



Complete Streets

Supporting safe and accessible roads for everyone
Local toolkit





The photos in this toolkit show some of the many creative ways communities are moving toward Complete Streets that work for all users.

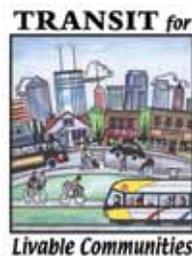


Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Benefits of Complete Streets	3
Steps to creating, adopting, and implementing a local Complete Streets policy	5
Elements of a Complete Streets resolution and policy	7
Frequently asked questions	8
Sample Complete Streets resolution (Hennepin County)	12
Talking about Complete Streets	13
Sample letter to the editor	15
Sample opinion piece/editorial	16
Sample opinion piece/editorial for elected officials	17
Links to additional resources	18
Coalition members	19

Nearly every Complete Streets policy begins with a single champion — whether an elected official, a staff person, or an advocate. Consider becoming that champion in your community!

Introduction

Transportation has broad impacts. At the most basic level, our transportation system impacts our ability to get around, but it also has a big impact on safety, economic development, quality of life, the environment and public health. “Complete Streets” recognizes and maximizes the benefits of all aspects of our transportation system.

For the past 50 years, most road design has focused primarily on one goal—moving as many cars as possible, as quickly as possible. This has often meant that the safety and accessibility needs of pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders are forgotten or addressed at the end of a road project if there is street right-of-way space and money left. Too often, the road-building process has also neglected to fully consider the impact on local residents and businesses along a road—with a focus on cars moving through the area rather than on how a road can contribute to a successful and vibrant community.

Not surprisingly, this paradigm has resulted in roads that move cars fairly well but often are not safe for seniors, children, people with disabilities, and others walking, biking, or taking transit. Because many people don’t feel safe, they drive to their destinations rather than use other options.

Complete Streets seeks to change this paradigm so that pedestrian, bicycle, and transit accommodations are no longer seen as “amenities” to be included when “possible,” but rather as core elements of road design and implementation, left out only if there is a truly compelling reason. Complete Streets is about making sure our kids can safely walk to school, seniors have time to cross the

street safely, and parents feel comfortable bicycling to a nearby park or grocery store. Complete Streets is not a one-size-fits-all solution and will not lead to sidewalks in cornfields or bike lanes on every street—it is about making sure that our transportation and road building systems work for everyone.

Complete Streets is a growing movement in Minnesota and across the country. In 2010, Governor Tim Pawlenty signed a Complete Streets law for Minnesota which directs a supportive Minnesota Department of Transportation to transition to Complete Streets. Local resolutions or policies have also been adopted in Rochester, Hennepin County, St. Paul, Albert Lea, Bloomington, Duluth, and Independence. Numerous other cities and counties are moving to support Complete Streets. Nationally, more than 120 communities and states are supporting Complete Streets.

This toolkit will help you understand the value of Complete Streets and how you can help make Complete Streets part of your Minnesota community. Much of the information is condensed and localized for Minnesota. There are links to the best of many national resources on Complete Streets. This is the first version of this toolkit, and it will be updated regularly. We anticipate adding technical information in Fall 2010. If you have unanswered questions, comments, or ideas, please contact Vayong Moua at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota at vayong_moua@bluecrossmn.com.

This toolkit was created by the Minnesota Complete Streets Coalition, which includes more than 65 organizations promoting safer roads for everyone. Special thanks to Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, Fresh Energy, and the Minnesota Department of Health for creating most of the content and design.

Benefits of Complete Streets

A local Complete Streets policy can help a community set the path to a transportation system that provides safer access for all road users by articulating the benefits of Complete Streets and providing political support for moving in that direction. By discussing and collaborating on Complete Streets as part of policy discussions, a community can learn to look beyond the current pavement and think about the many impacts of our transportation system.

Some of the many benefits of Complete Streets include:

- **Safety.** The core reason for Complete Streets is to improve safety for all road users. In the past decade, more than 500 pedestrians and bicyclists have been killed on Minnesota roads and more than 20,000 have been injured. We can and must do better.

20,000
number of pedestrians
and bicyclists injured or
killed in Minnesota
in the past decade

- **Public health.** More than 60 percent of Minnesotans are overweight or obese and at risk for serious illness, such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers. If left unchecked, obesity will add another \$3.7 billion in health care expenses for Minnesotans by 2020 (*Obesity and Future Health Care Costs*, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Health, 2008). By building roads that help support more walking and biking, communities can help create opportunities for people to be more physically active, while improving public health and reducing health care costs.

60%
percent of
Minnesotans who
are overweight

- **Access and transportation equity.** About 40 percent of Minnesotans do not drive, including children, seniors, people with disabilities, and people who cannot afford a car. Complete Streets helps to ensure that everyone has safe access to lead active and independent lives, while ensuring full compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Whether you live in the city, countryside, suburbs, or reservation, Complete Streets supports the ability of all people in their local context to have viable transportation choices.

40%
percent of all
Minnesotans who
don't drive

- **Affordable transportation choices.** Rising and erratic gas prices are taking a larger part of family budgets — money that goes nearly entirely out of the local economy. Complete Streets helps support options that make communities more resilient to gas price spikes and keeps more money in the local community.
- **Economic development.** “Complete” streets are built to fit a community’s context to attract people and encourage business by making sure that our roads are places that people want to be.



Designing roads with all users in mind from the beginning saves costly retrofits

➤ **Environment.** Transportation accounts for more than 70 percent of our oil consumption, 25 percent of global warming pollution, and a large portion of local air pollution, like ozone and particulate matter that lead to “air quality alert” days, increased rates of asthma, and even cancer. Complete Streets supports many transportation options that help lessen dependence on oil and promote cleaner air.

➤ **Cost effectiveness.** Road networks typically make up about 30 percent of the land area of cities and account for a significant portion of local budgets. Complete Streets helps ensure an efficiently planned transportation system that reduces gaps, improves traffic flow, and maximizes the investment while also ensuring that we build roads right the first time, rather than having to come back later for costly retrofits.

➤ **Quality of life.** Complete Streets can help calm traffic on residential streets, create walkable neighborhoods, and increase community interaction.

Steps to creating, adopting, and implementing a local Complete Streets policy

While every community has a different context and different needs and concerns that can be addressed by a Complete Streets policy, several general steps are applicable anywhere. The most important thing to remember when crafting a Complete Streets policy is that the goal is to work collaboratively to shift the focus of road design from “moving cars quickly” to “providing safe mobility for all modes of transit.”

Redefining the problem this way frees engineers to use their skill and talent to imagine creative solutions that a narrower focus precludes. To ensure broad support, it's important to invite the contributions of a wide range of stakeholders, including engineers, other relevant city staff, elected officials, and the public.

A municipality can pass, or begin implementing, Complete Streets as a stand-alone initiative or as part of a comprehensive plan, transportation plan, or an update of subdivision requirements.

➤ **Research how your community can benefit from Complete Streets.**

Official action toward Complete Streets requires a compelling impetus, so start with a general and basic evaluation of the problems that Complete Streets can help solve. This might include statistics related to safety concerns on a major road, local obesity and chronic disease rates, public health care costs, or rates of walking and biking to school. Begin to collect and understand personal stories of barriers that come from “incomplete” streets or the positives that have resulted from existing well-designed “complete” streets. This initial scan of problems may also provide an opportunity to find and reach out to potential allies across many different fields.

➤ **Decide who should be involved in creating and implementing a Complete Streets policy, and determine how and when to engage the public.**

Common participants include elected officials, planning, public works, and public health staff, community

stakeholders, and the public. Most communities begin the process with a relatively small task force and then seek broader input at different stages. It is important to ensure an authentic and transparent public process.

➤ **Determine a process for moving forward with Complete Streets.**

Some communities, fueled by a tragic event or a strong champion, move very quickly while others take a more deliberative approach. Some communities require local council or board action, while a few have created and implemented a Complete Streets policy solely through work performed at the staff level. A more engaged and collaborative approach that includes as many stakeholders and implementers as possible tends to be more broadly supported. Complete Streets is about supporting a culture change in road building and that takes leadership, time, patience, listening, understanding, and compromise.

The most common process in Minnesota has included the following steps:

- A small task force of city staff, elected officials, and community stakeholders drafts a Complete Streets resolution for consideration by the local council or board.
- The council or board approves the resolution, which confirms the community's intent to support Complete Streets, and directs city staff to craft a full Complete Streets policy and implementation plan.
- Local government staff members from all relevant departments work with stakeholders to create a proposal for a Complete Streets policy that includes concrete implementation steps and accountability.
- The council or board approves the Complete Streets policy and implementation plan.
- Local government staff members implement the policy on transportation projects in the community, evaluate implementation, and report on progress.

➤ **Articulate how Complete Streets relates to your community’s vision (and pass a resolution).**

Connecting Complete Streets to the core values of your community helps build community ownership and commitment and deepen understanding of the diverse impacts of road building. Creating a vision for Complete Streets can be done by the public, policy makers, staff or, ideally, a combination of interested stakeholders. Many communities have already defined their vision as part of comprehensive planning or through various sub-area or neighborhood plans. The Complete Streets process should build on information shared in these processes while also allowing for a separate discussion about the vision solely in the context of Complete Streets. A common outcome of the Complete Streets visioning is a set of “whereas” statements that makes the case for Complete Streets in a resolution. It is often at this point that a community drafts and passes a council or board resolution in support of Complete Streets.

➤ **Determine steps your community can take to support Complete Streets.**

Once your community commits to Complete Streets, the focus of discussion shifts to specific elements of a policy and its implementation. Each community has different opportunities for and barriers to Complete Streets, which often include technical engineering policies and funding allocations. Given the technical nature of implementing Complete Streets, this stage should include considerable input from Public Works staff as well as an examination of best practices.

Complete Streets policies are normally implemented by providing greater flexibility in road design as new roads are built and existing roads are rebuilt or repaved, and by allocating more capital improvement dollars toward features that support Complete Streets, such as sidewalks, bike lanes and trails, accessible curb ramps, and transit stops. Complete Streets policies provide a unified purpose for these investments so that residents can see, for example, that the sidewalk in front of their

house contributes to a growing and connected system and serves a broad public purpose. Complete Streets should also address staff training and ongoing community outreach to ensure that engineers and planners have the implementation tools they need and communities understand what Complete Streets may mean for them.

Initial steps typically focus on the numerous cost-neutral, low-cost, or cost-saving steps that communities can take toward Complete Streets. Work with engineers and planners to find underutilized 4-lane roads that could be converted to 3-lane roads with the extra space going toward bike lanes or sidewalks. Reevaluate standard lane widths—narrower lanes can help reduce speeding, save money, and provide space for sidewalks or bike lanes. For more information on technical ideas, see the Institute of Transportation Engineers guide *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach*. (See link in Resources section)

➤ **Decide how you’ll evaluate progress on Complete Streets and ensure implementation.**

An often overlooked part of a successful Complete Streets policy process is a discussion about feedback loops and check-in points to measure progress. These can include reports to elected officials and the public, as well as performance measures or other strategies. Evaluation creates a sense of ongoing purpose and accountability, while also providing an opportunity to update the policy as a community learns from its implementation efforts. No comprehensive plan is a static document, and no Complete Streets policy is, either.

Elements of a Complete Streets resolution and policy

Complete Streets resolutions and policies come in many forms and contexts. Some communities, like Rochester, created and passed a resolution and policy in one package while others, like Hennepin County, passed a resolution first and a policy later. Still others, like Albert Lea, jumped straight to the policy. While most communities in Minnesota have taken a significant amount of time to create Complete Streets resolutions or policies, Bloomington and many other communities around the country moved quickly to craft and adopt a policy, confirm an existing policy direction, or begin the shift to Complete Streets. Similarly, there is variety in the ways communities implement Complete Streets. Many aim for a comprehensive approach that covers all aspects of road building, while others focus simply on future subdivisions, a comprehensive plan, or street rebuilding and repaving. Below are a few broad elements and some sample language to help in your community.

Complete Streets resolution

A Complete Streets resolution is often used as a City Council's first official action in support of the concept and lays the ground for future work. Typically, resolutions 1) define Complete Streets; 2) cover the reasons that the community supports Complete Streets; 3) declare support for Complete Streets; and 4) direct next steps for work on Complete Streets. A sample resolution for Hennepin County is included in the Resources section of this toolkit.

Complete Streets policy

A Complete Streets policy specifies how work will proceed on Complete Streets. A policy can range from a simple declaration to provide accommodations for all modes of transit as part of every future transportation project to a total reworking of transportation planning and design manuals.

The National Complete Streets Coalition has identified ten elements of an ideal Complete Streets policy (more details available at <http://www.completestreets.org/changing-policy/policy-elements/>):

- Includes a **vision** for how and why the community wants to complete its streets
- Specifies that “**all users**” includes pedestrians, bicyclists and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses and automobiles
- Encourages **street connectivity** and aims to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes
- Is adoptable by **all agencies to cover all roads**
- Applies to **both new and retrofit projects**, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations, for the entire right of way
- Makes **any exceptions specific** and sets a clear procedure that requires high-level approval of exceptions
- Directs the use of the **latest and best design criteria** and guidelines while recognizing the need for flexibility in balancing user needs
- Directs that complete streets solutions will **complement the context** of the community
- Establishes **performance standards** with measurable outcomes
- Includes **specific next steps** for implementation of the policy

Frequently asked questions

How much will it cost to create and implement a Complete Streets policy?

A Complete Streets policy is about maximizing public return on investment. It is not about spending more money, but allocating money differently to support broader transportation outcomes. In some cases, Complete Streets may mean that an individual project costs more money. On some Complete Streets projects, a community can save money by right-sizing the automobile accommodations on a road, building a more connected system, and planning a road to fit into the local context. On all Complete Streets projects, valuable long-term public benefits can be gained from reduced health care costs and increased property values.

Complete Streets also provides a process that helps ensure that we build roads right the first time, rather than fixing them *after* a tragedy occurs or a problem emerges, when the costs will be much greater. Complete Streets applies to projects as they come through the normal funding process, providing an opportunity to improve safety, rather than focusing on costly retrofits.

Complete Streets is not about creating more process, it is about implementing a better process. Complete Streets will help speed project delivery — which reduces costs — by thinking about local context and needs throughout the process, rather than at the end when it becomes more costly to make changes.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation has prepared a report on Complete Streets. The report recommends implementing a state Complete Streets policy because the Department found, after engaging many experts and stakeholders, that “the general consensus is that the benefits of Complete Streets offset the incremental costs.” The report also recognizes that Complete Streets fits in very well with other efforts the Department is taking to maximize the value of transportation investments by making sure that projects are built for local contexts and needs.

What impact will this have on drivers and truck access?

Implementation of a Complete Streets policy will help improve safety for everyone, including drivers. It will also help support more transportation options and reduce congestion. A Complete Streets policy should also help ensure a connected system for trucks and include that as part of the ongoing consideration of road design.

Why do we need a *local* Complete Streets policy?

Minnesota’s state law on Complete Streets is a key step toward safer roads for all modes and users. The state law applies only to Mn/DOT-owned and -funded roads. The need for local Complete Streets policies still exists for local transportation authorities so that city and county roads belong to a Complete Streets network.

In many Minnesota communities, people do not feel safe walking or biking in their neighborhoods or letting their kids walk to school. Too often, roads are built primarily to facilitate the movement of motor vehicles, and the needs of children, seniors, and others are overlooked. This can result in roads that are simply unsafe for pedestrians, people with disabilities, bicyclists, transit riders, and drivers themselves. It can also result in roads that harm the economic vitality of main streets and the quality of life that draws people to our communities. Everyone is impacted by unsafe roads, which can lead to more injuries and fatalities — very real barriers in our transportation system and disincentives for walking, bicycling, and transit use.

A Complete Streets policy can help identify solutions to help communities move forward with a balanced approach to transportation investments that maximize total public benefit. While many communities are moving in a Complete Streets direction without a specific policy, a formal policy supports progress locally and across the state.



What are the impacts of Complete Streets for rural areas?

Local context is a key consideration with Complete Streets. Complete Streets will help us provide safe access where it is needed and in ways that are reasonable and cost effective. The new statewide legislation specifically recognizes that needs may vary in urban, suburban, and rural contexts.

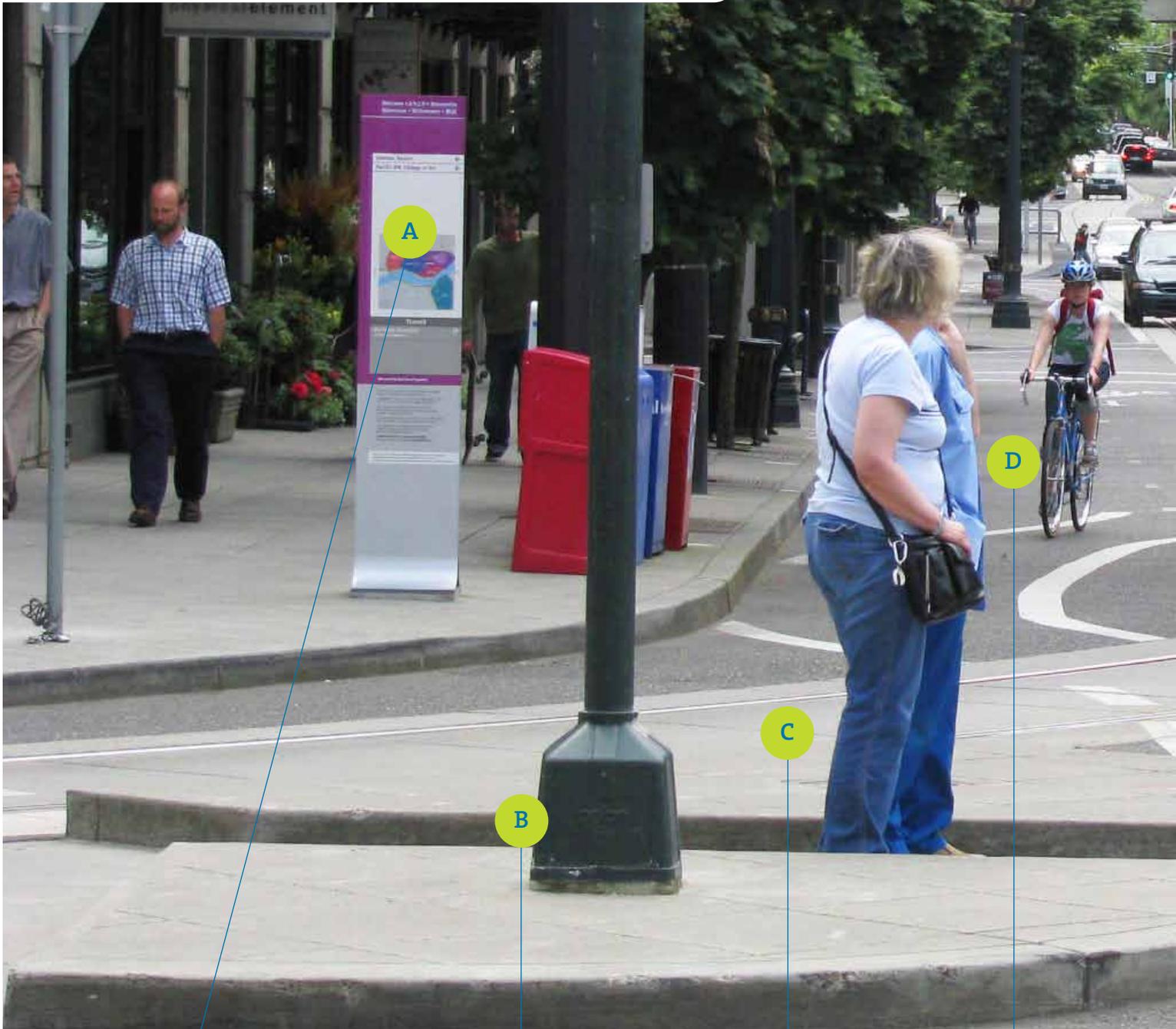
In many rural areas, there is not as much need for pedestrian or bicycle facilities, or there is so little traffic that people feel safe walking or bicycling. In these cases, the existing

road is a “complete” street already. Other rural roads serve as key connecting points for regional centers or pedestrian and bicycle trails, and people want to be able to walk or bike on those roads. In these cases, a paved shoulder may be warranted to provide safe access, depending on the context.

Complete Streets is very important for small towns, which are often bisected by a state highway. A Complete Streets policy will help ensure that the state highway can still serve as the vital main street that helps a small town thrive. It will also help ensure that children have the opportunity to safely walk or bike to their small-town school.

Streets that work for everyone

“Complete streets” are different in every community, but all are designed to balance safety and convenience for everyone using the road.



Clear signage is welcoming to pedestrians.

Streetlight on raised median makes intersection safer for walkers. Raised median creates a pedestrian refuge.

Raised median at right turn lane slows traffic and protects pedestrians.

Clear bike lane allows room for cyclists.



Street allows for multiple modes of transit: light rail, bus, cars and bicycles.

Well-marked crosswalk creates a space for pedestrians.

Narrow lanes slow traffic.

On-street parking slows traffic.

Sample Complete Streets resolution (Hennepin County)

WHEREAS, Complete Streets are designed and operated to assure safety and accessibility for all the users of our roads, trails and transit systems, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists, commercial and emergency vehicles and for people of all ages and of all abilities; and

WHEREAS, Complete Streets reduce congestion by providing safe travel choices that encourage non-motorized transportation options, increasing the overall capacity of the transportation network as well as decreasing consumer transportation costs; and

WHEREAS, Complete Streets will help Hennepin County achieve our Cool Counties goal to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as more people choose an alternative to the single occupant vehicle, thereby improving air quality and alleviating public health concerns such as asthma; and

WHEREAS, Complete Streets support economic growth and community stability by providing accessible and efficient connections between home, school, work, recreation and retail destinations by improving the pedestrian and vehicular environments throughout communities; and

WHEREAS, Complete Streets enhance safe walking and bicycling options for school-age children, in recognition of the objectives of the national Safe Routes to School program and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Physical Activity Guidelines; and

WHEREAS, Complete Streets can help reduce crashes and injuries and their costs; and

WHEREAS, Complete Streets is consistent with the Board-approved principles of Active Living Hennepin County, to promote the integration of physical activity into the daily lives of Hennepin County residents; and

WHEREAS, Active Living Hennepin County, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, and the Hennepin County Transportation Department sponsored a Complete Streets workshop on December 5, 2008, where national experts met with key county, city and state leaders and our Active Living partners; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED, that in order to develop and maintain a safe, efficient, balanced and environmentally sound County transportation system for people of all ages and abilities, transportation and development projects shall incorporate a Complete Streets philosophy that expands transportation choices; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in keeping with the County's Active Living principles, the Board directs the Active Living Interdepartmental Workgroup, along with other key staff as selected by the county administrator, to develop a County Complete Streets policy and report back annually to the County Board on how the policy will be implemented into all types and phases of Hennepin County's transportation and development projects; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Hennepin County Board of Commissioners encourages cities, counties, and the state to work together to make Complete Streets a reality throughout Minnesota.

Talking about Complete Streets

Because the new Complete Streets policy is about community and helping to assure the safety of Minnesota's residents, actively communicating the benefits of the new law is critical in order to get public and policymaker buy-in and support for implementing the new law. One way to do that is to seek earned media (newspaper, radio, etc.) and general communications opportunities (conversations, community discussions, etc.). This will initiate a dialogue that will help the public and policymakers understand the new law and its importance to local communities.

Before you embark on a public communications effort it's important to understand the best ways to talk about the new law. Through polling and message-testing, we have found that the best way to talk about Complete Streets is from the standpoint of safety, and especially the safety of seniors and children — two populations especially impacted by road design. While other benefits of Complete Streets (health benefits, positive fiscal impacts, etc.) can and should be discussed, every communications effort should emphasize safety.

To help you communicate the benefits of Complete Streets, we've developed a set of messages:

Lead messages

➤ **Safety.** Currently, too many Minnesotans do not feel safe walking or biking in their neighborhoods or letting their kids walk to school. Too often, Minnesota roads have been built primarily for vehicles, and the needs of children, seniors, and others have not been seriously considered. This can result in roads that simply aren't safe for pedestrians, people with disabilities, bicyclists, transit riders, and drivers themselves.

Supporting fact: In the last decade, more than 500 pedestrians and bicyclists were killed, and another 20,000 injured on Minnesota's roads.

➤ **Choices, accessibility, and equity.** All Minnesotans deserve roads that help them get around their community safely and independently. Complete Streets will help remove transportation barriers for seniors, children, and people with disabilities, and give people cheaper transportation choices.

Supporting fact: 40 percent of Minnesotans do not drive because they are too young, too old, cannot afford a car, have a disability, or choose not to drive.

➤ **Health.** Roads designed strictly to move vehicles have created disincentives for physical activity, a critical component of the effort to reduce the obesity epidemic that Minnesota, like many other states, is facing. Complete Streets will help to assure that Minnesota's roads, highways and streets are safer for pedestrians and other non-motorized users and thereby encourage increased physical activity by people of all ages.

Supporting fact: If left unchecked, the obesity epidemic is projected to add \$3.7 billion to Minnesota's total annual health care spending by 2020.

Supporting messages

➤ **Cost effectiveness.** Complete Streets is a commonsense process that uses taxpayer money more efficiently by better responding to local needs and making sure we build roads right the first time, rather than fix them after a tragedy occurs, when the costs will be much greater.

Supporting fact: In De Pere, Wisconsin, the county highway department saved money by building a narrower major street with roundabouts and bicycle facilities in place of the initially planned four-lane street with traffic signals at two intersections. The changes saved the county \$347,515 (16.5 percent) off the original project estimate.

- **Community development.** Roads designed strictly for cars hurt the economic vitality of many small towns and cities. Everyone is impacted by unsafe roads, which lead to more injuries and fatalities and disincentives for walking, bicycling, and transit use — key components of attractive and livable communities that help support vibrant and profitable businesses and attracts tourism and investment.

Supporting fact: There are countless examples in small towns all across Minnesota where a busy state highway bisects a community.

- **Community engagement.** Complete Streets encourages community participation in developing transportation systems that best meet local safety, health, and community needs.

Supporting fact: Before the implementation of the Complete Streets law, local communities often faced many state-created barriers to designing roads through their towns in a way that served their residents best — barriers that were difficult and often impossible to overcome.

- **Environment.** Complete Streets will support more walking and bicycling, clean transportation choices that reduce our dependence on costly energy sources and help protect Minnesota's rivers, lakes, and air quality.

Supporting fact: 70 percent of oil consumption is used for transportation, and automobiles are the number one source of many local air pollutants that increase rates of childhood asthma and cancer.

General tips for talking about Complete Streets

- **Broaden the name.** The general public does not know about Complete Streets, so connect it immediately with safety. A statement like “Complete Streets: Making roads safer for all Minnesotans” gets the message across in positive manner.
- **Stay positive.** You know that Complete Streets will help your community, and recent polling shows that most Minnesotans agree. The Minnesota Department of Transportation agrees as well and has begun work on Complete Streets.

- **Connect with seniors and children.** Complete Streets will have a big impact on these groups that everyone cares about.

Key messengers

- **Law enforcement officers** are ideal for messages about public safety
- **Individual seniors** can offer compelling personal stories
- **School principals** drive home the need for more walking and biking to school
- **Doctors and nurses** can urge action to support more physical activity

About Minnesota's law

- In 2010, the Minnesota Legislature passed and Governor Pawlenty signed into law a measure known as Complete Streets. The law took effect on August 1.
- Complete Streets requires that Minnesota roads and highways are planned and designed to be safe and accessible for drivers, pedestrians, transit riders, and bicyclists — for all users, regardless of age or ability.
- Specifically, the Minnesota Department of Transportation is required to consider local community needs and all likely road users when designing roadways, and to work with engineers and planners across the state to implement this process. The law applies to new construction, reconstruction, and repaving projects for Mn/DOT.

NOTE: *The new state law applies specifically to roads owned or funded by Mn/DOT. The law can support the efforts of communities to extend the reach of Complete Streets to city, county, and other roads not covered by the law.*

It is helpful to raise public awareness of Complete Streets through letters to the editor or opinion/editorial pieces in the local newspaper. The samples that follow are provided to help you reach out to the public and the media.

Sample letter to the editor

Dear Editor:

One of the more positive accomplishments of the 2010 Minnesota Legislature was the bipartisan passage of Complete Streets legislation. This new law, which took effect August 1, requires the Minnesota Department of Transportation to consider the needs of all transportation users when they design and build roads and highways.

What that means is that instead of building roads for the sole purpose of moving cars as quickly as possible, they will be built with the safety of all users in mind including walkers, bicyclists and even drivers. The law also encourages local communities to adopt their own Complete Streets policies, such as Rochester, Duluth and St. Paul have already done. That will give our community more flexibility to integrate the needs of all road users in the future planning and building of our roads and highways.

For years, state roads and highways were designed with a one-size-fits-all approach. Lost in that process were the safety needs of those who walk and bicycle – especially seniors and children. It was very difficult, if not nearly impossible, for a local community like ours to change that process to make it about something more than just automobiles.

Now, with the new law, that will change. The one-size-fits-all, top-down approach will be replaced with a process that gives local communities more say in integrating the needs of all road users in the planning and building of roads and highways. We should take advantage of it for all of our residents.

Sincerely,

Sample opinion piece/editorial

One of the more significant laws to go into effect this year is a change to how the State of Minnesota approaches road building and reconstruction. Specifically, the law, which was approved by a bipartisan majority of the Minnesota Legislature, requires that the safety needs of pedestrians, bicyclists and others be considered when roads are built or rebuilt.

Known as Complete Streets, the law is a significant departure from how Minnesota historically did road building. In the past, roads were designed with a one-size-fits-all mentality and the primary outcome of the design was to move cars and trucks as quickly as possible. Lost in the process were the needs of walkers and bicyclists, many of them kids and senior citizens, and the desire of towns and cities to have roads that suited the needs of community members.

The result of this past way of building roads was a staggering automobile/pedestrian fatality and injury rate. In the last decade, more than 500 pedestrians and bicyclists were killed, and another 20,000 injured on Minnesota's roads. So too, many communities became less livable as they were bisected by four lanes of traffic. Everyone is impacted by unsafe roads, which result in disincentives for walking, bicycling, and transit use – key components of attractive and livable communities that help support vibrant and profitable businesses and attract tourism and investment.

Thanks to the new law, opportunities to change the old way of road building now exist, including many right here in [name of town.]. Now, the Minnesota Department of Transportation is required to consider local community

needs and all likely users of the road when designing roadways, and to work with engineers and planners across the state to implement this process. It applies to new construction, reconstruction, and repaving projects for Mn/DOT. And while the new law addresses state highways and roads, it encourages local communities to adopt their own Complete Streets policies, such as Rochester, Duluth and St. Paul have already done.

One of the more significant aspects of the new law is cost. It isn't necessarily a new transportation spending program. Rather, it is a new way of doing business within an existing transportation program. In fact, examples exist where complete streets actually saved taxpayers money by preventing future costly retrofits when roads weren't built safe the first time.

Thanks to the new Complete Streets law, Minnesota and its communities will become safer, more vibrant and more active. We should look for opportunities in our community to implement the law as fully as possible and thereby share in these benefits.

Sample opinion piece/editorial for elected officials

Creation of Complete Streets law will bring broad benefits to Minnesota communities

As an [elected official — include specific title], one of my key priorities, in addition to managing the day-to-day workings of local government, is to help assure the health and welfare of our citizens. When it comes to the safety of those citizens who walk and bike, unfortunately, that has been a challenge in the past. The fatality statistics from the last decade point out the problem clearer than words can describe — a staggering 500 pedestrians and bicyclists were killed and another 20,000 were injured on Minnesota's roads.

That's why our city has taken steps to create more pedestrian and bicyclist friendly roads. We have done so not only because we want to make our community safer for those modes of transportation, but also because we recognize that making walking and biking easier choices helps to improve the health and fitness of residents, along with increasing the vitality of the community. Fortunately for other cities and towns throughout Minnesota, the legislature's passage of Complete Streets legislation this year will help them do the same.

Complete Streets, which had broad bipartisan support in the legislature, and the vocal support of the Minnesota Department of Transportation, will create greater flexibility for Minnesota communities to incorporate the transportation and safety needs of their citizens in the development of state road projects. It ends the top-down, one-size-fits-all approach to state road building by simplifying and removing the existing barriers to safe, community-based road design.

The policy is an essential first step for elected officials because state standards and requirements sometimes limit the ability of cities and towns to assure that roads are built safely for all users. And from the standpoint of

public safety at the local level, that's critical. Too often Minnesota roads have been built primarily for driving as quickly as possible, and the needs of children, seniors, and others have not been seriously considered whether for travel along a roadway or to cross it. This can result in roads that simply aren't safe for pedestrians, people with disabilities, bicyclists, transit riders, and drivers themselves.

The old way of road building has created other problems as well. It has resulted in roads that hurt the economic vitality of main streets and harm the quality of life that draws individuals, families and businesses to Minnesota. Everyone is impacted by unsafe roads, which not only lead to more injuries and fatalities, but also create disincentives for walking, bicycling, and transit use — elements that are critical to vibrant, living communities and a healthy citizenry.

Fortunately, the legislature's passage of complete streets legislation spells a new day for Minnesota. Whether you are an elected official, a parent, a senior citizen, a student or a main street business owner, you can know that, in the future, when highways and roadways through your community are built or reconstructed, they'll be done with an eye toward helping to assure your safety.

We are very proud that by implementing Complete Streets policies on our own, our community will be better for it. Thanks to the new law that took effect on August 1st, other community leaders will have the opportunity to share in that pride by being able to implement their own policies.

Resources

1 Resources from the Public Health Law Center

- Minnesota's Complete Streets Policy
<http://publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/ship-fs-cstreetpolicy-2010.pdf>
A summary of Minnesota's statewide Complete Streets policy
- Understanding Road Design in Minnesota
<http://publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/ship-fs-rddesign-2010.pdf>
A guide to the classification system for roads in Minnesota, how road classification affects what government entity controls the project, and process for approvals organized by type of road
- Bike/Pedestrian Fact Sheet
<http://publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/ship-fs-bikeped-2010.pdf>
Traffic rules for bicycles and pedestrians

2 Introduction to Complete Streets

<http://mncompletestreets.org/gfx/MNCompleteStreetsIntro.pptx>
Overview of Complete Streets frame principles and practices developed by the Minnesota Complete Streets Coalition

3 American Heart Association (AHA) Fact Sheet

<http://www.mncompletestreets.org/gfx/AHA%20-%20Complete%20Streets%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%20%28MN%29.pdf>

Supports Complete Streets policies as having great potential to increase the overall activity level of Americans and in turn reduce the risk of overweight and obesity. The AHA advocates for passage of Complete Streets policies that will in turn increase physical activity and improve the health status of all Americans.

4 Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota Fact Sheet

<http://www.mncompletestreets.org/gfx/Blue%20Cross%20Complete%20Streets%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>
Outlines current attitudes of Minnesotans around the built environment and its influence on physical activity. It also illustrates the number of rural and urban

Minnesotans engaged in physical activity for transportation and their level of support for policies that support biking and walking, such as Complete Streets

5 National Complete Streets Coalition

www.completestreets.org

6 Minnesota Complete Streets Coalition

www.mncompletestreets.org

7 Complete Streets: Best Policy and Implementation Practices. 2010. American Planning Association.

Available for purchase: <http://www.planning.org/apastore/Search/Default.aspx?p=4060>

8 Minnesota Department of Transportation's Complete Streets page

<http://www.dot.state.mn.us/planning/completestreets/>

9 Minnesota Case Studies

From the Minnesota Complete Streets Coalition
<http://www.mncompletestreets.org/gfx/Complete%20Streets%20Case%20Studies.pdf>

10 Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach. 2010. Institute of Transportation Engineers.

Available for free:
<http://www.ite.org/emodules/scriptcontent/Orders/ProductDetail.cfm?pc=RP-036A-E>

Photo credits

Cover: www.pedbikeimages.org/JenniferCampos,
www.pedbikeimages.org/AndyHamilton

Inside front cover: www.pedbikeimages.org/DanBurden,
www.pedbikeimages.org/DanBurden

Page 4: www.pedbikeimages.org/DanBurden,
www.pedbikeimages.org/DanBurden

Page 9: www.pedbikeimages.org/CarlSundstrom,
David Gonzalez — Mn/Dot photographer

Page 10: www.pedbikeimages.org/LauraSandt

Coalition Members

The following organizations and local elected officials have joined the Minnesota Complete Streets Coalition:

- AARP
- Alliance for Metropolitan Stability
- Alliance for Sustainability
- American Cancer Society Midwest Division
- American Council of the Blind of Minnesota
- American Heart Association
- Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota
- BLEND: Better Living Exercise & Nutrition Daily
- Bloomington Councilmember Steve Elkins
- Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota
- Blue Zones — Dan Buettner
- Catalyst
- Cedar Ave United
- City of Rochester
- City of Saint Paul
- Conservation Minnesota
- Dero Bike Rack Company
- Driftless Region Bicycle Coalition
- First Witness Child Abuse Resource Center
- Fit City Duluth
- Fresh Energy
- Friends of Washington County
- Get Fit Itasca
- Growth and Justice
- Havefunbiking.com
- HealthPartners
- Hennepin County Commissioner Gail Dorfman
- Hennepin County Commissioner Peter McLaughlin
- Howard R. Green Company
- Joe Urban, Inc.
- Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc.
- Laura Baker Services Association
- Local Initiatives Support Corporation
- Lutheran Coalition for Public Policy in Minnesota
- Minnesota Association of Small Cities
- Minneapolis Electric Bicycle Company
- Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
- Minnesota Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities
- Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
- Minnesota Environmental Partnership
- Minnesota Public Interest Research Group
- Minnesota Public Health Association
- Minnesota Public Transit Association
- Minnesotans for Healthy Kids Coalition
- National Multiple Sclerosis Society Minnesota Chapter
- Northfield Nonmotorized Transportation Task Force
- Now Bikes and Fitness

- Parks & Trails Council of Minnesota
- Pates Planning and Design
- Preservation Alliance of Minnesota
- Red Wing Housing and Redevelopment Authority
- Saint Paul Councilmember Russ Stark
- Saint Paul Riverfront Corporation
- Shifting Gears Bicycles
- Sierra Club North Star Chapter
- St. Paul Smart Trips
- The Arc of Minnesota
- The Corduroy Studio, Inc.
- The Cornerstone Group
- Transit for Livable Communities
- Transportation for America’s Minnesota Coalition
- Twin Cities Bicycling Club
- Twin Cities Streets for People
- Urban Land Institute Minnesota
- 1000 Friends of Minnesota

Local governments with a local Complete Streets resolution or policy

- City of Albert Lea
- City of Bloomington
- City of Duluth
- City of Independence
- City of Rochester
- City of St. Paul
- Hennepin County

Local governments with resolutions in support of state Complete Streets policy

- City of Bloomington
- City of Brooklyn Park
- City of Eagan
- City of Edina
- City of Falcon Heights
- City of Lake Elmo
- City of Richfield
- City of Rochester
- City of Rosemount
- City of St. Louis Park
- City of St. Paul
- City of Savage
- City of Woodbury
- Ramsey County



**BlueCross BlueShield
of Minnesota**

An Independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association