Safe Routes to School National Partnership

Complete Streets in the South

Complete Streets policies improve transportation safety by requiring infrastructure that makes streets more accessible for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists and public transportation passengers. Complete Streets benefit all age groups and all demographics – especially those without access to auto transportation or limited opportunities to exercise. There are many types of Complete Streets policies that can be tailored to fit the needs of your unique community.

Complete Streets Resolution

A resolution is non-binding, official statements of support for approaching community transportation projects as a way to improve access, public health, and quality of life. Resolutions are often a very helpful first step, providing the political support for a Complete Streets approach.[1]

Local leaders in West Jefferson, NC and NCDOT staff partnered to use a routine resurfacing of Jefferson Avenue as an opportunity to create Complete Streets in downtown West Jefferson. The project involved removal of two traffic signals and addition of pedestrian-friendly streetscaping elements.[2] The West Jefferson Chamber of Commerce reports that they've seen ongoing increases in tourism dollars following the street improvements, with more than 55 jobs and $500,000 of private investment in downtown.[3]

Local policies that have helped bring about these changes include a 2003 design charrette series held by the North Carolina State University's College of Design, Department of Landscape Architecture and the 2010 West Jefferson Pedestrian Plan.[4] The Town also adopted a Complete Streets policy in 2011.[5]

Photo Credit: Brantley Price, West Jefferson Town Manager

Ordinance

Ordinances legally require the needs of all users be addressed in transportation projects and change city code accordingly. Ordinances may also apply to private developers by changing zoning and subdivision requirements. Ordinances require strong support from the community and elected officials, and are enforceable by law. Broad partnerships between all departments is important in creating a strong ordinance.[6]

Artist rendering, City of Chattanooga Department of Transportation

In April of 2014, the City of Chattanooga, Tennessee passed a Complete Streets Ordinance after a team including representatives from health, engineering, planning and education met to insure the ordinance would include all 10 elements of a successful policy. The ordinance recognizes that a downtown street is different from a two-lane rural road. The ordinance allows transportation planners to address different developments, neighborhoods and areas with different solutions.

Departmental policy

A Departmental Policy is issued by the department head and usually created "in house" by that department.[7] An example of a departmental policy can be found in the Florida Department of Transportation. The Secretary for the Florida Department of Transportation supported the development of an internal complete streets policy which was signed in September 2014. The policy is being integrated into the Department's internal manuals, guidelines and related documents governing the planning, design, construction and operation of transportation facilities across the state.

Executive Order

An Executive Order reflects strong political will, however, they (usually) only last as long as the current mayor sits in office. Executive orders are

Photo Credit: US Environmental Protection Agency , Flickr Creative Commons

helpful in defining the problem and directing department heads to make the necessary changes.[8]

The Executive Order signed 2013 in In Memphis, Tennessee incorporated project ranking focused on bicycle and pedestrian projects into their annual city improvement and county transportation improvement plans. Thus, encouraging consistent efforts towards Complete Streets outcomes and insuring implementation is built into the executive order.

City policies

A city council may also take action by adopting a Complete Streets policy as official city policy. Generally, this means that a Complete Streets policy is developed by an internal group of stakeholders, which may include representatives from planning, engineering, public works, economic development, health, and/ or elected officials, or a broader group that includes residents and community stakeholders.[9]

In South Florida, the Broward County Metropolitan Planning Organization worked with local and national partners to develop a Complete Streets Guidelines document[10] which was approved in July of 2012. This document then influenced Complete Streets Guidelines in the cities of Deerfield Beach and Pompano Beach, as well as a Complete Streets Manual for the City of Fort Lauderdale[11]. The City of Fort Lauderdale then passed a Complete Streets Policy in October of 2013[12], which emphasizes connectivity and using a context sensitive design approach. This policy was recognized as one of the best in the nation by the National Complete Streets Coalition.

> *"By establishing design guidelines to create streets for all users, the City (of Fort Lauderdale) is providing the framework for a transformation of public infrastructure that will help to address a host of critical issues that face the City today including increasing traffic, incomplete network of sidewalks and bike lanes, roadway safety concerns, and decreased level of public health conditions."[13]*

Design guidelines

Communities may decide to integrate Complete Streets planning and design into new design guidance for their streets.[14]

In 2007 the City of Charlotte North Carolina adopted its Urban Street Design Guidelines (USDG) as a tool for creating Complete Streets. The USDG is applied through capital projects, area plans, and land development.[15]

To date, this includes a total of:

- 11New or reconstructed thoroughfares
- 26 Streetscape and road conversion projects
- 12 Rebuilt intersections
- 12 Small Area Plans

Photo Credit: Complete Streets Coalition, Flickr Creative Commons

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1., 6.,7.,8., 9, 14. Adapted from National Complete Streets Coalition Complete Streets Local Policy Workbook

2., 4., 5. Penn, Josh. West Jefferson Streetscape Project. 2014. http://www.completestreetsnc.org/project-examples/ex-westjefferson/ (accessed October 14, 2014).

3. Seskin, Stephanie. Complete Streets News - October 2013 . October 16, 2013. http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/2013/10/16/complete-streets-news-october-2013(accessed October 14, 2014).

10. "Broward County Complete Streets Guidelines," Broward Metropolitan Planning Organization, accessed October 15, 2014,http://www.browardmpo.org/services/complete-streets/guidelines.

11. "City of Fort Lauderdale Complete Streets," City of Fort Lauderdale, accessed October 15, 2014,http://www.fortlauderdale.gov/transportation/policies.html.

12,13. "City of Fort Lauderdale Complete Streets Policy," City of Fort Lauderdale, http://www.fortlauderdale.gov/transportation/pdf/complete_streets_policy.pdf

15. Charlotte Department of Transportation . *Urban Street Design Guidelines.* 2013. http://charmeck.org/city/charlotte/transportation/plansprojects/pages/urban%20street 20design%20guidelines.aspx (accessed October 14, 2014).