



Complete Streets Policy for the Rockford Region

Adopted
January 26, 2024

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The Policies & Procedures for the Distribution of Federal Transportation Funds was prepared by Region 1 Planning Council (R1), with funding from the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Illinois Department of Transportation, and local communities. The contents of this report reflect the view of R1, which is solely responsible for the information presented herein.

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I. Vision, Intent and Guiding Principles

A. Vision Statement

Through this Complete Streets Policy, the Rockford Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) recognizes the need to develop and support a safe, efficient, accessible, and integrated multimodal transportation network which balances the need for access, mobility, economic development, and aesthetics while providing for the health and improved quality of life for all residents and visitors, especially the most vulnerable (pedestrians, bicyclists, children, seniors, disabled individuals, as well as Title VI and Environmental Justice areas).

B. Intent

A complete street policy creates a connected, resilient, and equitable transportation network through roadway designs that guarantee equitable access to community resources for all who use the transportation system in the Rockford Region. In addition to establishing a safe and equitable transportation network, a complete streets approach provides benefits through improved public health and air quality, increased access to outdoor recreation opportunities, reduced maintenance costs of both vehicles and roadways, increased property values, enhanced aesthetics, and neighborhood safety.

The region will consistently support, plan, design, construct, and operate an interconnected street network that safely accommodates all anticipated users and transportation modes.

Particular attention will be given to the transportation safety and mobility needs of the most vulnerable roadway users – people walking, biking, taking public transit, and using wheelchairs or other mobility devices, as well as individuals with visual or hearing disabilities. While considering the users identified above, this approach will still balance the needs of those driving private, commercial, and emergency vehicles. This policy recognizes that all modes may not receive the same type of accommodation on every street based upon its surrounding context or classification.

The goals of this Complete Streets Policy are:

- To create a comprehensive, integrated, and connected transportation system that supports compact, sustainable development and provides livable communities.
- To ensure safety, ease of use, and ease of transfer between modes for all users of the transportation system.
- To provide flexibility for different types of streets, areas, and travelers to enhance the transportation experience.

By implementing this policy, the MPO intends to enhance streets to be healthy, vibrant, and inviting for all users by providing lighting, landscaping, green infrastructure, public art, and other amenities. It is important to continue to provide equitable access to multimodal transportation alternatives that accommodate active and alternative transportation options.

C. Guiding Principles

This policy focuses on the following six guiding principles to provide the framework for integrating a Complete Streets approach into transportation plans, policies, decision-making processes, funding priorities, and other practices throughout the region.

Safety

Complete Streets provides a safe travel experience for all users, including drivers, and is an effective strategy to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries.

Accessibility

Complete Streets serve people of all ages and abilities through design elements, such as curb ramps, to accommodate users with mobility issues. Regular maintenance is critical to ensuring that sidewalks and bicycle lanes stay clear of debris.

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity

Complete Streets elements are implemented equitably and inclusively throughout the region, with focused outreach and implementation programs to address the most vulnerable and under-invested neighborhoods.

Context Sensitivity

Complete Streets incorporate context sensitive and adjustable design approaches that consider the surrounding communities current and expected land use and transportation needs during the design and implementation of pedestrian, cyclist, and transit facilities.

Environment & Health

Complete Streets have the ability to preserve and protect the region's environment and improve public health by providing opportunities for active transportation, reducing vehicle miles traveled, decreasing pollution caused by motor vehicles. Complete Streets will also assist in effectively managing stormwater through the implementation of green infrastructure.

Economic Vitality

Complete streets support economic development through access to business locations via various mobility options. These mobility options have the potential to contribute to job creation and retention as individuals are provided transportation choice for travel to and from places of employment.

II. Application of this Policy

Allocating funding to projects with Complete Streets design elements is key to building a safe and interconnected transportation network. This Complete Streets Policy will become part of the MPO's planning and programming process. The MPO shall also incorporate this policy into land use and transportation policies undertaken by the agency.

The principles of this policy will also guide the MPO in the development and update of all planning documents, including federally-required documents and other plans and studies. These include, but are not limited to, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Human Services Transportation Plan, Transportation System Management and Operations Plan, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and Regional Traffic Safety Action Plan.

This Complete Streets Policy will become part of the MPO's programming process. To facilitate this, the MPO shall develop a project scoring criteria that incorporates Complete Street elements to rank and prioritize federal funding allocated to the Rockford urbanized area, including the Transportation Alternative Program (TAP), Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG), and Carbon Reduction Program. The following criteria shall be assigned heavier weights: projects with active transportation infrastructure;

projects that serve underserved communities; projects that alleviate disparities in geography, health, safety, and access; and improve safety while increasing multimodal level of service.

III. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusivity

The transportation network provides facilities for various modes of transportation including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, motorist, emergency responders, and freight. Individuals using the transportation network for any purpose deserve safe facilities regardless of age or ability. The region is committed to advancing transportation equity through the Complete Streets approach by investing in the most underserved communities and prioritizing projects and roadway designs that serve the most vulnerable users of the transportation network.

There are populations and communities within the region have higher transportation burdens, have access barriers to resources and opportunities, and have traditionally been underrepresented in planning and decision-making processes. These populations include low-income individuals, people of color, seniors, children, individuals with disabilities, and people living in households without access to a private automobile.

These groups are more likely to walk, bike or use public transportation and are at a higher risk of injury or death while doing so. These groups must be specifically considered when improving the transportation network. Additionally, incorporating equity considerations when evaluating transportation infrastructure maintenance is important in order to ensure accessibility for vulnerable users.

IV. Commitment in All Projects and Phases

Multi-modal transportation projects present opportunities to enhance roadway network safety for all users as well as ensure the network is accessible, convenient, affordable, resilient, and reliable. Therefore, this Complete Streets Policy is to be used to help inform decisions through all project phases (planning, design, engineering, construction, and maintenance) in order to ensure safe and equitable access for all users of the network. This policy shall be applied to all transportation projects including new construction, reconstruction, resurfacing, restoration, and rehabilitation.

Construction and maintenance work can create barriers and increased burden for people walking, bicycling, using wheelchairs or other mobility devices. The region shall ensure that all construction zones provide appropriate accommodations for people regardless of the mode of transportation. The region shall also ensure all users can use a chosen route safely during times in which repair work infringes on the right-of-way, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, transit stops, or accessibility infrastructure, such as curb ramps.

V. Exceptions to the Policy

The policy includes flexible implementation guidelines and is expected to be incorporated into all projects, when feasible. Streets and transportation infrastructure should be built to provide the highest level of service for all users regardless of mode of travel. This Complete Street Policy's is comprehensive and shall apply to all streets within the region, when appropriate based on the context of the surrounding area.

All roadway projects to which this policy applies will be reviewed by the Rockford Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for consistency. In the event the MPO determines a project does not comply with this policy and is therefore ineligible for inclusion into a plan or to receive funding, the applicant may petition for an exception to this policy. Requests for exceptions will be reviewed by the MPO Technical Committee

for recommendation to the Policy Committee. The MPO Policy Committee will have sole authority to approve exceptions to this policy.

Exceptions to this Policy may be granted upon review and approval under the following circumstances:

1. Accommodation is not necessary on roadways where specific users are prohibited, such as bicycle on interstates.
2. The cost of accommodating the needs of a particular user group for the transportation project would be disproportionately high relative to the current or future need or probable use of the facilities by the particular user group. This determination should be made with due consideration to future users, latent demand, and the social and economic value of providing a safer and more convenient transportation system for all users.
3. There is a documented absence of current and future need based on factors such as pedestrian and cyclist counts, land use, or connectivity.
4. Funding source is restricted in terms of how funds can be used or which transportation modes can be supported.
5. Project is in final design or construction as of the effective date of this policy.

VI. Design Guidelines and Flexibility

The region strives to use the best design guidelines and standards in order to maximize flexible design and ensure that design solutions are proactive and address the safety and comfort of all users. The region shall follow established design standards which provide guidance on multimodal street design and support Complete Streets.

Established design standards include, but are not limited to:

- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE)
- American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)
- National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)

VII. Land Use and Context Sensitivity

Complete Street solutions are not one size fits all and streets may not have the same elements to accommodate all modes of transportation in the same manner. Complete Street elements should be flexible and must be implemented in a context sensitive manner with respect to the surrounding community, demographics, present and future land uses, transportation needs, as well as considerations for the natural and built environments.

Context sensitivity reflects the desires of the communities affected by implementation of transportation improvements. As such, the Complete Street process and design elements aim to support a range of goals in order to have balanced economic, social, environmental, and transportation objectives, including enhancing scenic, historic, and environmental resources as well as ensuring access to businesses. Complete Street shall allow for flexible and sensitive roadway design to address community needs and values.

VIII. Implementation

The region shall make Complete Streets a routine part of everyday operations, when feasible, and will approach transportation projects as an opportunity to improve streets and mobility for all users.

Implementation of this Complete Streets Policy will heavily rely on the local jurisdictions and organizations who manage, implement, and fund projects which impact the public infrastructure and right-of-way. Therefore, collaboration and clear communication between local jurisdictions is required to identify opportunities to incorporate and implement Complete Street elements. The MPO shall ensure internal coordination among partner agencies to effectively implement the Complete Street Policy while making the best use of fiscal resources.

IX. Performance Measurement, Reporting and Accountability

Tracking progress of this policy shall be completed in coordination with local jurisdictions in a transparent manner. The MPO will track and document progress made through the implementation this policy in the form of an annual report, which will include:

- Progress made on each performance measure during the previous year;
- Public engagement undertaken; and
- Exceptions granted to incorporating Complete Streets into transportation project, citing specific reasons.

Performance measures will be used to track Complete Street Implementation progress, prioritize projects, and evaluate designs. The MPO will evaluate this policy every five years and may make recommendations for amendments to this Policy.

The MPO will collect and report information regarding each performance measure listed below:

- Number of non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries;
- Number of new pedestrian and bicycle facilities;
- Transit ridership;
- Bicycle and pedestrian counts; and
- Mode of transportation to work.

As part of the MPO's ongoing efforts to improve transportation access for traditionally marginalized populations, equity shall be a part of the performance measure listed to the extent in which data is available. Equity will be measured using considerations outlined by the MPO's Title VI and Environmental Justice Considerations document.

The MPO will review this policy every five years to ensure that the policy meets current best practices.