



TO: Michael Van Milligen, City Manager
FROM: Laura Carstens, Planning Services Manager 
Gus Psihoyos, City Engineer 
SUBJECT: Complete Streets Policy
DATE: March 28, 2011

INTRODUCTION

This memorandum transmits a resolution setting forth a Complete Streets Policy for the City of Dubuque. The proposed City policy is based partially on the Complete Streets Policy adopted in March 2010 by the Dubuque Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (DMATS) Policy Committee. Adoption of a City Complete Streets Policy was a City Council referral from the Environmental Stewardship Advisory Commission to the City Manager at their December 6, 2010 meeting. Related materials are enclosed.

DISCUSSION

Complete Streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists of all ages and abilities are able to move safely along and across a complete street.

The benefits of Complete Streets are that they: increase the capacity and efficiency of the road network, reduce traffic congestion, improve mobility options, limit greenhouse gas emissions, and improve the general quality of life. Promoting pedestrian, bicycle and public transportation travel as an alternative to the automobile reduces negative environmental impacts, promotes healthy living and is less costly to the commuter.

Complete Streets are supported in a number of local plans and City projects.

- Complete Streets is a goal in both the Community Design and Reasonable Mobility principles of the Sustainable Dubuque Plan.
- The City's 2009 Unified Development Code (UDC) includes a "place holder" reference to a Complete Streets Policy in Article 11: Land Subdivision.
- The Dubuque Region Smart Planning Project supports the diversity of transportation options available through Complete Streets and exemplified by the City of Dubuque's Complete Streets Model in the Historic Millwork District.
- The City Council has directed staff to evaluate and incorporate Complete Streets design into future East-West Corridor improvements.

The 2008 Tri-State Area Integrated Walking, Biking, Hiking Network Plan includes a goal to advocate for adoption of "Complete Streets" policies by cities and counties in the tri-state area. This Trail Plan was adopted by the DMATS Policy Committee in August, 2008 and by the City of Dubuque in May, 2009. Dubuque was the first city in the metropolitan area to adopt the Trail Plan, and has referenced the Plan when developing street projects or trail grant applications. The Tri-State Trail Plan states:

"The development of a "Complete Streets" concept provides for people-friendly streets, paths, trails and activity centers available to everyone, and supports sustainable community development. Walking, biking or hiking instead of driving can reduce traffic congestion, vehicle exhaust emissions, noise and energy consumption. The individual health benefits are evident."

RECOMMENDATION

City Planning and Engineering staff worked with local Complete Streets advocates, Tri-State Trail Vision, Proudly Accessible Dubuque and Green Dubuque, as well as two City boards -- the Environmental Stewardship Advisory Commission and the Long Range Planning Advisory Commission, to develop the proposed City of Dubuque Complete Streets Policy. The DMATS policy is the basis for the proposed City policy to provide for continuity in transportation projects.

The proposed Complete Streets Policy reflects the relationship of the Complete Streets Policy to the Dubuque Region Smart Planning Project, the City's Comprehensive Plan, the Sustainable Dubuque Plan, and the Tri-State Area Integrated Walking, Biking, Hiking Network Plan.

The proposed Complete Streets Policy provides an integrated multimodal approach to roadway planning and design. The Policy establishes that development of as many street projects as possible will be done in an affordable, balanced, responsible, and equitable way that accommodates and encourages travel by motorists, bicyclists, public transit vehicles and their passengers, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities. Since City street maintenance projects do not significantly alter the geometry, they would not be subject to this policy.

City street maintenance projects are done by the Public Works Department. These projects are limited in scope to an overlay less than 2" in thickness and also can include spot manhole repairs and storm sewer intake repairs. The Engineering Department gets involved in more expansive projects, such as full depth reconstruction projects; major overlay projects of collector and arterial streets; and significant storm, sanitary sewer and water main repairs and replacement. These larger projects may offer an opportunity for vehicular signs, crosswalks, and other improvements related to Complete Streets design.

The proposed Complete Streets Policy also ensures that future demand and context sensitivity is integrated into new facilities, recognizing that topography, cost, and right-of-way constraints are among the limiting factors and that not every project is a candidate for this desired outcome.

The Road Use Tax Fund (RUTF) historically has been used for either public improvements or existing street maintenance. In the past five years, the annual funding allocation has been insufficient to offset the increased material and operational costs. Therefore, the City has had to prioritize, postpone, and redirect the RUTF monies to those projects of greatest need.

The proposed Policy also includes language regarding the review of street projects for consistency with the Tri-State Trail Plan, posting annual street projects for public input, and documentation of project-specific exemptions.

The Complete Streets policy allows for project-specific exemptions to be approved by the City Council, or the City Manager where a project does not come before the City Council.

Letters of support for adoption of the proposed Complete Streets Policy for the City of Dubuque are enclosed. Adoption of a Complete Streets Policy also is an important step for Dubuque to be designated as a Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists.

REQUESTED ACTION

The proposed City of Dubuque Complete Streets Policy ensures that consideration is given such that the entire right-of-way is designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, recognizing fiscal and physical limitations. It also ensures that consideration is given such that all road projects result in a Complete Street design that is affordable as well as appropriate to local context and needs, again recognizing fiscal and physical limitations. The proposed Policy also provides for public input and documentation of project-specific exemptions.

The proposed Complete Streets Policy will further Dubuque's commitment to sustainability. Also, it formalizes a number of City plans, projects, and initiatives that support Complete Streets. Finally, it is supported by a range of community stakeholders.

The requested action is adoption of the proposed Complete Streets Policy for the City of Dubuque.

Enclosures

cc: Cindy Steinhauser, Assistant City Manager
Don Vogt, Public Works Director
Jon Dienst, Civil Engineer
Cori Burbach, Sustainability Coordinator

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RESOLUTION NO. 124 -11

RESOLUTION ADOPTING A COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

Whereas, Complete Streets promotes streets that are safe and convenient for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation riders, and motor vehicle drivers of all ages and abilities; and

Whereas, streets that support and invite multiple uses, including safe, active, and ample space for pedestrians, bicycles, and public transportation, are more conducive to the public life and efficient movement of people than streets designed primarily to move automobiles and trucks; and

Whereas, promoting pedestrian, bicycle and public transportation travel as an alternative to the automobile reduces negative environmental impacts, promotes healthy living and is less costly to the commuter; and

Whereas, full integration of all modes in the design of streets and highways, with safety in equal measure for each mode of travel, will increase the capacity and efficiency of the road network, reduce traffic congestion by improving mobility options, limiting greenhouse gas emissions, and improving the general quality of life; and

Whereas, studies have found that providing more travel options, including public transit, bicycling and walking facilities, is an important element in reducing congestion; and

Whereas, the Federal Highway Administration has confirmed that designing the street with pedestrians of all ages and abilities in mind significantly reduces pedestrian risk; and

Whereas, the development of a more complete transportation network will eliminate hazards and improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages and abilities, who now make up more than 12 percent of all traffic fatalities; and

Whereas, the design and construction of new facilities should anticipate future demand for bicycling, walking, and other alternative transportation facilities and not preclude the provision of future improvements; and

Whereas, Complete Streets are supported by the Institute of Traffic Engineers, American Planning Association, and other transportation, planning, and public health professionals; and

Whereas, implementation of Complete Streets policies can create immediate jobs through labor-intensive and small-scale projects, many of which can be accomplished in a limited timeframe; and

Whereas, Complete Streets projects can do more to aid economic recovery than provide individual jobs: they can help create complete transportation networks that provide Americans with transportation choices that are easier on their wallets; and

Whereas, the Dubuque Region Smart Planning Project supports the diversity of transportation options available through Complete Streets and exemplified by the City of Dubuque's Complete Streets Model in the Historic Millwork District; and

Whereas, the City's Comprehensive Plan supports development of a comprehensive bike/hike trail system to provide multi-modal transportation for the city; and

Whereas, Complete Streets is a goal for both the Community Design and Reasonable Mobility principles of the Sustainable Dubuque Plan; and

Whereas, the City of Dubuque was the first city in the metropolitan area to adopt the 2008 Tri-State Area Integrated Walking, Biking, Hiking Network Plan, which advocates for the adoption of Complete Streets policies by cities and counties in the Tri-State area; and

Whereas, the City annually will evaluate planned street projects for their relationship to the Implementation Plan of the 2008 Tri-State Area Integrated Walking, Biking, Hiking Network Plan; and

Whereas, street maintenance projects do not significantly alter the geometry, and therefore would not be subject to this policy; and

Whereas, the City currently implements curb ramp, sidewalk, signage, and trail projects that support Complete Streets concepts; and

Whereas, the implementation of the Complete Streets Policy will take into consideration additional construction costs, recognizing that not every project is a candidate for this desired outcome; and

Whereas, the City will post the annual street construction, reconstruction and overlay projects on the City website and on file at City Hall so that any interested parties can review and comment on the planned improvements; and

Whereas, the City will document the basis for project-specific exemptions from the Complete Street Policy, such as topography, right-of-way constraints, cost, or other factors.

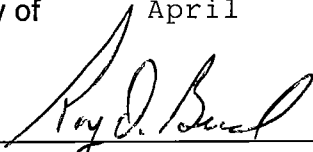
NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DUBUQUE, IOWA:

Section 1. The City Council does hereby adopt a Complete Streets Policy, as follows:

1. Develop as many street projects as possible in an affordable, balanced, responsible, and equitable way that accommodates and encourages travel by motorists, bicyclists, public transit vehicles and their passengers, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities.
2. Design and construct new facilities in anticipation of likely future demand for bicycling, walking and transit facilities and not preclude the provision of future improvements.
3. Design and construct new facilities to the best currently available standards and guidelines for Complete Streets and Context-Sensitive Design, recognizing that topography, cost, and right-of-way constraints are among the limiting factors and that not every project is a candidate for this desired outcome.
4. City street maintenance projects are not subject to this policy.

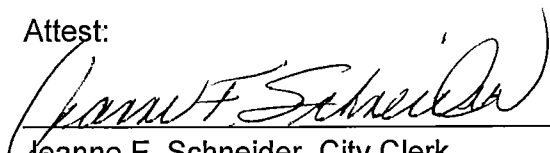
Section 2. This Complete Streets policy shall allow for project-specific exemptions to be approved by the City Council, or the City Manager where a project does not come before the City Council.

Passed, approved and adopted this 4th day of April 2011.



Roy D. Buol, Mayor

Attest:



Jeanne F. Schneider, City Clerk

COMPLETE STREETS FAQ

What are complete streets, and complete streets policies?

Complete streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities must be able to safely move along and across a complete street.

Creating complete streets means transportation agencies must change their orientation toward building primarily for cars. Instituting a complete streets policy ensures that transportation agencies routinely design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users. Places with complete streets policies are making sure that their streets and roads work for drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and bicyclists, as well as for older people, children, and people with disabilities.

What does a complete street look like?

Since each complete street is unique, it is impossible to give a single description. But ingredients that may be found on a complete street include sidewalks, bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders), special bus lanes, comfortable and accessible transit stops, frequent crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, and more. A complete street in a rural area will look quite different from a complete street in a highly urban area. But both are designed to balance safety and convenience for everyone using the road. Look at our [‘Many Types of Complete Streets’ slideshow](#) to see examples from across the country.

Why do we need complete streets policies?

Complete streets improve safety. A Federal Highways Administration safety review found that streets designed with sidewalks, raised medians, better bus stop placement, traffic-calming measures, and treatments for disabled travelers improve pedestrian safety. Some features, such as medians, improve safety for all users: they enable pedestrians to cross busy roads in two stages, reduce left-turning motorist crashes to zero, and improve bicycle safety. Complete streets encourage walking and bicycling for health. The National Institutes of Medicine recommends fighting childhood obesity by establishing ordinances to encourage construction of sidewalks, bikeways, and other places for physical activity. One study found that 43% of people with safe places to walk within 10 minutes of home met recommended activity levels; among individuals without safe place to walk, just 27% were active enough.

Complete streets address climate change and oil dependence. The potential to reduce carbon emissions by shifting trips to lower-carbon modes is undeniable. The 2001 National Household Transportation Survey found 50% of all trips in metropolitan areas are three miles or less and 28% of all metropolitan trips are one mile or less - distances easy to walk, bike, or hop a bus or train. Yet 65% of the shortest trips are now made by automobile, in part because of incomplete streets that make it dangerous or unpleasant for other modes of travel. Complete streets would help convert many of these short automobile trips to multi-modal travel. Simply increasing bicycling from 1% to 1.5% of all trips in the U.S. would save 462 million gallons of gasoline each year. Using transit has already helped the United States save 1.4 billion gallons of fuel each year, which is a savings of 3.9 million gallons of gasoline every day.

Complete Streets foster strong communities. Complete streets play an important role in livable communities, where all people - regardless of age, ability or mode of transportation - feel safe and welcome on the roadways. A safe walking and bicycling environment is an essential part of improving public transportation and creating friendly, walkable communities.

Where are complete streets being built?

Many states and cities have adopted bike plans or pedestrian plans that designate some streets as corridors for improvements for bicycling and walking. But a few places have gone beyond this to ensure that every street project takes all road users into account.

Among the places with some form of complete streets policy are the states of Oregon, California, Illinois, South Carolina, and Florida. The City of Santa Barbara, CA calls for “achieving equality of convenience and choice” for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and drivers. Columbia, MO adopted new street standards to encourage healthy bicycling and walking. And the regional body that allocates federal transportation dollars around Columbus, OH has determined that all projects must provide for people on foot and bicycle.

What are some of the benefits of complete streets?

Complete streets can offer many benefits in all communities, regardless of size or location. The National Complete Streets Coalition has developed a number of fact sheets, which are available through our website.

How can I get a complete streets policy adopted in my community?

This website has many resources to help you. See the Changing Policy tab for information on developing and implementing a good policy, working with local advocates, and the answers to many questions on implementation. The National Complete Streets Coalition offers interactive workshops led by national experts on policy development and policy implementation. Need to find transportation planning and engineering professionals ready to help create complete streets? Our Complete Streets Partner firms can offer the expertise and dedication you need.