



What are Complete Streets?

From: <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets>

Complete Streets are streets for everyone. They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. They allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from train stations.

Creating Complete Streets means transportation agencies must change their approach to community roads. By adopting a Complete Streets policy, communities direct their transportation planners and engineers to **routinely design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users**, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. This means that every transportation project will make the street network better and safer for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists – making your town a better place to live.

What does a “Complete Street” look like?

There is no singular design prescription for Complete Streets; each one is unique and responds to its community context. A complete street may include: sidewalks, bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders), special bus lanes, comfortable and accessible public transportation stops, frequent and safe crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, narrower travel lanes, roundabouts, and more.

A Complete Street in a rural area will look quite different from a Complete Street in a highly urban area, but both are designed to balance safety and convenience for everyone using the road. Check out our [‘Many Types of Complete Streets’ slideshow](#) to see examples from across the country.

Why do we need Complete Streets policies?

Incomplete streets – those designed with only cars in mind – limit transportation choices by making walking, bicycling, and taking public transportation inconvenient, unattractive, and, too often, dangerous.

Changing policy to routinely include the needs of people on foot, public transportation, and bicycles would make walking, riding bikes, riding buses and trains safer and easier. People of all ages and abilities would have more options when traveling to work, to school, to the grocery store, and to visit family.

Making these travel choices more convenient, attractive, and safe means people do not need to rely solely on automobiles. They can replace congestion-clogged trips in their cars with swift bus rides or heart-healthy bicycle trips. Complete Streets improves the efficiency and capacity of existing roads too, by moving people in the same amount of space – just think of all the people who can fit on a bus or streetcar versus the same amount of people each driving their own car. Getting more productivity out of the existing road and public transportation systems is vital to reducing congestion.

Complete Streets are particularly prudent when more communities are tightening their budgets and looking to ensure long-term benefits from investments. An existing transportation budget can incorporate Complete Streets projects with little to no additional funding, accomplished through re-prioritizing projects and allocating funds to projects that improve overall mobility. Many of the ways to create more complete roadways are low cost, fast to implement, and high impact. Building more sidewalks and striping bike lanes has been shown to create more jobs than traditional car-focused transportation projects.

Complete Streets are Safe Streets



Where are Complete Streets being built?

Many states and cities have adopted bike plans or pedestrian plans that designate some streets as corridors for improvements for bicycling and walking. More and more, communities are going beyond this to ensure that every street project takes all road users into account.



Among the places with some form of Complete Streets policy are the states of Oregon, California, Illinois, North Carolina, Minnesota, Connecticut, and Florida. The City of Santa Barbara, California calls for “achieving equality of convenience and choice” for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and drivers. Columbia, Missouri adopted new street standards to encourage healthy bicycling and walking. And the regional body that allocates federal transportation dollars around Columbus, Ohio has directed all projects provide for people on foot, bicycle, and public transportation. Check our [interactive atlas](#) to see all the jurisdictions that have formally committed to the Complete Streets approach.

How can I get a Complete Streets policy adopted in my community?

Advocating for Complete Streets means working with your neighbors and local policymakers, including elected officials and government staff.

Talk with them about particularly problematic and unsafe streets: schools that have no sidewalks out front, bus stops that are not accessible for people in wheelchairs, missing crosswalks by the grocery store, and no safe routes to bicycle to work. Work together to identify ways to make these places safer and more attractive and present your ideas to others. Make your case and [show examples](#) of what your streets could like. For great strategy ideas, check out the free [“Power of 25” presentation](#) made by Peter Lagerwey.

This website has many resources to help you. You can [modify and use our introductory presentation](#) in your community, show it at PTA and neighborhood association meetings and to your local chamber of commerce. See the [Changing Policy tab](#) for information on developing a good policy and finding other local advocates. We also have answers to many questions on how to implement a policy.

The National Complete Streets Coalition offers [interactive full-day workshops led by national experts](#) to help communities establish a common vision for their streets; develop an appropriate Complete Streets policy that builds on local expertise; and implement Complete Streets policies by identifying ways to change and streamline the everyday transportation decision-making process.

Need transportation planning and engineering professionals who are ready to help design and construct complete streets? [Our Complete Streets Partner firms](#) can offer the expertise and dedication you need.



NATIONAL
COMPLETE STREETS
COALITION