

City of Newton

Complete Streets Policy



§ 1. Vision

The City of Newton is committed to developing complete streets throughout the community. It is hereby the policy of the City to accommodate all users equally by creating a roadway network that meets the needs of everyone, without regard to age, ability, income, or mode(s) of transportation. The City undertakes this policy with the goal of promoting transportation options, so as to: reduce automobile congestion, improve the environment, increase public safety, encourage active lifestyles, and promote the livability and vitality of the City.

In the course of the 20th century, streets transitioned from spaces that accommodated walking and horse-driven travel, to spaces that also accommodated bicycles, rail-based transit, and ultimately automobiles. Since approximately 1920, streets have been designed and considered primarily for the use of cars. In recent years, research in transportation planning and engineering has shown that far too often streets now only work well when traversed in a motor vehicle and no longer provide safety, comfort, or convenience for those choosing to travel by any other means. As a result, the fields of transportation planning and engineering are now guiding communities to "complete their streets" by focusing efforts on understanding and meeting the needs of all uses of the street – making streets work for driving, walking, biking, taking the train or bus, or traveling in another way, as well as for the daily activities of residents and businesses on a street's edge.

The underlying principles of complete streets include promoting safety, health, economic growth, environmental protection, accessibility, and a better quality of life for travelers and residents of all ages, capacities, and incomes.

Complete streets seek context sensitive solutions in order to preserve and enhance scenic, aesthetic, historical, and environmental resources while maintaining or improving safety, mobility, and infrastructure conditions. In order to be context sensitive, complete streets approaches also value inclusion and transparency, sensitivity to the immediate context, as well as the broader physical, economic, and social setting of any particular project.

This Complete Streets Policy envisions streets that serve not only as automobile thoroughfares, but also as public spaces and community resources. Complete streets are an integrated network of roadways, sidewalks, bike lanes, and other inviting facilities for those who choose to travel by any means and for those who seek to use the streets as neighborhood resources. The City envisions that Newton's street network will be designed and operated to provide safety, comfort, and access for all who use the street, whether they use the streets as residents, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists, motorcyclists, freight haulers, service and delivery personnel, and emergency responders, etc. (collectively, "all users").

This policy directs City staff to consistently incorporate complete streets vision, principles, and values into all planning and decisions related to the city's roadways.

§ 2. Core commitments

- A. The City of Newton affirms that all users have an equal right to safe use of the roads. The City will plan, design, operate, and maintain Newton's streets so that they are safe for users of all ages and abilities.
- B. The City acknowledges the need to incorporate innovative and context sensitive approaches to environmental challenges when retrofitting or developing public infrastructure. Where applicable, the City will include elements that meet or exceed current environmental compliance standards and best practices.
- C. The City endeavors to meaningfully involve community members in relevant processes of complete streets prioritization and individual projects, and to involve them in ways that reflect a commitment to inclusiveness and equity.
- D. The City recognizes that all roadway projects, including new construction, maintenance, and reconstruction offer the opportunity to apply complete streets principles and values. The City will avail itself of those opportunities to the maximum extent practical, and will integrate complete streets principles and values into all roadway projects in order to provide a balanced and connected network for all users.

- (1) Complete streets principles and values shall be incorporated into all publicly and privately funded projects. All transportation infrastructure and street design projects requiring funding or approval by the City of Newton, as well as projects funded by the state and federal governments, including but not limited to Chapter 90 funds, City improvement grants, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the MassWorks Infrastructure Program, Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Capital Funding, and other state and federal funds for street and infrastructure design shall adhere to the Complete Streets Policy, as appropriate.

Private developments and related roadway design components shall adhere to the complete streets principles. In addition, to the extent practical, state-owned roadways will comply with the Complete Streets Policy, including the design, construction, and maintenance of such roadways within City boundaries.

- (2) City departments, in consultation with a Complete Streets Committee (described below), will use best judgment regarding the practicality of applying complete streets principles for routine roadway maintenance and projects, such as repaving, restriping, and so forth.
- (3) Transportation infrastructure projects, including but not limited to roadway reconstruction, roadway reconfigurations, or subdivisions, may be excluded upon approval by the Newton Complete Streets Committee, where documentation and data indicate that any of the following apply:
 - i. Roadways where specific users are prohibited by law, such as interstate freeways or pedestrian malls. An effort will be made, in these cases, for accommodations elsewhere.
 - ii. Cost or impacts of expanding multi-modal accommodations are excessively disproportionate to the need or probable future use.

- iii. Minor, routine, and preventative maintenance of the transportation network that does not change the roadway geometry or operations; such as mowing, sweeping, overlay, microsurfacing, crack sealing, and spot repair.
- iv. Private Ways, which are neither owned nor maintained by the City. Private ways shall be encouraged to consult with the Complete Streets Committee before beginning projects.
- v. Other City policies, regulations, or requirements contradict or preclude implementation of complete streets principles.

§ 3. Best practices

In meeting the complete streets vision and commitments described above the following best practices will guide the activities of the Complete Streets Committee.

- A. The City of Newton will carry out the Complete Streets Policy cooperatively within all relevant departments in the City and, to the greatest extent possible, with private developers, state, regional, and federal agencies, as well as members of the public.
- B. The City commits to considering all potential complete streets projects in a context-sensitive way with regards to both potential infrastructure changes and the process through which they are adopted. The City will establish opportunities for ongoing and project-specific engagement around complete streets topics.
- C. The City recognizes that complete streets principles and values may be achieved through major infrastructure projects as well as incrementally through a series of smaller improvements and maintenance activities over time.
- D. The City will integrate the Complete Streets Policy into its existing policies, planning, and design efforts related to roadway development and maintenance as well as future policy, planning, and roadway design work.
- E. The latest design guidance, standards, and recommendations available will be used in the implementation of complete streets principles, including but not limited to the most up-to-date versions of the following:
 - (1) The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD); the United States Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration, 2009. <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/>
 - (2) A Policy on Geometric Design of Highway and Streets; American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO), 6th Edition - 2011.
 - (3) Project Development & Design Guide; Massachusetts Highway Department, January 2006. <https://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/DoingBusinessWithUs/ManualsPublicationsForms/ProjectDevelopmentDesignGuide.aspx>
 - (4) Urban Street Design Guide, National Association of City Transportation Officials, October 2013. <http://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/>

- (5) Boston Complete Streets Design Guidelines; City of Boston, October 2013. <http://bostoncompletestreets.org/>
- (6) 521 CMR Rules and Regulations; Massachusetts Architectural Access Board (MAAB), 2006. <http://www.mass.gov/courts/case-legal-res/law-lib/laws-by-source/cmr/500-599cmr/521cmr.html>
- (7) ADA Standards for Accessible Design; United States Department of Justice, September 2010. <http://www.ada.gov/regs2010/2010ADAStandards/2010ADASTandards.htm>
- (8) Public Rights of Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) DRAFT; United States Access Board, July 2011. <https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/streets-sidewalks/public-rights-of-way/proposed-rights-of-way-guidelines>
- (9) Low Impact Development Toolkit, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, June 2014, <http://www.mapc.org/low-impact-dev-toolkit>
- (10) National Menu of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Stormwater, US Environmental Protection Agency, January 2016, <https://www.epa.gov/npdes/national-menu-best-management-practices-bmps-stormwater#post>
- (11) Documents and plans created for the City of Newton, including but not limited to, the 2007 Comprehensive Plan, 2006 Newton Tree Manual, 2011 Bicycle Network Plan, 2014 Parking Management Plan, 2015 Stormwater Infrastructure Improvement Plan, 2015 Newton Centre Parking Strategy, and the 2016 Newton-in-Motion Transportation Strategy (forthcoming).

§ 4. Implementation

A. Complete Streets Committee Organization

- (1) The City will utilize interdepartmental coordination to promote the most responsible and efficient use of resources for activities within the public way.
- (2) The existing Complete Streets Working Group will be expanded and formalized as the Complete Streets Committee (the Committee). This committee is comprised of members of relevant City departments required to implement this vision. The Complete Streets Committee will be a multidisciplinary team and members will include representation from: Department of Public Works (DPW), Planning and Development Department, Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the ADA Coordinator, Office of the Director of Sustainability, Parks and Recreation Department, Mayor's Office, and other committees, departments, or organizations within the City as the Mayor shall determine.
- (3) The City will secure training for relevant City staff and decision-makers on both the technical content of complete streets principles and best practices, as well as community engagement methods for implementing the Complete Streets Policy.

B. Complete Streets Committee Purpose Statement

The City of Newton, with the leadership of the Complete Streets Committee, shall make complete streets practices a routine part of everyday operations, shall approach every transportation project and program as an opportunity to improve streets and the transportation network for all users, and shall work in coordination with all relevant departments, agencies,

and jurisdictions to achieve complete streets principles and values throughout Newton's transportation network.

C. Complete Streets Committee Activities

- (1) In accordance with the vision, core commitments, and best practice of this policy, the Committee will review roadway projects and make recommendations regarding complete streets opportunities. As practicable, the Committee will meet and provide recommendations in a project's early stages of design.
- (2) The Committee will develop context-specific community engagement strategies, as appropriate, in order to ensure that the perspectives of community members are considered and incorporated in the process of a project. The Committee will collaborate with the Community Engagement Manager and relevant stakeholder groups to ensure two-way communications about the implementation of this policy.
- (3) The Committee will evaluate projects within the Capital Improvement Plan, Stormwater Infrastructure Improvement Plan, and other citywide effort to encourage implementation of this policy.
- (4) The Committee shall ensure the consolidation and maintenance of a comprehensive inventory of street infrastructure and transportation assets, and shall highlight projects that eliminate gaps in the sidewalk and bikeway network.
- (5) The Committee will seek out appropriate sources of funding and grants for implementation of the Complete Streets Policy.
- (6) The Committee will make recommendations to the Mayor concerning the need to alter existing practices that may be impeding implementation of this policy.
- (7) The Committee will develop performance measures to periodically assess the effectiveness of implementing the Complete Streets Policy and report on such evaluation to the Public Facilities Committee of the City Council (See §5).
- (8) This policy in no way alters the decision making role of City Council committees that review and approve roadway projects. Twice a year, the Complete Streets Committee will provide updates to the Public Facilities Committee of the City Council and will provide guidance on particular projects as appropriate.

§ 5. Evaluation of effectiveness

The Complete Streets Committee will develop performance measures to periodically assess the rate, success, and effectiveness of implementing the Complete Streets Policy. The Committee will determine the frequency of assessment and utilize appropriate metrics for analyzing the success of this policy. These metrics may include the total miles of new bicycle lanes; the linear feet of new or improved pedestrian facilities; number of projects incorporating low impact development techniques; number of intersection improvements made to improve safety for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists; number of accessible pedestrian signals; frequency of crashes by mode; percentage of children walking or bicycling to school; and/or number of trips by mode. The Committee will report on these metrics in its semi-annual reporting to the City Council's Public Facilities Committee.