



Carson City Public Works

Complete Streets Policy

Adopted May 14, 2014

Amended January 12, 2022

Introduction

What are Complete Streets?

Complete Streets are streets for everyone. They are designed and operated to enable safe access and comfortable accommodation for users *of all ages and abilities, including, without limitation, pedestrians, bicycle riders, movers of commercial goods, persons with disabilities, vehicles for public transportation and their passengers, older adults, children and motorists.* As an added benefit, Complete Streets support economic development and enhance the visual experience for users.

In addition to accommodating motorists on the roadway, Complete Streets focuses on the needs of travelers outside that group, including younger or older people, those with disabilities, and those who travel by transit, bicycle, or on foot, and who have oftentimes been overlooked in the transportation planning process. Many neighborhoods lack safe places to walk or bicycle. Access to key community resources such as parks, shops, grocery stores, and schools, is often limited to automobile traffic.

The Complete Streets concept is about safety and efficiency as well. Many people are injured or killed each year while walking or bicycling, and oftentimes the built environment is a contributing factor. Though Carson City has historically had relatively few accidents involving pedestrians and bicyclists, they have occurred and there is always room for improvement. In terms of efficiency, improvements can be made to the transit infrastructure to better accommodate the movement of buses and ease the transition between modes of travel.

Complete Streets seeks to develop integrated, connected networks of streets that are safe and accessible for all people. Complete Streets makes active transportation such as walking and bicycling more convenient; provides increased access to employment centers, commerce, and educational institutions; and allows more options in traveling so that transportation is less of a financial burden. Complete Streets also improve the quality of life in the community by enhancing the aesthetic environment.

The term Complete Streets means much more than the physical changes to a community's streets. Complete Streets means changing transportation planning, design, maintenance, and funding decisions. A Complete Streets policy ensures that, from the start, projects are planned and designed to meet the needs of every community member, regardless of their age, ability, or how they travel. Doing so allows a community to save money by getting the design right the first time and avoiding costly retrofits, accommodating more people by improving options for those that may be limited by existing mode choices, and creating an environment where every resident can travel safely and conveniently. Complete Streets provides a better quality of life, often through measurable environmental benefits, and can spur economic development.

Jurisdiction

This policy applies to all City-funded projects as well as to all privately funded projects or developments on streets under the jurisdiction of Carson City and the Regional Transportation Commission. To the greatest extent possible, City staff will work with State and Tribal entities to encourage them to implement Complete Streets concepts on projects within their respective jurisdictions.

Vision & Intent

To create a safe and effective transportation network where all users can travel comfortably within the transportation mode(s) of their choice.

The goals of this Complete Streets Policy are:

- 1) To create a comprehensive, integrated, and connected transportation network that supports compact, sustainable development and provides for livable communities.
- 2) To ensure safety, accessibility, and ease of transfer between modes for all users of the transportation system.
- 3) To provide context sensitive, aesthetic improvements for new and existing roadways that best meet the needs and desires of the community.

All Users/Modes

The need for streets that are designed, built, and operated to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists of all ages and abilities as legitimate users of the transportation system, in addition to motorized users, cannot be overstated. However, this policy must be applied to take into consideration not only various modes of transportation, but also the needs of the individual and unique users across those modes such as families, those with varying physical abilities, diversity of income levels, and cultural identity and values.

Improvements should also accommodate a variety of users within specific modes. For example, where appropriate, accommodations for motorized vehicles include motorcycles, freight, and buses to name a few. In addition to pedestrians and bicyclists, improvements should consider skateboards, strollers, wheelchairs and other means of active transportation. Consideration should be given not only to the types of individual modes, but the ease of transition between them. Oftentimes, people

rely on multiple modes to reach their destination which, at a minimum, generally requires some amount of walking.

Projects and Project Phases

Regardless of whether the project is large or small in scope, of new construction, major rehabilitation, or significant repair, Complete Street elements should be an aspect of all projects at all project phases. The entire right-of-way, not just the built roadway, should be included in the analysis for any project. This policy applies to all phases of a project from the initial planning, through design, and during construction. Once a project is constructed, the planned maintenance and operations of facilities should continue consideration of this policy.

Funding may be an obstacle to implementing projects and achieving the desired outcome. This policy recognizes that it may not always be feasible to construct an entire project at one point in time that is entirely inclusive of Complete Streets goals. However, a continued effort and commitment must be demonstrated to achieve Complete Streets incrementally through a series of smaller improvements when this is the case.

Exceptions

There may be certain exceptions to implementing Complete Streets on a small number of projects. However, each project should be carefully evaluated and have documented justification as to why it is not feasible or not practicable to implement Complete Streets measures after taking into consideration, cost-benefit, existing technology, existing law, and other logistics in light of overall project purposes. The following is a list of possible exceptions or situations where implementing Complete Streets measures are not practicable.

1. Accommodation is not necessary on corridors where specific users are prohibited, such as interstate freeways.
2. On private streets not under the jurisdiction of Carson City or the Regional Transportation Commission.
3. Cost of accommodation is excessively disproportionate to the need and potential benefit of the probable use. A cost-benefit analysis should be applied to reach this determination in situations where there is not a clear benefit.
4. A documented absence of current and future need. The existing and planned population, employment densities, traffic volumes, or level of transit service around a particular roadway is so low that future expected users of the roadway will not include pedestrians, public transportation, or freight vehicles.
5. The project involves only ordinary repair activities designed to keep assets in acceptable condition, such as cleaning, sealing, spot repairs, patching, and crack filling.
6. The project involves only surface treatment maintenance, such as slurry sealing and micro-surfacing. (This exception does not apply to bicycle facilities.)

Exceptions shall be documented in a memo by the Project Manager or the Transportation/Traffic Engineer and saved in the project file.

Implementation and Network Connectivity

Projects should be implemented so as to achieve the Complete Streets goals and to establish connectivity within the existing street network. Implementation methods may include:

- Developing connections to existing pedestrian facilities;
- Integrating bicycle lanes and bicycle routes, facilities and signs into all plans, designs, construction and maintenance of roads, to the extent practicable;
- Upgrading infrastructure for ADA compliance;
- Improving or providing new public transit amenities such as passenger shelters, ADA features, and bus pull-out areas;
- Reviewing roadway geometrics to allow for the safe and efficient movement of large/heavy vehicles;

Complete Streets concepts need to be applied to private developments as well in an effort to eliminate “islands” with no connection to the outside network. The private sector must be held to City standards and to the essence of Complete Streets concepts for proposed developments to ensure that the intent of this policy carries through approved site plans and the entire development process.

Design References

Carson City will use the best and latest design standards available and will refer to those nationally accepted standards when implementing projects. The following is a list of sources that provide nationally recognized standards:

- The National Complete Streets Coalition – www.CompleteStreets.org
- Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) – Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities: An ITE Proposed Recommended Practice – <https://ecommerce.ite.org/IMIS/ItemDetail?iProductCode=RP-036A>
- The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Bikeway Design Guide – <http://nacto.org/cities-for-cycling/design-guide/>
- The NACTO Urban Street Design Guide - <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/>
- American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities – <https://store.transportation.org/>
- The AASHTO Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities - <https://store.transportation.org/>
- Public ROW Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) – <https://www.access-board.gov/prowag/>
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) – <https://www.transportation.gov/mission/health/complete-streets-policies>

- Bike/Ped Level of Service Measures and Calculators and various other technical and educational information – <https://rideillinois.org/blos/blosform.htm>

Context Sensitivity

Realizing that not all standards lend themselves to a “one size fits all” approach flexibility must be retained when choosing design standards for various elements of a project. Innovative practices should be researched and considered where appropriate. Public input should be sought from residents and non-residents alike that will be directly affected by a proposed project. A design that might be appropriate for one area of the community may not be acceptable in a different area. The underlying concept behind Complete Streets is to design for the needs of the users of the roadway.

Performance Measures

As this policy is applied, it is imperative that its success is measured in concrete and meaningful ways. This not only serves as a means to log important data, but also serves as a benchmark in identifying strengths and weaknesses going forward. The creation of performance measures will evolve as Complete Streets best practices are established and refined. The following is a list of potential measures to consider during implementation.

- Linear feet of new or reconstructed sidewalks.
- Miles of new or restriped on/off-street bicycle facilities.
- Number of new or reconstructed curb ramps.
- Number of new or repainted crosswalks.
- Number of new street trees.
- Percentage completion of bicycle and pedestrian networks as envisioned by city plans.
- Efficiency of transit vehicles on routes.
- Percentage of transit stops with shelters.
- Percentage of transit stops accessible via sidewalks and curb ramps.
- Decrease in rate of crashes, injuries, and fatalities by mode.
- Rate of children walking or bicycling to school.
- Satisfaction levels as expressed on customer preference surveys.
- Incorporation of public art projects.
- Number of approved exemptions from this policy.

Next Steps

Having a Complete Streets policy is just the beginning toward implementation. There are four steps that are generally recognized elements of Complete Streets policies throughout the country. They are:

1. Restructure or revise related procedures, plans, regulations, and other processes to accommodate all users on every project.
2. Develop new integrated design policies and guides or revise existing to reflect the current state of best practices in transportation design or adopt national or state-level recognized design guidance.

3. Offer workshops and other training opportunities to transportation staff, community leaders, and the general public so that everyone understands the importance of the Complete Streets vision.
4. Develop and institute better ways to measure performance and collect data on how well the streets are serving all users.

There are many ways to go about achieving these four steps and what is right for one city may not work for Carson City. In addition, these four steps can and should be worked on simultaneously. They also require continuous action or refinement as plans, design standards, knowledge, and technology are updated and improved upon. Some possible approaches to addressing these steps are to develop a working committee or a project prioritization process that will ensure that all modes and users are being accommodated throughout project development.