sampling of these efforts:

- [Florida](#)
- [Massachusetts](#)
- [New York State](#)

Complete Streets provide both more significant and a greater number of benefits when they are integrated into transportation network development plans. A Complete Streets policy on its own does not guarantee the creation of complete networks, so bringing these two processes together is important for determining and reconciling the important tradeoffs involved in setting modal priorities for any given corridor. A network of Complete Streets that are safe, comfortable, and form complete networks for walking, biking, and transit can help to generate a higher level of acceptance and support in the community when compared to a single Complete Street. In this regard, it is also important to define both the geographic extent of network plans and their connections to neighboring areas.

In practice, due to limited resources and constrained capacity, it is common for municipalities and counties to develop complete street network plans over many years and in the form of separate mode-specific plans, such as a bicycle network plan, a pedestrian network plan, a high-crash corridor network plan, etc. This approach has both benefits – such as efficient use of existing resources, and potential for frequent updates to plans – and limitations – such as potential lack of coordination between plans or lack of a focus on implementation. The most successful plans are those that overcome the constraints and focus on milestones and metrics for implementation and on a long-term implementation strategy.

The development and implementation of Network Plans are possibly the next main challenge for many communities implementing Complete Streets policies. [Costa Mesa, California's Circulation Element of its General Plan](#) provides an overview of its balanced approach to Complete Streets, which conforms to the California Complete Streets Act (2008). Many other California communities have taken similar steps in follow-up of the act, a notable example of statewide implementation.

Small and Mid-Size Cities: Boulder, CO; Chapel Hill, NC; Louisville, KY; Portland, OR; Tucson, AZ

Typically, it is easier for smaller and mid-size cities to develop a network plan, since the scale of the infrastructure

and of community and stakeholder coordination is more manageable. Examples for the cities above provide a good sampling of these efforts, some of which are complete, some underway:

- Boulder, Colorado [Complete Streets Plan](#) and [Network Plan](#)
- [Chapel Hill, North Carolina](#)
- [Louisville, Kentucky](#)
- [Portland, Oregon](#)
- [Tucson, Arizona](#)

C. Evaluate and Monitor Progress of Planning, Design, Implementation, and Funding Practices

Beyond adopting a new policy, pivoting to a Complete Streets approach can be accomplished over a period of time through incremental changes in planning, policy development, and related practices. Smart Growth America also provides a framework to evaluate policy documents by using the [Complete Streets Policy Evaluation Tool](#). This tool may be applied to documents such as legislation, resolutions, executive orders, internal agency policies, policies adopted by elected boards, and tax ordinances that fund Complete Streets projects. It does not apply to broader planning documents that incorporate language into their comprehensive plans, transportation master plans, or design guidance updates that merely reference Complete Streets principles.

Municipalities nationwide have advanced Complete Streets by improving internal processes, modernizing design standards, building staff capacity, establishing performance measures, and strengthening accountability and community engagement. The examples below highlight effective strategies that help jurisdictions move from policy adoption to implementation.

1. Adopt binding design guidance that aligns with national and state best practices and draws from successful implementation in peer municipalities.

APBP acknowledges that many municipalities experience barriers to implementation because of existing, sometimes outdated, state or local design standards; potential inconsistency with other local policies, and entrenched operational practices. For US jurisdictions, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has issued several new rules and guidelines¹⁰ to provide greater flexibility in the federal sphere to spur Complete Street implementation, including through rulemaking that now provides greater design flexibility on National Highway System (NHS) streets with speed limits under 50 mph¹¹ (80 km/h). See Appendix for more information on complementary movements that align with the Complete Streets approach.

2. Capacity building for Complete Streets implementation.

Training staff in Complete Streets principles is essential early on, but agencies should also prioritize hiring professionals who already have this expertise. Updating job descriptions and recruitment criteria can attract planners, engineers, and public health practitioners skilled in multimodal design, as demonstrated by agencies like PennDOT and the City of Philadelphia, which created dedicated bicycle, pedestrian, and Complete Streets leadership roles.

3. Establish performance measures and best practices to evaluate safety, access, and progress.

For example, some cities integrate a complete streets approach with land use and transportation planning by

¹⁰ https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/2022-02/2022_CS_Transformations_Doc_508.pdf

¹¹ Achieving Multimodal Networks: Applying Design Flexibility and Reducing Conflicts
https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/multimodal_networks

defining street typologies, place types, and overlays to guide planning and design efforts. These tools inform mobility solutions as they connect adjacent land uses to a street's transportation function, allowing for a context-sensitive outcome. Overlays for particular activities, such as transit stops or school zones, allow an overriding street type to accommodate these activities. See the street typologies and overlays in the Complete Streets Plans for Philadelphia, Pennsylvania ([Chapter 3](#)) and Ames, Iowa ([Chapter 2](#)). Other examples include Oklahoma City's Comprehensive Plan, [PlanOKC](#). FDOT adopted a [Context Classification Guide for Florida's streets and roadways](#), which will better define appropriate design criteria for typical streets, in the context of its surroundings and the transportation network.

4. Engage and educate underrepresented communities and create accountability through a committee of agency staff, residents, and community representatives.

Many cities demonstrate how meaningful engagement strengthens Complete Streets implementation. Howard County and Des Moines have integrated outreach to underinvested communities through walk audits, school-based engagement, and neighborhood-level planning. Cities like Seattle, New Orleans, and Charlotte pair Complete Streets principles with multilingual outreach, partnerships with community-based organizations, youth engagement, and pop-up design demonstrations to reach residents who have historically been excluded from transportation decisions. Cleveland and Jersey City further embed equity by incorporating community input directly into corridor redesigns, quick-build safety projects, and implementation priorities.

Resources:

For further information, APBP suggests these recognized sources:

- Achieving Multimodal Networks: Applying Design Flexibility and Reducing Conflicts (FHWA 2016) https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/multimodal_networks
- National Complete Streets Coalition <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/>
- Completing Our Streets: The Transition to Safe and Inclusive Transportation Networks (Barbara McCann 2013, Island Press) <http://www.islandpress.org/book/completing-our-streets>
- Complete Streets: Best Policy and Implementation Practices (American Planning Association 2010) <https://www.planning.org/research/streets/>
- AARP's Complete Streets in the Southeast: A Tool Kit <http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/info-2014/complete-streets-southeast-toolkit.html> As AARP suggests: "Y'all could benefit from these lessons and resources, regardless of your location."
- ChangeLab Solutions <http://www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/what-are-complete-streets> offers [Complete Streets Talking Points](#), [Model Comprehensive Plan Language](#), and [Model Complete Streets Laws and Resolutions](#).
- Complete Streets for Canada <https://tcat.ca/project/complete-streets/>
 - City of Calgary, AB - Complete Streets: <https://www.calgary.ca/planning/transportation/complete-streets.html>
 - City of Edmonton, AB - Complete Streets Design and Construction Standards - Public Primer: <https://www.edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/CSDCS-Public-Primer.pdf>
 - City of Hamilton, ON - Complete Streets Design Manual | City of Hamilton: <https://www.hamilton.ca/build-invest-grow/planning-development/planning-policies-guidelines/complete-streets-design-manual>
 - City of Guelph, ON: guelph.ca/wp-content/uploads/Complete-Streets-Design-Guidelines.pdf

- Geometric Design Guide for Canadian Roads (Transportation Association of Canada)
<https://www.tac-atc.ca/en/publications-and-resources/geometric-design-guide-canadian-roads>

Hyperlinks to case studies mentioned above include:

- Ames, Iowa: <https://www.cityofames.org/home/showdocument?id=47852>
- Arlington, Washington: <http://www.arlingtonwa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1855/Arlington-Complete-Streets-Policy>
- Austin, Texas: <https://austintexas.gov/departments/completestreets>
- Chicago, Illinois:
<https://www.chicago.gov/dam/city/depts/cdot/Admin/ChicagoForwardCDOTActionAgenda.pdf>
- New York City: <https://www1.nyc.gov/html/dot/html/about/stratplan.shtml> and
<https://www1.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/2013-dot-sustainable-streets.pdf>
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania:
<https://www.philadelphiastreet.com/completestreets> and
<http://www.phillyotis.com/portfolio-item/completestreets/>
- San Francisco, California: <https://www.sfcta.org/policies/completestreets> and
<https://www.sfbetterstreets.org/>
- Seattle, Washington: <https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/projects-and-programs/programs/urban-design-program/completestreets-in-seattle>
- Washington, DC: <https://comp.ddot.dc.gov/Documents/Complete%20Streets%20Policy.pdf>
- California: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/transportation-planning/office-of-smart-mobility-climate-change/smart-mobility-active-transportation/completestreets>
- Florida: <https://www.fdot.gov/roadway/csi/default.shtm>
- Massachusetts: <https://masscompletestreets.com/>
- Minnesota: <https://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/completestreets/>
- New York State: <https://www.dot.ny.gov/programs/completestreets>
- Boulder, Colorado: [Transportation Master Plan | City of Boulder](#)
- Denver, Colorado: [Regional Complete Streets Toolkit](#)
- Portland, Oregon: <https://www.portland.gov/transportation/planning/transportation-system-plan-tsp>
- Oklahoma City's Comprehensive Plan, PlanOKC <http://planokc.org/development-guide/infrastructure-investment/street-typology/#:~:text=Investment%20%2F%20Street%20Typology-Street%20Typology,the%20basis%20for%20design%20criteria>
- Florida Context Classification Guide: https://fdotwww.blob.core.windows.net/sitefinity/docs/default-source/roadway/completestreets/files/fdot-context-classification.pdf?sfvrsn=12be90da_2
- Slow Streets and Essential Places, Oakland California - <https://www.oaklandca.gov/projects/oakland-slow-streets>

Appendix:

Complementary Movements: Many other concepts and movements complement Complete Streets. Below we list the complementary movements that most clearly intersect with the goals and policies of the Complete Streets movement.

- **Safe Systems Approach:** The FHWA's Safe System Approach is a proactive, holistic framework designed to eliminate fatal and serious roadway injuries by recognizing that people make mistakes and designing a

transportation system that can accommodate them. It emphasizes multiple layers of protection—such as safer roads, safer vehicles, managed speeds, responsible road user behavior, and strong post-crash response—to keep crash impacts below deadly levels. Built on principles of shared responsibility, human vulnerability, and proactive safety, the approach seeks to prevent severe crashes through redundant, system-wide safeguards rather than relying solely on individual behavior.

- **Vision Zero:** Vision Zero is a strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. First implemented in Sweden in the 1990s, Vision Zero has proved successful across Europe — and now it's gaining momentum in major American cities. Vision Zero strategies and Complete Streets are closely intertwined, and support similar goals. For more information, please refer to the [APBP Policy Statement on Vision Zero](#).
- **Safe Routes to School, Parks, Older Adults, etc.:** A Complete Streets approach, policy and design guidelines are used to achieve many goals, including the various 'safe routes to...' programs. Travel to schools, parks, transit, and other community destinations benefit from rights-of-way designed for all users. Include 'safe routes to...' planning work as part of Complete Streets planning and vice versa, rather than two separate processes.
- **Active Living Programs:** Building Complete Streets is a necessary but many times not sufficient condition for activating public spaces with people walking and bicycling. In many cases, Active Living Programs can then fulfill that function. At the policy level, programs supported by health practitioners, the Centers for Disease Control and entities such as the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation provide guidance and support for local active living program implementation.
- **Age Friendly Communities:** Activation of Complete Streets and public spaces also involved consideration of age-appropriate design criteria, and designing communities that are attractive for ages from 8 to 80. The AARP is a major supporter of these efforts.
- **Tactical Urbanism:** Tactical urbanism includes low-cost, temporary changes to the built environment, usually in cities, intended to improve local neighborhoods and city gathering places. Tactical urbanism, pop-up urbanism, city repair, or D.I.Y. urbanism. Tactical urbanism can be a low-cost way to pilot or implement Complete Streets infrastructure. For more information:

APBP's policy statement development

The Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP) relied on the professional experience of its members and widely available information and tools to draft its policy statement on Complete Streets. APBP has worked closely with the National Complete Streets Coalition, serving on the NCSC steering committee for more than 10 years and managing the NCSC Complete Streets workshop program between 2008 and 2016. Many APBP members have planned or designed Complete Streets, developed Complete Streets policies, created Complete Streets design guidelines, managed transportation agencies' Complete Streets programs, and some APBP members are Complete Streets workshop instructors.

This policy statement was developed by the APBP Policy Committee. APBP's Board of Directors approved the original policy statement on February 21, 2019 and approved updates and revisions on December 18, 2025. APBP members can suggest changes to any policy statement by contacting the association's executive director, Policy Committee chair, or a board member. For more information, contact: Lauren Santangelo, Executive Director, at lsantangelo@amrms.com.