

Complete Streets

The Problem:

Communities around the country have built many miles of streets and roads that are unsafe for people traveling by foot, bicycle or taking transit. These roadways often lack sidewalks, crosswalks, space for bicyclists, and make no room for transit riders and no accommodation for people with disabilities. Topeka/Shawnee County needs to provide people with transportation choices in order to get to work, school, shops and medical visits, and to take part in social, civic and volunteer activities. We need to change old road building habits so that road projects consistently take into account the needs of everyone using the roads. By completing our road network for all travelers, we will improve safety, help reduce automobile emissions, and provide opportunities for physical activity. Safe, multi-modal streets in business districts also become engines for economic revitalization.

The Solution:

Complete streets are streets that work for all users, not just those using a car. Instituting a complete streets policy ensures that transportation agencies routinely design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for drivers, transit users and vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists, as well as for older people, children, and people with disabilities. More than 80 jurisdictions spanning all regions of the country have adopted complete streets policies through legislation, internal agency policies and design manuals.

What the Policy Does:

A Complete Streets policy ensures that the entire right of way is routinely designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. The best complete streets policies apply to all phases of all projects; feature direct use of the latest and best design standards; allow flexibility in balancing user needs; and specify any exceptions and require high-level approval of them. An effective policy should prompt: restructured procedures; re-written design manuals; re-trained planners and engineers; and re-tooled measures to track outcomes.

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The Benefits:

Complete streets provide a full menu of transportation options to meet the needs of everyone using the road. Children are able to safely travel to school, those on foot and bike have convenient routes to their destinations, and public transportation is accessible by all users.

Complete streets policies are cost effective because they save money on retrofits by building streets right the first time and reduce congestion by providing more transportation options. Creating complete streets has been shown to spur economic development by improving conditions for existing businesses and attracting new development.

Complete Streets fight climate change and reduce our dependence on foreign oil by providing transportation choices and allowing people to leave the car at home – they are essential if we are serious about helping people drive less and save money on gas.

Complete streets improve safety for everyone using the road and encourage healthy and active lifestyles. One study found that 43% of people with safe places to walk within 10 minutes of home met recommended activity levels, while just 27% of those lacking safe options were active enough.

Organizations That Support Complete Streets Include:

AARP • America Bikes • American College of Sports Medicine • American Council of the Blind • American Institute of Architects • American Planning Association • American Public Health Association • Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals • City of Boulder • Healthcare Leadership Council • Environmental Defense Fund • Friends of the Earth • Humana • League of American Bicyclists • National Association of City and County Health Officials • National Association of REALTORS • National Coalition for Promoting Physical Activity • National Recreation and Parks Association • Natural Resources Defense Council • Paralyzed Veterans of America • Partnership for Prevention • Prevention Institute • Rails-to-Trails Conservancy • Sacramental Air Quality Management District • Safe Routes to School National Partnership • Smart Growth America • Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments • Transportation for America • Trust for America's Health • U.S. Conference of Mayors • YMCA of the USA

For further information
Heartland Healthy Communities
c/o Community Resources Council
785-233-1365
Or
CompleteStreets.com