Kansas
LTAP Fact Sheet
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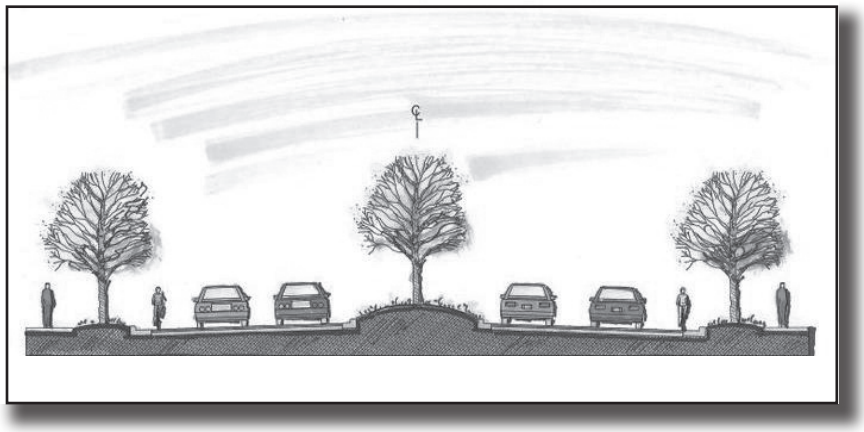
Complete Streets Address the "Complete Picture"

By Matthew Barnett

A look at how to design streets to meet the needs of all users.



FHWA

This is one example of a Complete Streets design, if you have sufficient right-of-way.

"Complete Streets" is a nationally recognized phrase referring to infrastructure that is designed, operated and maintained to enable safe and convenient access for multi-modal transportation. Complete Streets are planned for the travel of all users: pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, as well as freight and automobiles regardless of age or ability. Complete Streets do not have one set design to fit all roadways; rather they offer a flexible planning process to suit each situation. Complete Streets can vary based on context, topography, road function, speed of traffic, local pedestrian and bicycle demand, and available right-of-way (ROW).

Complete Streets have a variety of components that address different travel needs. Common components include sidewalks, bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders), designated bus lanes or turn-outs, accessible transit stops and facilities, frequent pedestrian crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, green landscaping design, and in some cases low impact development storm water features. Different roadway characteristics and traffic volumes call for different components.

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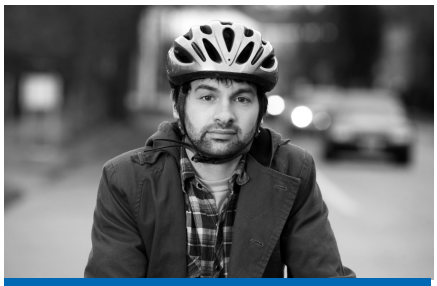
The main goal of a Complete Street is to balance safety and convenience for all users. The illustration at left shows a sample layout of components that can fit within an 88 foot ROW, showing that it is possible to include each element with sufficient ROW.

Each component of a Complete Street design shows the benefits the design can have for a community in terms of transportation accessibility and safety.

There are several ways to accommodate transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and motor vehicle traffic in a corridor containing Complete Streets. While there are inherent conflicts in planning and designing for a variety of modes for public infrastructure, these conflicts can be minimized through engineering and public education and involvement. In fact, one of the most important factors in user satisfaction comes from the involvement that each type of roadway user has in the creation of infrastructure design plans. Complete Streets support many of the goals and visions cities have by increasing equity, health, safety, and comfort for all users.

The steps involved in taking a Complete Streets approach include adopting a Complete Streets policy and adopting comprehensive plan and



In the City of Salina, if a mode cannot be accommodated on a new street, an alternate street must be identified at that time to accommodate that mode.

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development code language to support Complete Streets.

Iowa City, Iowa

Iowa City's Complete Streets policy was adopted in 2008. The plan requires that bicycle, pedestrian and transit facilities be included in all subdivision plans, unless an existing parallel trail is located near a proposed street. Trail connections are required if a park is nearby; likewise, bike racks are required at all commercial and high-density residential properties.

The plan also states that pedestrian connections are required from sidewalks to doors on commercial properties. Freight transportation was not as much of a component due to the low use of freight transportation in the city.

Improvements planned and completed: A pedestrian and bicycle count program is to be added to the City's traffic count program. Older neighborhoods have been retrofitted with sidewalks and bicycle lanes, equaling eight miles of sidewalk/bicycle lane improvements in the city. Transit stops have been upgraded to include paved areas and bus turnouts.

Fort Collins, Colorado

In 1997, Fort Collins passed a comprehensive city plan, and in 1999, they established a Complete Streets policy. In a city-county joint effort, separate but complementary bike and pedestrian plans were established [they are often combined], which allowed a better analysis of the needs of each of these modes of transportation. Freight transportation was not addressed due to low incidence of that mode. The city's plan allows for more detail in its design standards, such as dedicated bike lanes and enhanced pedestrian environments.

Public involvement was a big part of the planning process. There is both pro-growth and anti-growth sentiment in the community. Complete Streets made growth more palatable due to its aesthetic, recreational and safety benefits. In the public work sessions, the plan was designed to be flexible in its implementation. Greater emphasis was placed on design flexibility for corridors with a high degree of density. Currently the city is focused on retrofitting older neighborhoods that do not have Complete Streets facilities such as bike lanes, sidewalks, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, and green landscaping design.

Champaign, Illinois

Like Iowa City, Champaign, Illinois, implemented their transportation plan in 2008 with Complete Street concepts in mind. Input came from public meetings, multiple drafting sessions, Council workshops, engineers and a local bicycling group. The result: more consistent street cross section diagrams, a better balance of Complete Street requirements and an updated development code.

Improvements made: Bicycle facility standards have been improved on a citywide basis. This allowed construction of improved connections to the university and four additional miles of bicycle lanes during the summer of 2010. Green Street, the community's first Complete Street, has been constructed and the City has seen, as a result, increased economic development in the area, reduced congestion and a more aesthetically pleasing atmosphere for pedestrians.

Salina, Kansas

Salina is just now implementing Complete Street designs in their future road network. The policy of the City of Salina is to design streets that accommodate all transportation modes. If a mode cannot be accommodated, it must be justified and an alternative street must be identified at that time to accommodate multiple users. Complete Streets should at a minimum strive to incorporate the following elements:

- Automobile lanes.
- Sidewalks and pedestrian amenities (on both sides of the street).
- Dedicated bike lanes or striped shared lanes.
- Transit (bus) stops.
- Pedestrian amenities.

In addition to the design of Complete Streets, Salina has identified 12 streets as "impact streets." Impact streets have a higher standard of aesthetic design. This is achieved primarily through streetscaping (street trees, plantings, artistic lighting, etc.), pedestrian amenities (benches, trash receptacles, water fountains), enhanced crosswalk facilities and other improvements such as public art.

Impact streets are defined as streets that people identify with in a community—streets that citizens use on a regular basis to access key areas of the community, and more importantly, these are streets that visitors to Salina are likely to use. The City of Salina plans to showcase the quality of the built environment through these streets.

Lawrence, Kansas

Lawrence is in the beginning stages of garnering public and political support for Complete Streets. This fall there will be a Complete Streets public presentation and an invitation-only workshop presented by two speakers who are part of the National Complete Streets Coalition—Carol Kachadoorian and Michael Moule. The city wants to build public support with the presentation and then discuss possible policy and potential infrastructure improvements.

Specifics of the workshop are being planned, but the intended result will be a city-specific plan for laying the foundation of Complete Streets in Lawrence. Information about workshops available from the National

Complete Streets Coalition can be found at their Web site: http://www.completestreets.org.

A report completed by the University of Kansas in partnership with the City of Lawrence laid the groundwork for the City's Complete Streets discussion. The report, Complete Streets: Lawrence, KS Considerations for the Future of Multimodal Transportation, discusses the existing conditions of Lawrence's infrastructure and policy, as well as defining Complete Streets. At the end of the study, potential improvements are discussed. The study also talks about peer cities, their successes and problems, and what lessons can be learned from them.

Topeka, Kansas

Topeka's City Council approved a resolution that "paved the way" for a future policy for Complete Streets. The resolution makes Complete Streets ideals a strong consideration for new projects. As of now, however, a Complete Streets policy has not been adopted.

In Topeka, most Complete Streets will be retrofitted, according to Tim Paris, City of Topeka Planning Department, who explained that Topeka is not seeing a lot of new road projects right now.

Paris said retrofitting is much more expensive than designing new projects to include Complete Streets design. And that brings up the question of funding. Where will it come from?

The City Council is responsible for approving the budget. Presently there are no funds that can be used directly for the types of improvements needed to create Complete Streets designs. The city passed a half-cent tax for the improvement of existing structures, but none of that money can be used for new structures and design elements. Paris explained that if there isn't an existing structure (like a median, for example) to begin with, they can't fund it with the half-cent tax funding. The city generally uses these funds for repaving.

The construction of Champaign's first Complete Street has resulted in increased economic development in the area, reduced congestion, and a better pedestrian environment.

Paris is hopeful that they can find funding for Complete Streets retrofits from other outlets and expand the scope of improvement projects that use the half-cent tax. Public support is key to getting the City Council to allocate funds for Complete Streets projects. Organizations like the Heartland Healthy Neighborhood Coalition are great supporters of Complete Streets, but Paris explained that there just might not be enough people who walk, ride or bike to work and shopping districts for the City Council to make funding available. Paris said he wished more people in Topeka made use of other modes of transportation besides their cars.

Topeka's situation illuminates a Catch-22 in implementing Complete Streets. Public support from multi-modal users increases the chances of getting local funding for Complete Streets and retrofits. However, safe pedestrian, bicycling and transit facilities need to be in place to encourage people to use multiple modes of transportation in the first place. The communities profiled in this article are being forward-thinking in building Complete Streets concepts into their road construction policies now—so that all modes can grow with the community and be supported over time.

More information

For more information on Complete Streets, visit the Web site for the National Complete Streets Coalition at http://www.completestreets.org.

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Sources:

• Adapted from: Mortinger, J., Pappas, N., Rudolph, B. and Girdler, T. Complete Streets Lawrence, Kansas: Considerations for the Future of Multimodal Transportation, May 2010.
• Source of illustration: http://health.utah.gov/obesity/images/complete%20streets.jpg
• Jessica Mortinger. Personal interview. City of Lawrence. 8-5-10.
• Carol Kachadoorian. Personal interview. National Complete Streets Coalition. 8-10-10.
• Nancy Johnson. Personal interview. Heartland Healthy Neighborhood Coalition. 8-10-10.
• Tim Paris. Personal interview. City of Topeka. 8-11-10.