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COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

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6.1 WHAT ARE “COMPLETE STREETS”?

The intent of this chapter is to promote and create a policy to develop Complete Streets on roads identified in the bicycle, pedestrian, and transit networks, while also providing direction for how to consider what kind of improvements should be made to the street. Complete Streets policies validate a City’s intent to plan, design, and maintain streets so they are safe for people of all ages and abilities. Policies guide planners, engineers, and other decision-makers to implement safe streets and reliable transportation networks for people walking, biking, driving, and using transit.

6.1 WHAT ARE “COMPLETE STREETS”?

Incomplete streets mean many people lack opportunities to be active as part of daily life. Complete Streets are roadways designed to safely and comfortably provide for the needs of all users in the community, including, but not limited to motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, micromobility users, transit and school bus drivers, movers of commercial goods, emergency vehicle drivers, and persons of all ages and abilities. They encourage people to use physically active transportation, which promotes a healthy lifestyle and minimizes unintended chronic disease effects like cancer and heart disease.

Complete Streets provide opportunities for increased physical activity by incorporating features that promote regular walking, cycling, and transit use. Additionally, they ensure that everyone’s experience of moving through the City is safe, comfortable, convenient, and dignified.

As mentioned, Complete Streets are designed for users of many different modes of transport, improving access and safety for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and motorists, while balancing the needs of all users to ensure a safe and comfortable way to get around. Complete Streets are not a one-size fits all approach, and will vary in design based on the surrounding development context. Each roadway is unique and should be designed in response to its existing conditions including adjacent land uses, the function of the street within the overall transportation system, and the role of the corridor in creating connected networks and routes for different modes. A Complete Streets approach provides the flexibility to enable roadway designs to achieve policy priorities and goals. Investing in Complete Streets promotes active living and provides a better quality of life, economic and environmental benefits, and safer transportation networks for residents.



GUDALUPE STREET - AUSTIN, TEXAS

6.2 COMPLETE STREETS POLICY RECOMMENDATION

6.2 POLICY RECOMMENDATION

The City of Laredo should adopt a Complete Streets policy that mandates all users and uses of road rights-of-way are factored into decision-making for road improvements. Adopting a Complete Streets policy and an accommodation design for all users would provide many benefits that include:

- People walking/using micromobility
- People using transit
- People driving a car
- Transportation of goods
- Economic benefits
- Social benefits
- Ecological benefits

Complete Streets legislation ensures transportation planners and engineers consistently design and operate the entire roadway with all users in mind including pedestrians, motorists, cyclists, mass transit riders, and those with disabilities.

When “streets are complete,” alternative modes of transportation (walking, biking, etc.) are more attractive; physical activity is promoted; safety is improved for all users, and in the case of safe routes to school, safety is improved for children; and the unintended negative health outcomes of a less active lifestyle are minimized.

COMPLETE STREETS POLICY ACTIONS

Make Complete Streets a priority of the proposed Active Transportation Sub-Committee, which will provide the guidelines and regulations of completing the streets.
Create a Complete Streets handbook, which contains regulations, guidelines for completion of streets on the construction or reconstruction of the streets.
Adopt design standards for the completion of streets, such as a Complete Streets matrix that provides the necessary compliance for street areas.
Set minimal requirements for streets with compliance measures such as ADA measures, Texas Department of Transportation measures, etc. as well as sufficient use of multi-use purposes being accommodations of bicycles or pedestrian users.
Develop performance-based measures to monitor Complete Streets performance and support improved data collection and evaluation.
Adopt-a-street program such as initiating a group of volunteers to help maintain the greenery aspects of the streets and collaborate with local neighborhood groups.
Make Complete Streets practices a routine part of everyday operations and procedures.
Consideration of Complete Streets shall be integrated into capital improvement planning.
Promote safer street designs at high-crash intersections as a way to reduce accidents and fatalities; target and fund Complete Streets projects at or near these intersections.
Apply Complete Streets policy guidelines for new streets and major repairs of streets for projects that do not exceed a targeted cost; this includes reconstruction, retrofit, and resurfacing of existing streets.
Require new developments to implement complete streets on roads that that provide access to trails and parks.

COMPLETE STREETS POLICY RECOMMENDATION

Complete Streets Policy

Definition of Complete Streets

Complete Streets are defined as streets that are designed and constructed for all ages and abilities. They are designed and operated to create safe access for everyone, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders for all users. Complete Streets make it easy for everyone to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work.

Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to establish the City's intent to implement Complete Streets serving users of all ages and abilities through a uniformity of design, construction, operation, and maintenance of streets. Complete Streets ensure that local roads are safe, reliable, comfortable, and convenient for people walking, bicycling, riding public transportation, and operating motor vehicles. The City shall use Complete Streets to enhance mobility by ensuring all users have a safe, comfortable, accessible, and convenient way to travel throughout the City.

Complete Streets Policy

The City shall develop a safe, reliable, accessible, efficient, integrated, and connected multimodal transportation network that will promote mobility and health for all users of ages and abilities. Through a series of actions and guidelines the Complete Streets Policy shall allow the City to:

- a. Establish a Complete Streets Program to promote an ongoing effort to ensure Complete Streets principles are incorporated into design, construction, and maintenance of the City's transportation system.
- b. Create a Complete Streets handbook, which contains regulations, guidelines for completion of streets on the construction or reconstruction of the streets. Developers shall be able to refer to this with the construction or reconstruction of streets. This enables the streets to be safe and accessible to users of all ages and abilities;
- c. Adopt design standards for the completion of streets, such as a Complete Streets matrix that provides the necessary compliance for street areas. This Complete Streets design matrix shall ensure the correct and necessary metrics for maintaining, constructing, or reconstructing streets;
- d. Improve public rights-of-way in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility guidelines;
- e. Set minimal requirements for streets with compliance metrics such as (ADA) measures and Texas Department of Transportation measures;
- f. Develop performance-based measures to monitor Complete Streets performance and support improved data collection and evaluation. Not all streets will become a Complete Street, but applying certain performance measures will enhance the longevity and accessibility of the street;
- g. Create an adopt-a-street program such as initiating a group of volunteers to help maintain the landscaping aspects of the streets and collaborate with local neighborhood groups. Incorporating an adopt-a-street program will ensure streets are properly maintained and collaborating with neighborhood groups can ensure neighborhood streets are safe and accessible;

COMPLETE STREETS POLICY RECOMMENDATION

- h. Make Complete Streets practices a routine part of everyday operations and procedures. Including Complete Streets practices in operational functions such as street maintenance enhances the longevity of the streets for all users;
- i. Integrate the Complete Streets Policy into capital improvement planning.
- j. Promote safer street designs at high-crash intersections as a way to reduce accidents and fatalities; target and fund complete street projects at or near these intersections. Creating safer crosswalks, wider sidewalks, and having proper signage will assist with reducing the risk at these particular locations;
- k. Apply Complete Streets Policy guidelines for new streets and major repairs of streets for projects that do not exceed a targeted cost; this includes reconstruction, retrofit, and resurfacing of existing streets;
- l. Require new developments to implement Complete Streets on roads that provide access to trails and parks. Providing residents access to trails and parks from neighborhoods will create the connectivity for the City;
- m. Approach every transportation improvement and project phase as an opportunity to create safer, more accessible streets for all users. These phases include, but are not limited to: planning, programming, design, right-of-way acquisition, construction, construction engineering, reconstruction, operation and maintenance.

Design Standards and Context Sensitivity

The City shall follow accepted or adopted design standards by utilizing the best and latest design standards. In acknowledgement of public input and the needs of many users, a flexible, creative, and equivalent approach that follows other necessary design standards may be considered, given that a commensurate level of safety for all users is present.

This Policy recognizes the diversity of the City's road network and various built environment contexts; Projects should be planned and designed to consider current and future planned adjacent land uses, local transportation needs, and to incorporate the latest and best practice design guidance. Each project must be considered both separately and as part of a connected network to determine the level and type of treatment necessary for all foreseeable users.

Implementation

In support of the Complete Streets Policy the City shall view the Policy as an integral part to everyday transportation decision-making processes. The City shall:

- a. Incorporate Complete Streets principles into all existing plans, manuals, checklists, decision-trees, rules, regulations, and programs as appropriate;
- b. Dedicate appropriate staff to ensure Complete Streets practices and guidelines are forthcoming in City plans;
- c. Dedicate adequate resources to train appropriate staff on the content, guiding principles, and best practices to ensure the implementation of the Complete Streets Policy is successful;
- d. Dedicate adequate resources to ensure the collection and analysis of data pertaining to high-risk streets such as crash data is available to guide and inform the decision-making process.

6.3 COMPLETE STREETS POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

6.3 COMPLETE STREETS POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing a Complete Streets policy will enhance and ensure that City infrastructure provides safer access to people of all ages and abilities. Not only will it provide safer access to residents, but it will also improve connectivity throughout the region.

IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPLETE STREETS:

Delivering Basic Safety and Dignity

An attainable environment should be provided for residents to walk or ride with safety and dignity to attract all ages and abilities for an enjoyable walk or bike.

Examples

- Accessible Streets: installation of curb ramps & detectable warnings
- Filling Gaps: fill in missing sidewalks, crosswalks, and short-cut connections
- Safe Transit Station and Stops: bus stops should be accessible, safe, and convenient, as well as safe, marked, and controlled crosswalks, medians, and lighting

Connecting Residents and Communities

Connectivity and convenience are important aspects when developing safe and accessible networks to get residents where they need to go.

Examples

- Controlled Crossings: signalized crosswalks, protected turns for safe, accessible streets, as well as the proper height to reach all users and abilities
- Neighborhood Greenways: make connections and focus on creating safe crossings within neighborhoods, and provide better connectivity for pedestrians and bicyclists
- Separated Bike Infrastructure: protected or



EXISTING STREET DESIGN ON SAN BERNARDO AVE



EXAMPLE OF A COMPLETE STREET



CYCLE TRACK IN MISSOULA

6.4 PLAN CONCLUSION

separated bike lanes and careful design of intersections that include safety features

Transformational Projects

Many risk factors exist due to roads not being designed for walking or cycling. Transformational projects would be able to correct these risk factors by incorporating well designed streets to provide residents to walk or cycle.

Examples

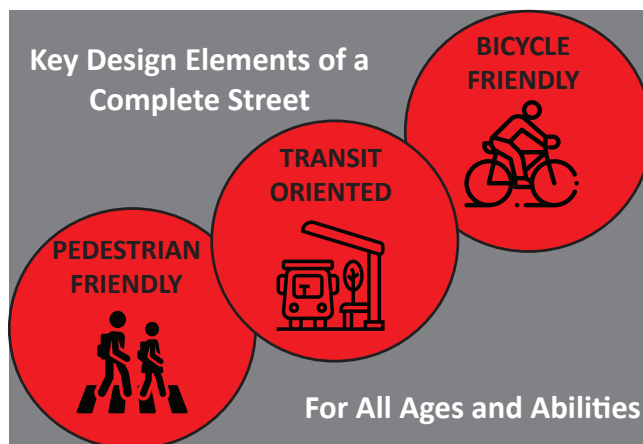
- Right-Sizing Roads: road diets that add separation and safe crossings for pedestrians and create safer turning maneuvers and improved flow for motorists
- Priority Transit Corridors: dedicated bus lanes and priority turns that can increase the overall capacity of a roadway
- Area-Wide Traffic Calming: lower vehicle speeds and area wide traffic calming programs

Achieving Long-Term Change

During the course of the next 20 years, the Laredo-Webb County region will undergo significant changes and rebuilding as the population grows. The decisions made today are important to ensure these changes result in safe, accessible, and connected networks.

Examples

- Changing Land Use Patterns: focus development in ways that encourage active transportation, transit and safe, connected communities
- Creating A Safety Culture: establishing a goal of zero fatalities and serious injuries (Vision Zero)
- Aligning development standards: align development standards in compliance with Complete Street goals.



PLAN CONCLUSION

The Active Transportation Plan is a living document that will need to be regularly revisited and updated considering the demands of a growing region and its mobility needs as well as rapid advancements in mobility technologies. The recommended projects, policies, and programs in this Plan will help guide the Laredo & Webb County Area MPO, City, and all relevant organizations to make strategic and informed decisions in the implementation and continued planning of the region's active transportation network.

Public and stakeholder engagement throughout the Plan's life will be fundamental in achieving the community's vision for a safe, comfortable, accessible, and equitable active transportation network for residents of all ages and abilities.

THOMAS PRESSLEY-WILLIAMS



Thomas Pressley-Williams is an entrepreneur. He uses the streets and sidewalks of Laredo as his main form of transportation. He occasionally uses transit, but prefers using his wheelchair on the streets to get around. He regularly travels several miles across town this way.

When asked why he used the streets instead of sidewalks, Mr. Williams stated, "If the sidewalk is clear and it's a good sidewalk, I'll use it. If it's not, I'm not messing up my chair."