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:

1. APBP represents the professional expertise and practical experience of its members in transportation policy discussions to advance active and healthy communities.
2. APBP endorses active transportation as an integral part of transportation systems through all stages of planning, design, funding, and implementation.
3. APBP supports connected, convenient, and safe streets and pathways in every community and planning with the input of every member of a community.
4. APBP advances street designs that make walking and bicycling a viable option for everyone in every place.

Position:

The Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals (APBP) supports the Complete Streets movement and recommends that transportation agencies and governments adopt and implement Complete Streets policies. Furthermore, agencies should modify their planning, design, prioritization, and project delivery practices and standards to institutionalize the Complete Streets approach so that all potential users and uses are adequately accommodated with safe, welcoming, and context-appropriate facilities and networks.

Definition:

The U.S. based National Complete Streets Coalition, of which APBP is a member, defines Complete Streets as streets that "...are planned, designed, operated, and maintained to be safe and comfortable for everyone, regardless of age, ability, ethnicity, income, or chosen transportation mode."[1] The benefits of Complete

[1] https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/equity-benefits-of-complete-streets/

Streets include a greater emphasis on equity considerations, increasing the efficiency of streets[2], offering more transportation options[3], and improving safety and mobility for all street users, particularly children and other vulnerable road users[4]. Further, Complete Streets can help address prevailing inequities in transportation investment. Complete Streets work for all users and all trips—not just those who can afford to own, operate, and park a car, and not just for adults who drive but for children, people with disabilities, and the elderly as well.

The Complete Streets approach is a process that entails planning, designing, and constructing streets that support the surrounding context—e.g., the destinations, trip generation, and character of development along the corridor. It is not a prescribed one-size-fits-all solution. In fact, a variety of designs and treatments can and should be employed to serve all 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 than streetscaping, placemaking, and urban design (although it is compatible with those concepts).

The National Complete Streets Coalition states that:

> "A Complete Streets approach 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."

Application:

The Complete Streets approach is a system-wide approach to transportation planning and street design that applies to all roadways within an agency's jurisdiction. It is not selectively applied to individual projects. Complete Streets policies and practices can be adopted by any agency, regardless of size or urban/rural context, that has a role in planning, designing, constructing, or maintaining street and roadway networks.

According to the National Complete Streets Coalition, more than 1,200 Complete Streets policies have been passed in the United States[5]. Already, 33 states, 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 while others have incorporated Complete Streets components in Official Plans and Transportation Master Plans. The Complete Streets approach has enjoyed rapid acceptance, perhaps because of its simplicity in defining a policy for designing and operating public streets. The widespread adoption of Complete Streets policies has also helped to break down longstanding barriers to more community participation in transportation planning as well as create a stronger distinction between the conventional auto-oriented functional planning approach and the more comprehensive Complete Streets approach.

Recommendations:

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[2] https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/complete-streets-ease-traffic-woes/

[3] https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/health-benefits-of-complete-streets/

[4] https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/children-benefits-of-complete-streets/

[5] https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/policy-development/policy-atlas/ This link leads to a .pdf inventory of all Complete Streets policies' the .pdf is updated monthly.

Adopt a Complete Streets Policy. APBP recommends that all transportation agencies develop and adopt Complete Streets policies. The National Complete Streets Coalition states[6] that an ideal Complete Streets policy includes the following:

1. **Vision and intent**: Includes an equitable vision for how and why the community wants to complete its streets. Specifies need to create complete, connected, network and specifies at least four modes, two of which must be biking or walking.
2. **Diverse users**: Benefits all users equitably, particularly vulnerable users and the most underinvested and underserved communities.
3. **Commitment in all projects and phases**: Applies to new, retrofit/reconstruction, maintenance, and ongoing projects.
4. **Clear, accountable expectations**: Makes any exceptions specific and sets a clear procedure that requires high-level approval and public notice prior to exceptions being granted.
5. **Jurisdiction**: Requires interagency coordination between government departments and partner agencies on Complete Streets.
6. **Design**: Directs the use of the latest and best design criteria and guidelines and sets a time frame for their implementation.
7. **Land use and context sensitivity**: Considers the surrounding community's current and expected land use and transportation needs.
8. **Performance measures**: Establishes performance standards that are specific, equitable, and available to the public.
9. **Project selection criteria**: Provides specific criteria to encourage funding prioritization for Complete Streets implementation.
10. **Implementation steps**: Includes specific next steps for implementation of the policy.

The National Complete Streets Coalition provides example policies on its website.

Beyond adopting a policy, implementing Complete Streets requires changing planning, design, prioritization, and project delivery practices, as well as regular monitoring of performance measures and adjustments to the policy as needed.

Develop Network Plans. 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 into neighboring areas.

Modify planning, design, and construction practices to implement the Complete Streets approach. Once a Complete Streets policy is adopted, APBP favors rapid implementation to ensure better health through active

[6] The Elements of a Complete Streets Policy (2018) https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/elements-complete-streets-policy/

transportation and more transportation options for people of all ages and incomes. 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 transit[7]. The National Complete Streets Coalition provides guidance to help local governments implement Complete Streets policies[8].

APBP acknowledges that many municipalities experience barriers to implementation because of state or local design standards, consistency with other local policies, and operational practices. For US jurisdictions, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has issued several new rules and guidelines to provide greater flexibility, including through rulemaking providing greater design flexibility on National Highway System (NHS) streets below 50 mph[9] (80 km/h). Minimally, APBP recommends three best practices to advance Complete Streets implementation in towns and cities of every size (these practices are in keeping with guidance provided by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)[10] and the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE)[11]):

- Design streets based on an appropriate target speed—the speed at which motorized traffic is intended to move. Target speeds on Complete Streets are generally between 10 and 35 miles per hour (15 to 50 km/h). The ideal target speed in urban environments is 25 miles per hour (40 km/h) or less. Design speeds should match target speeds, which may require implementing geometric, traffic control, and signal timing measures to achieve the target speed.
- Lower speed limits (ideally to 25 miles per hour [40 km/h] or less on streets without separated bikeways). FHWA describes alternative methods for setting speed limits[12]. On some streets, implementing traffic calming and speed mitigation may be necessary to achieve a higher level of compliance with lower speed limits.
- Coordinate early with state/provincial and other agency reviewers to develop cooperation and approval for variances from state/provincial and local standards.

Note that while lower motor vehicle speeds have consistently been shown to increase safety for all road users and are especially important on multimodal streets, the designs of roadways with higher speed limits and design speeds should also consider and accommodate bicycling and walking in a context-sensitive manner and in consideration of the types of users that are likely present. US federal policies mandate bicyclist and pedestrian accommodations on National Highway System (NHS) non-interstate roadways while also encouraging agencies to consider accommodations on non-NHS roadways. Several states have similar policies, while several Canadian provinces have adopted provincial cycling network plans that incorporate facilities on

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[7] https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/cost-of-complete-streets/

[8] Complete Streets Implementation: A Resource Appendix
https://smartgrowthamerica.org/app/uploads/2016/09/Implementing-CS-Policy_Brief-Guidebook.pdf

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

[10] Urban Street Design Guide: Design Speed https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/design-controls/design-speed/

[11] Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach
https://ecommerce.ite.org/IMIS/ItemDetail?iProductCode=RP-036A-E

[12] Methods and Practices for Setting Speed Limits: An Informational Report (FHWA)

higher speed roadways. That said, separation between bicyclists and motor vehicle traffic is necessary above 35 miles per hour (50 km/h) in order to accommodate bicyclists of all ages and abilities.

Many agencies find value in developing a Complete Streets plan, design guide, or design manual that includes predefined street types with associated design parameters, decision-making guidance, and a method for weighing and resolving tradeoffs in constrained environments.

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

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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 policy statement on February 21, 2019. 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: Melanie Bowzer, Executive Director, at mbowzer@amrms.com.