

COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

The City of Minneapolis is committed to building a complete and integrated public right-of-way to ensure that everyone can travel safely and comfortably along and across a street regardless of whether they are walking, biking, taking transit, or driving. This Complete Streets policy will inform decision-making throughout all phases of transportation projects and initiatives. The overarching policy purpose is the establishment of a modal priority framework that prioritizes public right-of-way use in the following order: walking, biking or taking transit, and driving motor vehicles.

1. Purpose and Vision

In the 20th century, transportation planning and infrastructure investments in Minneapolis – as in most US cities – became skewed towards providing more efficient movement for motorized travel. Minneapolis is committed to rebalancing its transportation network by clearly prioritizing walking, taking transit, and biking over driving motorized vehicles, in a manner that provides for acceptable levels of service for all modes. This approach is consistent with – and builds on – guidance that Minneapolis has already established in its transportation policy plan, *Access Minneapolis*¹, its *Comprehensive Plan (the Minneapolis Plan for Sustainable Growth)*, and many other adopted policies.

By implementing this Complete Streets policy:

- Transportation in Minneapolis will occur via complete, integrated, efficient, safe, comfortable and well-maintained networks for all modes; and,
- Transportation-related decisions will align with the *Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan for Sustainable Growth*, which states: “Minneapolis will build, maintain, and enhance access to multi-modal transportation options for residents and businesses through a balanced system of transportation modes that supports the City’s land use vision, reduces adverse transportation impacts, decreases the overall dependency on automobiles, and reflects the City’s pivotal role as the center of the regional transportation network”; and,
- The health of Minneapolis residents, workers, and visitors will be improved through walking and biking; and,
- The environment, both in terms of local air and water quality and in terms of global impacts like climate change, will be positively impacted by the City’s transportation-related decision-making; and,
- The local economy will be supported and strengthened through the provision of safe, efficient transportation options and vibrant public spaces; and,
- City streets and sidewalks – our largest public space – will foster livable, walkable, bicycle-friendly, green neighborhoods by including healthy trees, plants, permeable surfaces, and design features that help define the character of a street while providing added benefits of shade, summer cooling, reduced energy consumption, and improved water quality; and,
- Minneapolis will create an integrated transportation network that provides all residents access to employment, education, and other needs for daily living, regardless of their age, access to, or ability to operate a motorized vehicle.
- Ensure private development contributes to the objective of this policy.

2. Policy Framework

The City establishes a modal priority framework that prioritizes people as they walk, bicycle, and take transit over people when they drive. The modal priority framework will inform City transportation related decision-making. Minneapolis offers modal options through networks of interconnected routes, but there will be City streets that do not have specific accommodations for all modes, e.g., residential streets without freight vehicles, car-free streets, trails, interstate routes that prohibit walking and



¹ Access Minneapolis encompasses the City’s Bicycle Master Plan and Pedestrian Master Plan, amongst others.

bicycling, streets without transit routes, or streets without dedicated bicycle facilities.

City right-of-way, in addition to serving a transportation role, is the largest and most important public space in the City. To truly serve the highest-priority modes, streets must be vital, healthy *places*, which include healthy trees, plants, permeable surfaces, public art, and other design features. These elements help define the character of a street, provide shade and cooling, reduce energy consumption, absorb and cleanse stormwater runoff, support car and bicycle sharing, and provide data to facilitate trip planning, parking, and transfers between modes of transportation. The importance of these elements is most important along streets with higher traffic volumes, by helping offset the localized impacts of through traffic on adjacent neighborhoods.

Although not identified specifically, emergency service providers are unique users of the transportation system and require special consideration to allow for reasonable and efficient access to destinations in all parts of the City. Similarly, the movement of commercial goods and services will continue to be a high priority for the City, with an understanding that larger vehicles may present challenges within constrained urban environments.

This modal priority framework is established for the following reasons:

- All trips begin or end with walking (with or without mobility device), regardless of the primary mode(s) of travel.
- Transit extends the range of travel for people when they walk or bicycle, provides greater efficiencies and operational benefits than motor vehicles, and is accessible to those unable to walk, bicycle, or drive.
- Bicycling extends the range of higher-speed non-motorized travel, while serving commuting, delivery, social, and other purposes.
- Safety of the most vulnerable street users must be the highest priority, because they are the most at risk.
- The priority modes have an important set of benefits that motor vehicle travel lacks, including health, the environment, land use patterns, economic development, and congestion reduction.
- The City's highest-priority modes have historically encountered underinvestment and rebalancing our transportation networks necessitates addressing the needs of those uses.
- Transportation investments influence travel choices, such that greater investment in high-quality pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities facilitate less reliance upon motor vehicles.
- Motor-centric priorities and investments incentivize greater motorized vehicle usage, accelerate congestion, elevate parking demand, and increase pollution.
- The policy will enhance the safety, convenience, comfort, and efficiency of travel for people of all ages and abilities.

3. Implementation

City transportation-related decisions will follow the Complete Streets policy. This includes all types and phases of projects, including programming, planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance. Implementation of Complete Streets will encompass all elements within the public right-of-way, including landscaping, transit shelters, lighting, signs, traffic lights, parking meters, bicycle parking, and furniture. The process by which the Complete Streets policy is applied will be scaled appropriately for each individual project or initiative, including private developments that influence the public right-of-way. This process will coincide with completion of the Complete Streets project delivery checklist, which is intended to document the implementation of the policy.

Individual routine maintenance activities (including but not limited to sweeping, mowing, pothole repair, sign replacement, etc.) must reflect the Complete Streets policy's modal priority framework, but will not be required to go through a Complete Streets policy process. However, the overall planning for such activities will reflect the City's modal priority framework that prioritizes people as they walk, bicycle, and take transit.

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The City will continue to engage partner agencies, schools, businesses, neighborhood associations, and developers in a cooperative manner throughout implementation of the Complete Streets policy process. Application of the policy shall apply to all public and private projects and initiatives that interact with and impact the public right-of-way. Multimodal performance metrics will be established to track the progress towards achieving the City's vision of Complete Streets. Periodic evaluations will be necessary to assess each metric's effectiveness, establish benchmarks, and determine if new or refined metrics are needed.

Programming

The City's long-range Capital Improvement Program will be informed by the modal priority framework that prioritizes people as they walk, take transit, and bicycle. This includes prioritizing projects that will significantly improve the pedestrian, bicycle, and transit networks.

Planning

The planning phase consists primarily of coordination amongst City staff and external agencies, as well as the completion of a Complete Streets checklist. The Complete Streets checklist is part of a Project Rationale and Overview, which provides City staff with a tool to document activities and decision-making from planning through final design.

The City incorporates a context-based approach that will be informed by the modal priority framework. Designs will be based upon project-specific objectives and context sensitive design solutions supported by the modal priority, street typology and place types², documented modal needs, multimodal metrics, issues, opportunities, functionality, environmental or social factors, right-of-way impacts, and input from stakeholders and the community.

This approach will include review of relevant adopted City plans (i.e., *Minneapolis Comprehensive Plan for Sustainable Growth*, *Access Minneapolis*, and the *Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans*, etc.) and seek to provide a transportation system that offers people numerous modal options through networks of interconnected routes within and through the City and continue to seek opportunities to address and/or eliminate gaps, barriers, or connectivity in the non-motorized transportation networks.

During the planning phase City staff will work with other City departments, external agencies, City advisory committees, and elected officials as necessary to identify an equitable engagement and outreach approach in a manner that is scaled appropriately and defines specific goals. The City will continue to explore new and innovative public engagement approaches that promote greater engagement from stakeholders, when appropriate and accessible.

Design

The design of the public right-of-way will follow recognized design standards, best practices and guidelines to achieve the vision of Complete Streets, including *Design Guidelines for Streets and Sidewalks (Access Minneapolis)*, *NACTO Urban Street Design Guide*, *AASHTO, ITE*, and, *MnDOT Local State-Aid Route Standards*. The City will continue to explore flexible and innovative designs, and continue to evaluate the latest design standards and innovative concepts, seeking guidance from established best practices. Where standards established by other units of government, such as *MnDOT Local State-Aid Route Standards*, conflict with the City's Complete Streets

² Access Minneapolis provides context-based geometric designs and treatments that reflect adjoining land uses and functionality to reinforce modal priorities, activation of the public realm, stormwater management, and corridor greening.

vision, the City will seek design exceptions and variances. The City will continue to examine existing standards and work to influence established standards to be more in alignment with the City's Complete Streets vision.

Design of the public right-of-way will be informed and guided by the City's street typologies and place types. The City supports opportunities to incorporate sustainable alternatives and placemaking elements within the public right-of-way, which may include landscaping, green spaces, public art, or stormwater management elements. When designing a street, the City will consider and evaluate metrics for all modes within the right-of-way. The City will work to identify context-based multimodal metrics that prioritize the safety, convenience, and comfort of the prioritized travel modes.

Construction

Impacts to pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users will be limited to the extent possible during construction. Safe, convenient, and connected detours will be established for people as they walk, take transit, and bicycle when those networks are temporarily interrupted by construction work. Construction will impact trees and green space as little as possible, to preserve and protect this important green infrastructure. The City will continue to explore innovative construction methods to increase the safety, convenience, and utility of pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities.

Operation

The operation of the public right-of-way is a significant opportunity to implement the City's modal priority framework that prioritizes people as they walk, bicycle, and take transit. The timing of traffic signals will reflect this modal priority framework, such that signal timing plans will incorporate multimodal metrics. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the operation of the public right-of-way should support safe, comfortable, and convenient travel for people that choose to walk, bicycle, take transit, or drive a vehicle.

From time to time a street may be closed temporarily to automotive traffic, to accommodate community events or activities, such as Open Streets, which support the implementation the City's Complete Streets vision. The City will work with residents to accommodate events that build community and improve the pedestrian and bicycle user-experience (e.g., National Night Out, paint-the-pavement projects, etc.).

Maintenance

The modal priorities of the Complete Streets policy shall be used when planning, prioritizing, and budgeting maintenance activities. These activities would include, but are not limited to, snow and ice control, street cleaning, pavement repair, pavement marking, etc.

4. Exemptions

All transportation projects and initiatives are subject to the Complete Streets policy and related process. When adopted City plans and goals call for facilities following the modal priority framework and a proposed project does not include those facilities in accordance with the modal priority framework, an exemption will be required from the City Council based upon the following list:

- Cost of a new facility for a particular mode is excessively disproportionate to need or probable future use.
- Documented lack of current or future need (i.e., higher-quality parallel routes in close proximity).
- Constraints related to physical space, emergency vehicle clearance, or right-of-way acquisition.
- Mode is prohibited by law from using the street.