

Complete Streets Policy

City of New Hope



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INTRODUCTION

Active living is a way of life that integrates physical activity into daily routines, through activities such as biking, walking and/or taking transit.

Active Living is important because it:

- Improves physical and mental health
- Decreases risk of chronic disease
- Reduces medical costs associated with chronic disease
- Reduces transportation costs
- Reduces pollution and improves air quality
- Builds safer, stronger communities
- Increases quality of life

In January of 2010, the city of New Hope joined Active Living Hennepin County (ALHC), a partnership of cities, businesses, state and local agencies, and the county. ALHC members work together to increase opportunities for active living in their communities through policy change, infrastructure planning, marketing and communications, mentoring new and potential organizations, and hosting workshop events. ALHC is funded through Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota and the State Health Improvement Program (SHIP).

In the city's resolution of support for ALHC, it outlined the dangers of inactivity, the barriers to activity, and the need to make infrastructure, programmatic and policy changes to promote and support active living at the local level. One such way to accomplish this is through the adoption and implementation of Complete Streets.

Complete Streets are defined as roadways that enable safe and convenient access for all users, of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and personal, emergency and commercial vehicles and are conducive to efficient movement and mobility of people and goods. With strong support from the Citizens Advisory Commission (CAC) and staff, the city adopted a Complete Streets resolution in January of 2011. The resolution called for the CAC and staff to craft a Complete Streets Policy. This document is the result of such work.

BACKGROUND

History

New Hope was primarily developed in the 1960s and 1970s during a time in which the personal automobile dominated land use and transportation planning practices and policies. As a result, the city is highly auto-oriented and many areas lack adequate connections to adjoining neighborhoods, parks, commercial areas and community institutions.

Since then, our economy, demographics and personal attitudes have changed drastically - we face rising gas prices, growing senior and immigrant populations, and growing proportions of the population want to live in bikeable and walkable neighborhoods. These changes mean we can no longer build transportation systems as they were built in the past. Our transportation system needs to reflect our changing world. Complete Streets is, in a sense, a return to the pedestrian-oriented streets of the past, while at the same time, a view into our future.

Benefits

The benefits to adopting and implementing a Complete Streets policy are immense, as well as measurable and immeasurable. Those benefits may include:

1. Safety. Currently, many Minnesotans do not feel safe walking or biking in their neighborhoods. In many neighborhoods, there is no dedicated space for pedestrians and bicyclists and cars travel too fast and too close. In the last ten years, more than 500 pedestrians have been killed in Minnesota and more than 20,000 injured. Providing for adequate spaces for all users will reduce accidents and increase a sense of security.
2. Providing options. Not everyone uses a personal vehicle as their means of transportation. In fact, 40% of Minnesotans do not drive because they are too young, too old, cannot afford a car, have a disability or choose not to drive. It is important to provide alternative and reasonable choices for everyone.
3. Health. As the reliance on the personal vehicle has increased, so has the rate of obesity. Currently, more than 60% of Minnesotans are overweight, which, if left unchecked will result in \$3.7 billion additional health care costs by 2020. By providing residents and workers with options to bike and walk, more may be willing to do so, possibly helping to reduce health care costs and obesity rates.
4. Community and Economic Development. The desire to live and work in highly walkable neighborhoods, especially by both empty nesters and young professionals, is a highly documented phenomenon that occurred in the last two decades. In fact, now major real estate agencies provide "walkability scores" on home listings as this has become such an important aspect of finding a home to homebuyers. Homeowners are searching for neighborhoods with great accessibility, local amenities and attractions and exciting, lively commercial areas. In fact, a national study has shown that home values in more walkable neighborhoods have higher values. Additionally, businesses that provide access to all users and a safe design attract more business.

5. Cost effectiveness. Complete Streets aims to design road projects with all users in mind from the beginning. This ensures that roads are built with pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders in mind the first time, rather than retrofitted after a tragedy has occurred and when costs will be much greater. Also, including amenities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders from the beginning of a design project, rather than mid-way or near the end of a project, reduces time and costs related to engineering design. There may also be ways to save costs through design of smaller roads.
6. Environment. By providing spaces for non-vehicle/transit users, it may reduce the air pollution resulting from cars and trucks. Also, by reducing the size of paved areas and providing additional green space amenities, there may be a reduction on the impact impervious areas have on storm water quantity and quality.

POLICY

This policy includes the following elements:

1. Vision
2. All Modes, Purposes and Users
3. Connectivity
4. Jurisdiction
5. Phases
6. Exceptions and Flexibility
7. Design
8. Context Sensitivity
9. Performance Standards
10. Cost Savings and Financing
11. Implementation Plan

1. Vision

In order to create a Complete Streets network, all streets and trail projects, including design, planning, reconstruction, rehabilitation, maintenance, or operations by the city of New Hope shall be designed and executed in a responsible, equitable and financially reasonable way to accommodate and encourage travel by bicyclists, pedestrians, public transportation vehicles and their passengers, and personal, emergency, and commercial vehicles in a balanced manner.

Additionally, the New Hope Complete Streets Policy is intended to:

- I. Benefit the community by improving safety, transportation options, public health, community and economic development, cost effectiveness, and the environment.
- II. Inspire the community to transform social norms and bring the community together.
- III. Prepare the city of New Hope for the future and changing demographics and economics.

2. All Modes, Purposes and Users

Transportation is a complicated and always changing set of systems. In order to create a complete transportation system, the city needs to recognize the many variants at hand. This Complete Streets policy recognizes the different modes, purpose and users.

This policy recognizes that not all people get from place to place in the same manner. Transportation users may utilize a variety of transportation modes. Hypothetically, a New Hope resident may take the bus to work, use their personal vehicle



A bus stop in Richfield, MN

to meet a friend for dinner, walk to the neighborhood store, and bike with the family to a park – all in one (busy) day. Complete Streets takes into consideration all of these transportation modes.

Additionally, this policy recognizes that people use transportation systems for different reasons, resulting in unique needs. For example, people utilizing personal vehicles may be traveling to work, tourists, or new drivers learning the rules of the road. Bicyclists may be training for a race, biking with friends to school, or commuting to work miles away. Pedestrians may be walking as a means to do errands, get their daily exercise, or to explore new neighborhoods.

Finally, this policy recognizes that there are different users in the transportation system with different needs. Differences include age, socio-economic status, physical ability, employment or skill level.

While it is likely impossible to consider and implement the specific needs of all users, **this policy encourages city leaders and staff, as well as residents and business owners, to consider the range of needs and recognize the importance of planning and designing transportation systems for all modes, purposes and users.**

3. Connectivity

In order to accommodate all modes, purposes and users, a Complete Streets **network** must be created in the city. While this policy recognizes Complete Streets is not “all modes on all roads,” it is important to create an **interconnected transportation system** in which users can easily and safely reach many potential destinations. A network approach also allows for the balancing of the needs of all users. **Complete Streets aims to be equitable rather than equal.**

4. Jurisdiction

The transportation network within the city consists of transportation systems constructed, maintained and operated by different units of government including the city, Hennepin County, Three Rivers Park District, Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit, the state of Minnesota and the federal government. This policy applies only to the transportation systems under the jurisdiction of the city of New Hope.



42nd Avenue N is a county road and a major thoroughfare in the city.

At the date of adoption of this policy, Hennepin County and the state of Minnesota have adopted Complete Streets resolutions. As a result, any funding for projects passing through either of these agencies to the city should follow a Complete Streets approach.

Additionally, it is important for the city to work closely and foster strong relationships with other jurisdictions, including those having jurisdiction within the city, such as Hennepin County, Three Rivers Park District, Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit, the state of Minnesota and the federal government, and those neighboring the city, particularly the cities of Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley and Plymouth, in creating multimodal and interconnected transportation systems that serve the city and extend beyond its borders.

Finally, in the event of development or redevelopment within the city, all private roads should aim to follow this Complete Streets policy.

5. Phases

As a fully developed community, constructing a Complete Streets network will not be easily accomplished. The existing transportation and land use framework from which the city exists will, in some instances, limit the extent to which Complete Streets can be implemented. That being said, **this policy requires that planning for all projects, including new construction, reconstruction and rehabilitation shall include Complete Streets.** Repair and major maintenance projects as well as operations work should strongly consider implementation of Complete Streets.

Considerations for implementation of Complete Streets will vary depending on the scale of the project. When given the opportunity to reconstruct an existing road, the city shall consider a wide variety of improvements and amenities that may serve different users and include many modes. Smaller projects do not present such opportunities but should not be disregarded for improvements. Minor projects may present ample opportunities to make small changes to infrastructure that may be major improvements.

In order to avoid costly retrofits, the city shall consider Complete Streets improvements at the beginning stages of planning. Retrofits, especially those mandated after an accident or loss of life, are unfortunate both in the terms of safety and financial responsibility to taxpayers.

6. Exceptions & Flexibility

While Complete Streets intends to make accommodations for all modes and users of the transportation network, it is acknowledged that it is not always possible to make such accommodations in every instance. Therefore, while the Complete Streets policy is proscriptive, it is important to allow for exceptions and flexibility. **The following exceptions are allowed:**

1. **The project involves a transportation system on which certain modes and users are prohibited, either by law or significant safety reasons. Examples include interstate freeways, bike and pedestrian trails, or malls. In the case that a particular use or mode is prohibited, an effort shall be made to accommodate that use or mode elsewhere nearby.**
2. **The cost of accommodation is excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use. In most instances, a 25% cap may be appropriate, although this figure is mentioned in an advisory, rather than absolute, sense.**
3. **The corridor has severe topographic, environmental, historic or natural resource constraints.**
4. **A well documented absence of current and future need.**
5. **Other exceptions are allowed when recommended by the Public Works, Community Development, Parks and Recreation, and Police departments, West Metro Fire-Rescue, the advisory board and approved by the City Council.**

The city believes that engineers, project managers, and land use and parks planners are talented and creative problem-solvers and should be able to address project-level barriers in ways that still achieves an environment that is supportive of all users.

7. Design

When designing Complete Streets projects in New Hope, it is important for the city to utilize the wide variety of design resources available. This includes but is not limited to:

- National Complete Streets Coalition
- Safe Routes to Schools
- American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHTO)
- Minnesota Department of Transportation
- Institute of Transportation Engineers
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines



A pedestrian oriented street in St. Louis Park, MN

There are a number of design options and tools available to the city to implement Complete Streets, each with a unique set of benefits and disadvantages. A Complete Street may include:

- Sidewalks
- Bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders)
- Special bus lanes

- Comfortable and accessible public transportation stops
- Frequent and safe crossing opportunities
- Median islands
- Accessible pedestrian signals
- Curb extensions/bump outs
- Narrower travel lanes/road diets
- Roundabouts
- Traffic calming improvements
- Improvements to create safer and more comfortable pedestrian spaces including buffer space, pedestrian-scaled lighting, street furniture, refuge islands, landscaping and public art
- Wayfinding signage
- And, when possible, the city should consider including environmental improvements (storm water, pervious space, green space) into Complete Streets projects.

The city will generally follow accepted or adopted design standards from the resources listed above when implementing improvements to fulfill this policy but will consider innovative or non-traditional design options where a comparable level of safety for users is present. Considering innovative or new ideas is especially important when working within the context of a fully developed city. The city should consider adopting its own design guidelines as a way to reflect the unique needs of New Hope.

8. Context Sensitivity



A context sensitive street in Brooklyn Park, MN

The Minnesota Complete Streets legislation states Complete Streets should be designed **“in a manner that is sensitive to the local context** and recognizes that the needs vary in urban, suburban, and rural settings.” This policy agrees with that statement. In the city’s case, the context is different at the neighborhood level – **Complete Streets maybe designed different in residential, commercial, industrial and mixed use neighborhoods. It is important to note that context sensitivity is to be considered alongside network connectivity, flexibility, innovation and the unique needs of various users.**

9. Performance Standards

Like any project involving the use of taxpayer dollars, Complete Streets should be continuously evaluated for success and opportunities for improvement. **This policy encourages the regular gauging and reporting of implementing Complete Streets through the following performance measures:**

- User data – bike, pedestrian, transit and traffic
- Crash data
- Use of new projects by mode
- Compliments and complaints
- Linear feet of pedestrian accommodations built
- Number of ADA accommodations built
- Miles of bike lanes/trails built or striped
- Number of transit accessibility accommodations built
- Number of street trees planted
- Number of exemptions from this policy approved

10. Cost Savings and Financing

Currently, the city is faced with the challenge of maintaining and replacing an aging infrastructure. As challenging as this may be, it also presents a unique opportunity to effectively and efficiently alter the city's landscape and system of networks to include Complete Streets components. The creation of a Complete Streets network is important to the city, but equally important is the responsible use of taxpayer's dollars.

Pedestrian, bicycle, transit and other improvements will no doubt add to the expense of capital improvement projects. However, there are definite trade-offs to these expenses including:

- Through the implementation of road diets (smaller drive lanes), the city can realize lower road construction and maintenance costs.
- The inclusion of trees, environmental improvements and increasing non-motorized modes of travel will benefit the city's air and water quality.
- Safety improvements will benefit the city's public and private property as well as the health of individuals.
- Increasingly, pedestrian, bicycle, transit connections and tree-lined streets are amenities homeowners desire, potentially raising property values.
- By altering the project development process to include the analysis of Complete Streets components inclusions at the beginning, rather than the end of planning, the city can avoid potentially expensive engineering and planning costs to alter plans. Likewise, this can help to avoid potential future retrofit projects.

The city also recognizes that not all taxpayers are drivers. In order to implement a Complete Streets network, the tax dollars of all users should be used in an equitable manner.

11. Implementation Plan

The adoption of the Complete Streets resolution and this policy are the first of many steps in implementing a successful Complete Streets network. The steps the city must take to implement this policy fall into two categories. The first category involves City Council and staff decisions related to policies and procedures. The second category relates to residents and business owners and their engagement.

A. City Policies and Procedures

- I. Staff training
- II. Adopt design standards
- III. Consider amendments to the City Code
- IV. Implement performance measures and evaluation
- V. Work with other jurisdictions to implement projects and connection networks
- VI. Regularly apply for grants to implement this policy
- VII. Review feasible funding sources and adopt revisions to the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), as necessary and appropriate.

B. Resident and Business Involvement

- I. Create communications program
- II. Revise project development process
- III. Appoint residents advisory board to review major infrastructure projects

City Policies and Procedures

Staff training

It is important for the city's staff to be up to date and aware of new laws, funding sources, best practices, trends and tools related to Complete Streets. Staff should be encouraged to attend related training and education events and opportunities.

Adopt design guidelines

The city should consider adopting its own design guidelines as a way to reflect the unique needs of New Hope and to provide a consistent baseline from which projects can be designed.

Consider amendments to the City Code and Comprehensive Plan

The City Code and Comprehensive Plan may require revisions to allow for Complete Streets or to make it easier to implement. In particular, the Subdivision and Platting chapter should be reviewed for possible changes. This policy should be adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan.

Implement performance measures and evaluation

Staff should regularly evaluate Complete Streets programs and provide updates to the City Council and advisory committees.

Work with other jurisdictions to implement projects and connection networks

Staff and Council should keep an open line of communication between other jurisdictions including the cities of Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley and Plymouth, Hennepin County, Three Rivers Park District, Metropolitan Council/Metro Transit, the state of Minnesota, and the federal government. The city should work with these agencies to create consistent and connected transportation networks.

Regularly apply for grants to implement this policy

Increasingly, transportation grant programs are requiring municipalities to have adopted Complete Streets policies. By adopting this policy, the city will be able to apply for a wider variety of grant programs and should do so as a means to fund new or expanded improvements.

Review feasible funding sources and adopt revisions to the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), as necessary and appropriate.

As the city does routinely, staff should review the CIP for possible ways to implement Complete Streets. This will include a review of funding sources and prioritization of projects according to need and benefit. Staff recommendations shall be reviewed with Council and open to review by the public.

Resident and Business Involvement

Create communications campaign

Complete Streets has the potential to be a major transformation of what people have been accustomed to in New Hope. The city will need to work with residents, property owners, business owners and employees to educate them on the benefits of Complete Streets. Education may also be needed on financing, safety/traffic maneuvering, and project awareness. A comprehensive and consistent communications campaign is expected to be promoted by staff, Council and advisory committees.



The annual Bike Rodeo is an important educational opportunity for area youth.

Appoint resident advisory board to review major infrastructure projects

The creation of a resident advisory board or some other residents group that meets regularly is recommended to provide oversight and on-going stewardship of these implementation items. This advisory board can also review capital projects and hold

public meetings to increase resident involvement in the planning process. The city may decide to utilize either the Planning Commission or Citizens Advisory Commission as the advisory board. If a separate board is created, members of both commissions are likely candidates for appointment.

Revise project development process

The project development process should be turned on its head, with public involvement and consideration of Complete Streets improvements taken into account at the very beginning of infrastructure planning projects. A suggested, but still flexible, process is as follows:

Step 1. Conduct Public Meeting – Conduct a public meeting to announce the project, to inform residents about the Complete Streets approach, and obtain public “buy-in.”

Step 2. Site Analysis – The site analysis will gather necessary data and identify key design constraints and opportunities for the project.

If a project under consideration is in the jurisdiction of a non-city entity, begin project discussions with those entities as early as possible in the design process to discuss design criteria.

Step 3. Design Development – Develop a preliminary design considering constraints, criteria and opportunities identified in Step 1.

Step 4. Conduct a Second Public Meeting – Proceed with public engagement by bringing plans forward to the community for further input and review. Incorporate stakeholder feedback and contributions as appropriate.

Step 5. Proceed with Final Design – Complete design plans and present to residents advisory board. Proceed to final approval by City Council.

Step 6. Construction – Include continual information on changes to project or timeline to the public.









