

Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Area Complete Streets Policy Statement

Approved by the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of
Governments' Policy Board on November 18, 2010

1. Purpose

The term Complete Streets means the process of planning, designing, building, and operating streets so they routinely and safely accommodate all modes of local and regional travel.

Completing a street will expand its capacity to serve everyone who travels on it, be it by motor vehicle, foot, bicycle, transit, or other means. Complete streets are essential for those who cannot drive – because of age, disability, income, or other reason – and for those who choose not to drive to save money, protect the environment, or be healthier by living a more active lifestyle.

Complete Streets is not a revolutionary planning concept; it is essentially practicing coordinated, comprehensive and contextual planning and design. It is not a prescriptive design or outcome; it is a process based on guiding principles. Complete Streets and the concept of planning for Complete Streets are recognized nationally by numerous states and local jurisdictions. The state of Minnesota passed a Complete Streets law in July of 2010. The Federal Government is also cognizant of the benefits of planning for all users of the transportation system. The Federal Complete Streets Act of 2009 is presently moving through Congress.

This Policy Statement is meant to act as a guidance document. The guidance within this document is not a requirement set upon any of Metro COG's member local units of government or other federal aid recipients in the FM Metropolitan Area. The hope is that member local units of government will consider all modes of transportation during the planning, design, construction, and operation phases as provided in this Complete Streets Policy Statement.

The benefits of Complete Streets can be both qualitative and quantitative, and can act both in the short and long-term:

- **Safety** – reduction of conflict and encouragement of more predictable interaction among motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities
- **Environmental** – less air and noise pollution
- **Maintenance** – less use of roads by automobiles if significant mode shifts occur
- **Congestion** – integration of transit and non-motorized modes can reduce local congestion if a mode shift occurs
- **Health** – increased physical activity and reduction in healthcare costs
- **Accessibility** – approximately one-third of the population cannot or does not drive a car (Complete Streets Report, 2009, MnDOT); increased compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) will provide better access for people of all ages and abilities
- **External Costs** – reductions correlated with less costly modal choices
- **Economic Activity** – A network of complete streets is safer and more appealing to residents and visitors, which is good for retail and commercial development.

- **Quality of Life** – A variety of transportation options allow everyone – particularly people with disabilities and older adults – to get out and stay connected to the community.

In June 2009, the Center of Disease Control released a report titled Recommended Community Strategies and Measurements to Prevent Obesity in the United States, which recommends the adoption of Complete Streets policies as a strategy for obesity prevention.

The establishment of well-connected walking and bicycling networks is an important component for livable communities. The overall design of a community's transportation system will have a significant effect on its perceived livability. Walking and bicycling foster safer, more livable, more family-friendly communities; promote physical activity and healthy lifestyles; and reduce vehicle emissions and fuel use. Planning for Complete Streets is not only being recognized by local communities it is now recognized by the Federal Government.

In March of 2010 The Secretary of the Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced an updated policy statement on bicycle and pedestrian accommodation. This policy reaffirms the concept of planning for non-motorized forms of transportation as well as transit use.

The DOT policy is to incorporate safe and convenient walking and bicycling facilities into transportation projects. Every transportation agency, including DOT, has the responsibility to improve conditions and opportunities for walking and bicycling and to integrate walking and bicycling into their transportation systems. Because of the numerous individual and community benefits that walking and bicycling provide — including health, safety, environmental, transportation, and quality of life — transportation agencies are encouraged to go beyond minimum standards to provide safe and convenient facilities for these modes.

Regional planning for Complete Streets is supported by the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) and the United States Code (USC). The State and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) planning regulations describe how walking and bicycling are to be accommodated throughout the planning process (e.g., see 23 CFR 450.200, 23 CFR 450.300, 23 U.S.C. 134(h), and 135(d)). Non-motorists must be allowed to participate in the planning process and transportation agencies are required to integrate walking and bicycling facilities and programs in their transportation plans to ensure the operability of an intermodal transportation system. Key sections from the United States Code (USC) and CFR include, with italics added for emphasis:

- The scope of the metropolitan planning process "will address the following factors...(2) Increase the safety for motorized and *non-motorized users*; (3) Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and *non-motorized users*; (4) Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy

conservation, improve the quality of life..." 23 CFR 450.306(a). See 23 CFR 450.206 for similar State requirements.

- Metropolitan transportation plans "...shall, at a minimum, include...existing and proposed transportation facilities (including major roadways, transit, multimodal and intermodal facilities, *pedestrian walkways and bicycle facilities*, and intermodal connectors that should function as an integrated metropolitan transportation system..." 23 CFR 450.322(f). See 23 CFR 450.216(g) for similar State requirements.
- The plans and transportation improvement programs (TIPs) of all metropolitan areas "shall provide for the development and integrated management and operation of transportation systems and facilities (including *accessible pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities*)." 23 U.S.C. 134(c)(2) and 49 U.S.C. 5303(c)(2). 23 CFR 450.324(c) states that the TIP "shall include ...trails projects, pedestrian walkways; and bicycle facilities..."
- 23 CFR 450.316(a) states that "The MPOs shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing...representatives of users of *pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, and representatives of the disabled*, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan planning process." 23 CFR 450.210(a) contains similar language for States. See also 23 U.S.C. 134(i)(5), 135(f)(3), 49 U.S.C. 5303(i)(5), and 5304(f)(3) for additional information about participation by interested parties.

The Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments (Metro COG) recognizes the need for Complete Streets and therefore has developed this Policy Statement (Section 2). Metro COG encourages local units of government in the metropolitan area including Mn/DOT and NDDOT to take this Complete Streets Policy Statement under reasonable advisement. In addition, Metro COG has developed the Implementation Plan detailed in Section 4, which describes how this Policy Statement will be incorporated into Metro COG's Metropolitan Planning Program. Metro COG encourages local units of government to incorporate the Policy Statement into the planning, design and construction of federally and locally funded projects.

2. The Fargo-Moorhead Regional Complete Streets Policy Statement

Complete Streets is an on-going and comprehensive planning, design, construction, and operations process, with a long-range perspective, aimed at improving safety, usability, and quality of life. By embracing Complete Streets, Metro COG seeks to plan and program public rights-of-way that fully integrate and balance the needs of all street users, including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit users, commercial vehicles, emergency services vehicles and passenger vehicles. Users of all ages and abilities will be considered. The Complete Streets process will apply to street projects, including construction, reconstruction, and maintenance. Because Complete Streets are context sensitive, a Complete Street in one neighborhood may look very different from a Complete Street in another neighborhood, but both are designed to balance the safety and convenience for everyone using the public right-of-way. Successful achievement of this vision will result in the creation of a complete transportation network for all modes of travel (as opposed to

trying to make each street perfect for every traveler), and may result in fewer crashes, lower severity crashes, improved public health, less air, water, and noise pollution, as well as lower overall transportation costs for the public and for their governing bodies.

By approving this policy, Metro COG and its member local units of government as well as the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT) have dedicated themselves to planning, designing, constructing, and/or operating the transportation network to a higher/ more inclusive set of planning goals. Exceptions to this standard should be rare. Metro COG encourages its member local units of government to adopt an official Complete Streets exception process that involves enhanced public input and to officially document exceptions when they occur.

3. Consistency with Federal Guidance and Regulation

Congress has consistently and progressively encouraged the development of a transportation system that favors the movement of people and goods -- not just automobiles -- beginning with the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991, and continuing through the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) in 1998, and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) in 2004 (See 23 CFR 450.200, 23 CFR 450.300, 23 U.S.C. 134(h), and 135(d)). The USDOT’s issuance of an updated bicycle and pedestrian accommodation policy statement in March of 2010 further solidifies the United State’s commitment to recognizing the need to overtly plan for non-motorized transportation.

In 2009, Congress introduced the Federal Complete Streets Act (HR 1443/SR 584) which defines Complete Streets as:

“A roadway that accommodates all travelers, particularly public transit users, bicyclists, pedestrians (including individuals of all ages and individuals with mobility, sensory, neurological, or hidden disabilities), and motorists, to enable all travelers to use the roadway safely and efficiently.”

Though this legislation has not been signed into law; this legislation is still moving toward passage.

On March 15, 2010, the Secretary of Transportation, Ray LaHood, signed an updated and enhanced policy statement on bicycle and pedestrian accommodation, which states, in part:

“Because of the numerous individual and community benefits that walking and bicycling provide – including health, safety, environmental, transportation, and quality of life – transportation agencies are encouraged to go beyond the minimum standards to provide safe and convenient facilities for these modes.”

On June 16, 2009, EPA joined with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U. S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to help improve access to affordable housing, more transportation options, and lower transportation costs while protecting the environment in communities nationwide. Through a set of guiding livability principles and a partnership agreement that will guide the agencies' efforts, this partnership will coordinate federal housing, transportation, and other infrastructure investments to protect the environment, promote equitable development, and help to address the challenges of climate change. The FM Metropolitan Area Complete Streets Policy Statement aligns with several of the six livability principles of the HUD-DOT-EPA Interagency Partnership for Sustainable Communities. The six principles are as follows:

- **Provide more transportation choices.** Develop safe, reliable, and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.
- **Promote equitable, affordable housing.** Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.
- **Enhance economic competitiveness.** Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers, as well as expanded business access to markets.
- **Support existing communities.** Target federal funding toward existing communities—through strategies like transit oriented, mixed-use development, and land recycling—to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes.
- **Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment.** Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy
- **Value communities and neighborhoods.** Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

The FM Metropolitan Area Complete Streets Policy Statement offers the opportunity to plan and design roadways more thoroughly for non-motorized users as well as transit users thus providing more transportation choices. This supports the livability principle of *providing more transportation choices*. Planning for Complete Streets may create greater opportunities to plan and develop transit oriented and mixed-use developments thus offering more walkability and bikeability for residents. This supports the livability principle of *supporting existing communities*. Planning and designing Complete Streets can enhance the unique characteristics of a community by creating more walkable

neighborhoods in rural, urban and suburban areas which will be safer and healthier places to live thus accomplishing the livability principle of *valuing communities and neighborhoods*.

In May of 2010, Minnesota' Governor Pawlenty signed in to law the *Minnesota Complete Streets Bill*. Among its provisions, the recently passed legislation defines Complete Streets as "the planning, scoping, design, implementation, operation, and maintenance of roads in order to reasonably address the safety and accessibility needs of users of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets considers the needs of motorists, pedestrians, transit users and vehicles, bicyclists, and commercial and emergency vehicles moving along and across roads, intersections, and crossings in a manner that is sensitive to the local context and recognizes that the needs vary in urban, suburban, and rural settings."

The law directs the Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Transportation to implement a Complete Streets policy after consultation with stakeholders, state and regional agencies, local governments, and road authorities. The law also states that local road authorities are encouraged, but not required, to create and adopt Complete Streets policies for their roads that reflect local context and goals.

The development of Metro COG's Complete Streets policy statement demonstrates recognition of and a plan to address Federal guidance regarding Complete Streets as well as local support for the planning and creation of Complete Streets.

4. Metro COG Implementation Plan

So as to achieve the purpose and intent articulated in sections 1, 2 and 3; the following steps will be taken by Metro COG:

Metro COG will **integrate Complete Streets criteria** in the development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), products of its Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), its modal sub-elements as well as its Public Participation Plan (PPP). These criteria will be designed to efficiently and accurately indicate a project's overall compatibility with the regional Complete Streets Policy Statement.

A. Metro COG will **promote the use of Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) planning**, which is a multi-disciplinary, collaborative approach that involves all stakeholders to develop a transportation facility that fits its physical setting and preserves scenic, aesthetic, historic, and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility. CSS is an approach that considers the total context within which a transportation improvement project will exist, and employs early, continuous, and meaningful involvement of the public and all stakeholders throughout the project development process. CSS emphasizes six key principles:

- 1 Balance safety, mobility, community and environmental goals in all projects

- 2 Involve the public and affected agencies early and continuously
- 3 Use an interdisciplinary team approach for each project
- 4 Address all modes of travel
- 5 Apply flexibility inherent in design standards
- 6 Incorporate aesthetics as an integral part of good design

The reader is referred to <http://www.ite.org/css/> for more details and information on the CSS process.

Many of the principles of CSS can be met using Metro COG's Congestion Management Toolbox (see pages 2.22 through 2.27 of the 2009 Metropolitan Transportation Plan). As Metro COG conducts planning studies, the toolbox will be given due consideration during the planning, programming and development of transportation projects. Not every strategy is right for all projects, and some strategies may be only partially effective. But it is important that each strategy be evaluated for effectiveness. The intent is not to dictate specific strategies, but to encourage evaluation and implementation of the most appropriate and cost effective measures.

- B. Metro COG will support the development of **a complete system of bikeways and pedestrian facilities, connected across the FM Metropolitan Area**. Further, Metro COG will plan context-appropriate facilities to the best currently available standards and guidelines with the understanding that design exceptions may be necessary to achieve safe and efficient design strategies for bicyclists, pedestrians and other roadway users.

5. Local Implementation Guidance

When using Federal funds, project sponsors are required during planning and design to consider bicycle and pedestrian transportation facilities where appropriate, in conjunction with all new construction and reconstruction of transportation facilities, except where bicycling and pedestrian use are not permitted (*23 USC Section 217 (g)*). Metro COG encourages and will continue to encourage project sponsors to consider bicyclists and pedestrians in the planning and design of all proposed transportation projects, regardless of funding source, where bicycles and pedestrians are permitted by law.

Project sponsors are responsible for determining, for each project and within the context of the metropolitan long-range plan, the most appropriate facility or combination of facilities for accommodating bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities, including but not limited to bicycle lanes, paved shoulders, wide outside lanes, signed bike routes, shared-use paths, sidewalks, bicycle parking facilities, marked or raised street crossings, and pedestrian signals and signs. Design solutions should be context sensitive and should actively involve as many stakeholders as possible.

Providing access for people with disabilities is a civil rights mandate that is not subject to limitation by project costs, levels of use, or exceptional circumstances. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (*Public Law 101-336*) is a civil rights statute that prohibits

discrimination against people with disabilities in all areas of public life. The ADA addresses State and local government services, activities and policy making under the Department of Justice's ADA Title II implementing regulations. The ADA, under Title II, Subpart A, covers public rights-of-way. The ADA requires that recipients of Federal aid and State and local entities that are responsible for roadways and pedestrian facilities do not discriminate on the basis of disability in any highway transportation program, activity, service or benefit they provide to the general public; and to ensure that people with disabilities have equitable opportunities to use the public rights-of-way system. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 states that responsibilities not detailed specifically in Title II of the ADA are: Rest areas on Interstate highways must be accessible; and pedestrian overpasses, underpasses, and ramps constructed with Federal financial assistance must be accessible.

Complete Streets are easier to implement if all levels of government are concurrently applying the same Complete Streets principles, thus minimizing the difference between design standards being applied by the various agencies with jurisdiction over roadways (e.g., city, county, state). Project sponsors within the FM Metropolitan Area are encouraged to consider adopting Complete Streets policies that are consistent with the Complete Streets Policy Statement.

Local Implementation Strategies

So as to achieve the purpose and intent articulated in sections 1, 2 and 3 possible strategies for use by implementing agencies are identified below. These implementation strategies are meant to be contextual in nature yet are standardized enough that it is likely most jurisdictions will implement these strategies in very similar ways. Thus, aesthetics will likely be unique to each jurisdiction but the methods of design will likely be similar. Metro COG encourages all jurisdictions to always fall back to these key strategies for all their transportation projects.

Planning

- Review codes, ordinances and zoning regulations and make changes necessary to remove barriers and assist in the achievement of the Complete Streets vision
- Use the Congestion Management Toolbox from the 2009 Metropolitan Long-Range Transportation Plan when conducting corridor studies to give explicit consideration to all modes of travel as well as other measures to reduce single-occupant automobile trip generation
- Reference the Metropolitan Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan when conducting corridor studies to give explicit consideration to bicyclists and pedestrians and to reduce single-occupant automobile trip generation
- Reference the Metro Transit Plan when conducting corridor studies to give explicit consideration to transit use to reduce single-occupant automobile trip generation
- Utilize a public participation process that provides street users within the FM Metropolitan Area adequate notice of public input opportunities related to planning studies and street improvement projects (e.g. resurfacing, re-striping, re-construction projects)

- Where appropriate, ask transit provider(s) to review alternatives of corridor studies
- Include charrettes, walkability audits, bicycling audits and other forms of enhanced public input where appropriate to gain stronger, more detailed public input relative to Complete Streets planning efforts

Design

- Consider when appropriate, roadway design that slows motor vehicles and/or limits access so as to provide greater safety for bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists (e.g. lane narrowing or the reduction of lanes; reduction of access etc.)
- Evaluate existing and potential on-road bicycle use in all repaving and re-striping projects (i.e. striping of bicycle lanes, wide curb lanes, paving of roadway shoulders or widening of curb lanes) as well as new roadway construction and reconstruction projects
- Evaluate the effectiveness of narrowing pedestrian crossing distances at intersections where high motor vehicle counts and high pedestrian counts are expected. Narrowing can be accomplished with pedestrian refuge islands or curb bump-outs
- Reduce the number of travel lanes on roadways where appropriate to create more operating room for bicyclists and to improve vehicular flow for motorists
- The latest design standards and guidelines should be used but not to the exclusion of design exceptions as needed for the safety and efficiency of bicyclists and pedestrians. Some common sources for design standards include:
 - AASHTO *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*
 - AASHTO's *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*
 - AASHTO's *Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities*
 - Federal Highway Administration's *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways*
 - ITE's Recommended Practice *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach Recommended Practice*
 - Draft Proposed Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG)
 - Mn/DOT Bikeway Facility Design Manual
 - Respective State Guidelines for design standards
 - American Planning Association's *Complete Streets: Best Policy and Implementation Practices PAS 55, APA Planning Advisory Service, 2010*
- Provide appropriate bicycle accommodation on and along all arterial and collector streets
- Use colored and/or textured crosswalks in high-count pedestrian areas
- Use pedestrian-scale design adjacent to sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities (e.g. pedestrian scale lighting, application of buffers between roadways and sidewalks or shared use paths, application of street furniture etc.)
- Evaluate the use of traffic calming features along all roadway corridors
- Provide pedestrian accommodation in the form of sidewalks or shared-use paths (if design guidelines are met) adjacent to all arterial and collector streets
- Consider using colored pavement for bicycle lanes

- Where physical conditions will allow, consider planting trees along newly constructed or reconstructed roadways in residential neighborhoods
- Retrofit sidewalks and curbs with ADA compliant pedestrian ramps as expeditiously as possible so that all pedestrians are served at maximum levels of service

Construction

- Provide advance notice of construction projects to key bicycle and pedestrian network users (e.g. local colleges, bicycle clubs, running clubs etc.)
- Provide alternate routes for bicyclists and pedestrians during construction, reconstruction and repair of streets

Operations

- Time traffic signals to provide adequate pedestrian crossing time. Consider exclusive pedestrian timing or leading pedestrian intervals where pedestrian crossing volumes are high enough.
- Develop a traffic calming policy; or review existing policies or ordinances to ensure that consideration is given to various traffic calming techniques
- Develop a maintenance schedule or program to address roadway, sidewalk and shared use path maintenance needs
- Regularly inspect and fix pavement and/or surface defects before they become issues for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Develop a schedule of regular pavement marking maintenance for on-road bicycle facilities
- Develop a sweeping program that is sensitive to the needs of on-road and off-road bicyclists

Exceptions

Not every street can be ideal for every traveler. However, it is still important to provide basic, safe and direct access for users regardless of the design strategy used.

Exceptions should be made where:

- Non-motorized use is prohibited by law, such as on some sections of Interstate highways
- A suitable or more desirable alternative is available within a reasonable distance based on public and staff input. (General acceptable total out of the way distances: pedestrians ¼ mile; bicyclists ½ mile.)
- The cost of accommodation would be excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use. (Note: Excessively disproportionate is sometimes defined as exceeding twenty percent of the cost of the larger transportation project. In this case, the project sponsor may propose an alternate design or spend twenty percent of the project cost of the larger project to improve accommodations for all users.)
- There is a documented absence of current or future need. Documentation should be in a standalone document and easy to access by the public.
- There is public consensus that the accommodation is unwanted. Evidence of this should be well documented and defensible.