

Complete Streets Policy

Metropolitan Planning Organization of Johnson County
Adopted by MPOJC Urbanized Area Policy Board January 28th, 2015

The Vision

The MPOJC Policy Board expects to realize long-term cost savings in improved public health, reduced fuel consumption, better environmental stewardship, and reduced demand for motor vehicle infrastructure through the implementation of this Complete Streets policy, which applies only to projects that utilize federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds. The vision of this Complete Streets Policy includes achieving the following goals when utilizing STP and TAP funds:

1. To create a comprehensive, integrated, and connected transportation network that supports compact, sustainable development and creates livable communities.
2. To provide a connected network of facilities accommodating all modes of travel.
3. To look for opportunities to repurpose rights-of-way to enhance connectivity for all modes to commercial, recreation, education, public services, and residential destinations.

Users and Modes

This policy defines Complete Streets by this outcome: all current and projected users of the public right-of-way are intended to conveniently and safely reach their destinations via public rights-of-way, regardless of their chosen mode of transportation for that project to be considered “complete.” The design of the urbanized area street network will create a connected grid of streets, sidewalks, and trails accommodating a safe, easily accessible, convenient, comfortable, and visually appealing manner for all users of all ages and abilities, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, children, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, freight carriers, emergency responders, and adjacent land users.

Connectivity and All Agencies

Project sponsors will design, operate, and maintain a transportation network that provides a connected network of facilities accommodating all modes of travel. To achieve this goal project sponsors will foster partnerships with the State of Iowa, The University of Iowa, Metropolitan Planning Organization of Johnson County, school districts, Johnson County, neighboring cities, citizens, businesses, interest groups, and neighborhoods to implement Complete Streets.

Design Criteria and Context Sensitive Design

Each street and right-of-way design should be practically undertaken to complement the neighborhood in which it exists, while complying with accepted or adopted design standards and other guidelines based upon resources identifying best practices in urban design and street design, construction, operations and maintenance when implementing improvements intended to fulfill this Complete Streets Policy. Project sponsors will consider all available design options that comply with state and federal requirements in the following manuals, as well as others when feasible, to ensure access for all modes:

- *AASHTO Green Book: A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*, by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
- *AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*, by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
- *Urban Street Design Guide*, by the National Association of City Transportation Officials
- *Urban Bikeway Design Guide*, by the National Association of City Transportation Officials
- *Iowa Statewide Urban Design Standards*, by the Institute for Transportation at Iowa State University

Implementation

The MPOJC Complete Streets Policy applies only to projects that utilize MPOJC-controlled federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) or Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds.

Complete Streets projects are generally accomplished through adding the following to the public right-of-way: sidewalks, ADA-compliant curb ramps, bicycle facilities (e.g. bike lanes, shared lane arrows, way-finding signs), ADA-compliant bus stops, trails, and any other reasonably applicable facilities. In particular, projects will incorporate complete street facilities found in MPOJC-adopted plans, including (but not limited to) the *Long Range Transportation Plan*, bicycle and pedestrian plans, and local ADA accessibility transition plans.

This Complete Streets Policy and associated project documentation applies to any NEW STREET, RECONSTRUCTED STREET, or STREET MAINTENANCE within the public right-of-way (see Definitions section for CAPITALIZED items) with the following clarifications:

- A. NEW STREETS and RECONSTRUCTED STREETS either built by the project sponsor or by a developer for project sponsor ownership will implement complete streets – applies in all zoning designations and land uses.
- B. STREET MAINTENANCE projects – whereas all NEW STREET and RECONSTRUCTED STREETS will implement multi-modal transportation elements, it is not expected for maintenance and rehabilitation projects to change geometric features and functional elements to upgrade to multi-modal transportation elements, although items that fit within the existing geometrics (e.g. re-striping, signage upgrades, sidewalks, etc.) should be implemented.
- C. Sidewalks and curb ramps within a project corridor will be ADA-compliant.
- D. Existing and new bus stops within a project corridor will be ADA-compliant.

The approved STP and TAP Project Scoring Criteria reflect this policy. In order to not penalize projects which have been granted exceptions, the same number of points will be awarded to those projects if the exception is granted. Note: As part of the initial review of project applications, MPOJC staff will evaluate whether appropriate complete streets elements are included, or whether an exception is met. MPOJC staff will provide guidance on this policy during the funding application process.

This policy will be periodically reviewed and revised in parallel with the MPOJC *Long Range Transportation Plan* update process.

Exceptions to this Policy for STP and TAP funded projects

All MPOJC-funded STP and TAP projects will consider complete streets principles and possible treatments at the time of the initial application for funding. Project sponsors may request an exception for one or more of the following:

- **Where there are relatively high safety risks.** There are times bicycle and pedestrian facility standards cannot be met due to roadway topographic constraints or it is impractical to make the street safe for shared use. Roads with a combination of traffic volumes exceeding 18,000 vehicles per day, constrained and fixed rights-of-way, or posted speeds of 45+ mph may need special consideration. This type of exception is highly problematic because high traffic volume is often an indication that a road is the most direct connection between multiple origins and destinations, and pedestrians, cyclists and transit users should not be denied access to those destinations. For this exception to be granted, the Project Sponsor **will** enhance alternate routes (e.g. signage, bike boulevard treatments, shared-use trail spurs, bike lanes, shared-lane markings, etc.), unless available alternate routes also meet an exception(s) to this policy.

- **Where bicyclists and pedestrians are prohibited by law from using the roadway.**
- **Where a main road has multi-modal facilities for all users of the right-of-way, the PUBLIC FRONTAGE ROAD may be exempt from this policy.**
- **Where the project consists primarily of the installation of traffic control, including pre-timed traffic signals, or safety devices and little or no additional right-of-way is to be acquired.** However whenever new traffic control detection devices are installed they must be capable of detecting bicycles. All new pedestrian crossing devices must also meet the most current accessibility standards for controls, signals, and placement.
- **Where a project involves emergency maintenance activities designed to keep assets in serviceable condition or when interim measures are implemented on temporary detour routes.**
- **Where the Project Sponsor Engineer and MPOJC staff jointly determine the construction is not practically feasible due to significant or adverse environmental impacts to waterways, floodplains, significant street trees, remnants of native vegetation, wetlands, or other critical areas.**
- **Where the cost of establishing bikeways or walkways would be excessively disproportionate to the cost of project.** In accordance with federal guidelines, excessively disproportionate is defined as exceeding twenty percent of the cost of the total transportation project (including right of way acquisition costs). This exception must consider probable use through the life of the project, a minimum of 20 years.
- **Where scarcity of population or other factors indicate an absence of need for current and future conditions.** This exception must take the long view and consider probable use through the life of the project, a minimum of 20 years.
- **Where the Average Daily Traffic count (ADT) is projected to be less than 1,000 vehicles per day over the life of the project.**

All requests for exceptions to complete streets treatments shall be documented with supporting data which indicates the basis for the request. Exceptions must be requested in writing and will be granted after review by MPOJC staff, or, if not granted, the reason for not granting will be explained in writing by MPOJC staff. Staff will work with sponsors to identify a mutually acceptable alternative.

Performance Measures

The MPO will measure the success of Complete Streets policy by using the following measures:

- Miles of bike lanes, trails, shared lane arrows striped or built
- Linear feet of pedestrian accommodations built
- Number of ADA accessibility accommodations built
- Number of exemptions from this policy approved
- Annual ridership for Iowa City Transit, Cambus, and Coralville Transit
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Definitions

- A. **COMPLETE STREET:** a street that accommodates convenient and safe use by everyone, regardless of age, ability, or mode of travel.
- B. **CONTEXT SENSITIVE DESIGN SOLUTION:** a design which balances safety, mobility and transportation needs, while preserving scenic, aesthetic, historical, environmental, neighborhood and community values and characteristics.
- C. **STREET:** The STREET is considered to be the subgrade, base, pavement, grading, storm sewer, and sub-drains. (i.e., all of the elements required to build, operate, and maintain the street.)
- D. **NEW STREET:** a street constructed where one has not previously existed.
- E. **RECONSTRUCTED STREET:** an existing street that has rehabilitation done to it, which is estimated at 50% or higher of the cost of NEW STREET (excluding utilities except storm sewer or sub-drains), will also be considered a RECONSTRUCTED STREET for the purposes of this policy.
- F. **PUBLIC FRONTAGE ROAD:** a roadway located with portions of PUBLIC STREET right-of-way, frontage road reservation easement or adjoining other streets, which have access control.
- G. **STREET MAINTENANCE:** rehabilitation of a street, which generally restores the functionality of the existing street components (either primarily as a street project or in conjunction with underground public utility construction), without significantly altering or adding to those components, and which is estimated at less than 50% of the cost of a NEW STREET with those same components. Utility construction (except storm sewer or sub-drains) is excluded from this cost calculation.