



# Adopt a Complete Streets Policy

10 Points

Updated August 2018

*Updates include a new checklist to assist in completing the action*

**Note: The Complete Streets Program action was retired at the end of 2016. Municipalities applying for certification in 2017 or after can apply for points related to Complete Streets under this action and the Institute Complete Streets action. The maximum number of points available for these two actions combined is 25 compared to 20 points for the retired Complete Streets Program action. Please note that this new action includes an updated standard for a complete streets policy. A policy previously approved for points under the retired Complete Streets Program action may need to be updated to be approved for this action. Questions regarding the complete streets actions can be directed to 609-771-2938 or by emailing [info@sustainablejersey.com](mailto:info@sustainablejersey.com).**

**NEW: Before adopting or updating your Complete Streets policy, download both the [Adopt a Complete Streets Policy](#) and [Institute Complete Streets](#) action checklists to ensure all requirements are met.**

“Complete Streets” is the concept that all roadways should be designed, built, and maintained for all travelers. Streets do not exist only for single-family motor vehicles. Other roadway users – pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users of all ages and abilities – must be considered. And, significantly, safe and desirable bicycling and walking environments promote health equity by reducing barriers and providing opportunities for potentially vulnerable populations- such as low-income individuals, seniors, and children- to achieve their greatest health possible.

A Complete Streets Policy that is formally adopted and implemented by a municipality ensures that each street is planned, designed and operated to provide safe access and a healthy environment for multiple users. Because streets and sidewalks are part of the public right-of-way, they should accommodate all existing and potential users.

A Complete Streets Policy is not:

- A design prescription. It's not about adding sidewalks and bike lanes to every road, but it is about considering those options as part of municipal planning and decision making and coordinating designs with other municipal and regional authorities.
- A mandate for immediate installation or retrofitting of existing transportation networks. Rather, it is about creating a structure for implementing these improvements over time and whenever feasible.
- A magic formula. While instituting a Complete Streets program is an important sustainable community feature, other initiatives and issues must be addressed by municipalities, including land use planning, environmental concerns, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction, and proximity of recreational land and other open space.

Sustainable Jersey offers a separate action to earn 10-15 points for instituting your Complete Streets Policy through the "Institute Complete Streets" action.

## Who should lead and be involved with this action?

Instituting a Complete Streets program begins with the adoption of an official municipal policy by resolution or ordinance, requires a broad group of stakeholders such as the mayor, representatives from the governing body, planning and zoning boards, environmental commission, public health professionals, transportation and housing agencies, as well as any redevelopment agency, businesses, and officials from the zoning office, municipal police, fire, engineering, planning, public works, recreation, parks, and finance departments.

## **Timeframe**

Adopting a Complete Streets Policy can be developed and passed within two to six months.

## **Project Costs and Resource Needs**

The cost to institute a Complete Streets program is low. This action mostly requires staff time or volunteer time.

## **Why is it Important?**

Complete Streets have numerous environmental, safety, and health benefits. Designing roadways that are inclusive of all appropriate forms of transportation can reduce serious injuries and fatalities by lowering the number of speeding drivers and providing access and accommodation for all potential travelers. Safer roadways encourage residents to walk and bike more often, which can greatly improve their health. Increased walking, biking and transit use also cuts carbon dioxide emissions and reduces reliance on fossil fuels. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), if one average driver leaves the car at home just two days a week, greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced by 1600 pounds per year.<sup>1</sup>

In any given community, approximately 30 percent of the residents cannot or have chosen not to drive. They may be too young; they may have decided to “give up the keys” due to poor health or advancing age; they may be physically handicapped; or they may have simply made a lifestyle or economic choice not to own or operate a car. These citizens need places to walk, bicycle, and use public transportation. They need Complete Streets.

To summarize, a Complete Streets program can:

- Gradually create a complete network of transportation facilities.
- Provide an equitable transportation system that serves all residents.
- Shift transportation investments so safer, better-functioning streets are created.
- Save money in the long run (because doing it right the first time costs less than retrofitting a project later).
- Encourage healthy habits by making it easier to walk and bicycle.
- Provide more transportation options and reduce traffic congestion, thus increasing the capacity of the overall transportation network.
- Improve air quality by cutting down on harmful carbon dioxide and other vehicle emissions.<sup>2</sup>
- Include parking solutions with both on- and off-street parking for motor vehicles and bicycles in order to minimize hazards for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Promote health equity by providing people who typically face significant barriers to better health more opportunities to live healthier lives.

When a municipality expands the focus of the complete streets policy to incorporate health and environmental health considerations, additional health benefits, including one or more of the following, might be realized:

1. Reduced rates of several chronic diseases related to increases in physical activity from walking and bicycling. Key impacted diseases include diabetes, heart disease, depression, and some cancers.
2. Reduced rates of injury and death from decreased traffic crashes and improved road safety for all users.
3. Reduced rates of asthma and other respiratory issues due to improved air quality through emissions reductions and

vegetative air filtration.

4. Multiple health and wellness benefits resulting from improved access to necessary amenities for vulnerable populations.
5. Reduced risk of illnesses related to water-borne pathogens resulting from improved stormwater infiltration.
  - (1-5 above adapted from *Smart Growth America, 2014*)
6. Development of social capital and community connectedness.

## What to do and how to do it (“How to”)

Below we have listed the requirements for earning points for this action.

- 1) At a minimum, the governing body must adopt a Complete Streets Policy by resolution or ordinance **from within 3.5 years of the June submission deadline** to receive credit for this action.
- 2) The adopted Complete Streets Policy must reflect all of the items listed under “What to Include in a Complete Streets Policy” (# 1) below to receive 10 points.

We have provided extensive guidance and recommendations for implementing this action in the section that follows **and in the Adopt a Complete Streets Action Checklist**. You do not need to follow this guidance exactly as long as your final product meets the requirements.

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

To be effective, all Complete Streets Policies should, at a minimum, include the following basic elements. Please note that these items must be reflected in the resolution or ordinance submitted to earn credit for this action.

- a) State an intent to plan, design, build and maintain all roads to meet the needs of all users.
- b) Specify that “all users” include pedestrians, bicyclists, transit vehicle users and motorists of all ages and abilities.
- c) Commit to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected multi-modal transportation network within the community.
- d) Recognize the need for flexibility and that all streets are different, and user needs must be balanced and fit into the context of the community.
- e) Apply to both new and retrofitted projects, including design, planning, construction, maintenance, and operations, for the entire right-of-way. Allow exceptions to the policy to be contingent upon the presence of specific safety concerns and set a clear procedure that requires high-level approval prior to granting exceptions. Create a system for exceptions that is explicit and understandable.
- f) Include the following language which acknowledges the potential benefits of complete streets:

*“Whereas, complete streets have the potential for improving physical and mental health either directly or indirectly in the following ways:*

- i. Incorporating physical activity into our daily lives by increasing pedestrian activity and bicycle use.*
- ii. Reducing rates of several chronic diseases related to increases in physical activity from walking and bicycling. Key impacted diseases include diabetes, heart disease, depression, and some cancers.*
- iii. Reducing rates of injury and death from decreased traffic crashes and improved road safety for all users.*
- iv. Reducing rates of asthma and other respiratory issues due to improved air quality through emissions reductions and vegetative air filtration.*
- v. Multiplying health and wellness benefits resulting from improved access to necessary amenities for vulnerable populations.*
- vi. Reducing the risk of illnesses related to water-borne pathogens resulting from improved stormwater infiltration.*

vii. *Increasing the sense of social connectivity & sense of community belonging.*

viii. *Improving aesthetics through decorative and functional vegetation.*”

g) The implementation section of the policy must articulate the intent of the community to consider public health during planning and design program phases. For example the provision could state: *“Now, be it resolved that, all initial planning and design studies of complete street infrastructure projects shall consider opportunities to improve public health.”*

## **RECOMMENDED PROCESS FOR ADOPTING A COMPLETE STREETS PROGRAM**

### **A. Steps for a municipally-initiated effort:**

1) Municipal administrator, mayor, engineers, planning professionals, public health professionals, public works staff, clerk and other officials meet to discuss current roadway construction and maintenance policies and how best to adapt them to the Complete Streets approach. Including a broad group of stakeholders at the beginning of the process helps to achieve better understanding and implementation of the policy later.

2) The workgroup should decide what type of Complete Streets Policy would best meet their community's needs. Sample policies based on your community type as well as more robust policies that also incorporate health considerations into the Complete Streets Policy are important options to consider when crafting your policy.

3) With input from the team of stakeholders, the governing body drafts and adopts by resolution or ordinance a Complete Streets Policy that reflects, at a minimum, the basic elements listed under “What to Include in a Complete Streets Policy” (Section 1) above. Technical assistance in drafting a resolution or ordinance is available through the New Jersey Bicycle and Pedestrian Resource Center. You can contact the center at [www.njbikeped.org](http://www.njbikeped.org)

4) To receive points, please upload the adopted resolution or ordinance that clearly indicates the date adopted by the municipal government.

5) The municipality shall also inform all municipal agencies and professionals (either via email, in person meeting, staff newsletter) of the adoption of the Complete Streets Policy and provide a copy of the adopted policy.

### **B. Steps for an Advocate-initiated effort:**

1) Advocates urge their governing body to adopt a Complete Streets Policy by requesting participation in the process and attending municipal meetings.

2) Advocates work with municipal officials to discuss current roadway policies and decision-making structures and how best to adapt them to the Complete Streets approach.

3) Advocates, preferably alongside staff and consultants, draft a policy that can be adopted by resolution or ordinance that includes the basic elements listed under “What to Include in a Complete Streets Policy” (Section 1) above. The goal is to implement the Complete Streets Policy by incorporating it into the municipality’s comprehensive planning and decision-making processes. This should include revising the municipal master plan, adopting ordinances and amending transportation procedures. The policy should establish internal procedures so that different departments are working toward the same outcomes.

4) Advocates continue to work toward adoption of the Complete Streets Policy, being diligent about meeting attendance and suggesting additional ways to strengthen local policies in favor of Complete Streets.

5) Advocates monitor proposed state, county and local construction projects, writing as needed to the New Jersey Department of Transportation, state legislators, county planning boards and county engineers to ensure that the Complete Streets approach is utilized.

## **What to submit to get credit/points**

In order to earn points for this action, the following documentation must be submitted as part of the online certification application in order to verify that the action requirements have been met. **Make sure to complete the Adopt a Complete Streets Checklist to help you complete this action.**

1) Description of Implementation – In the text box provided on the submission page for this action provide a short narrative (300 words or less) of what has been accomplished and the impact it has or will have on the community.

2) The Complete Streets Policy the governing body adopted by resolution or ordinance. The policy must be **from within 3.5 years of the June submission deadline** and reflect all of the items listed under “What to Include in a Complete Streets Policy” in Section 1 above to receive credit for this action.

3) Evidence that the adopted policy was distributed to all municipal departments (either via email, in person meeting, staff newsletter, etc.).

Approved actions will be set to expired 3.5 years from the date the Complete Streets Policy was adopted. To reapply for points under this action, evidence that the policy is still in effect and being followed is required.

**IMPORTANT NOTES:** You can upload up to six separate documents for each action. Please excerpt relevant information from large documents. Please remember that your submissions will be viewable by the public as part of your certification report.

## Spotlight: What NJ towns are doing

### City of Hoboken, Hudson County, NJ:

The City of Hoboken passed its Complete Streets Resolution on November 15, 2010 and has been working aggressively toward implementation. The City has reconfigured roadways to allow for more bicycle and pedestrian movement; added bike lanes and a local transit option “The Hop” and instituted traffic calming and safety measures.

### Lawrence Township, Mercer County, NJ:

In September 2010, Lawrence Township adopted its Complete Streets program by resolution. It has since become institutional within the Engineering Department, whereby all present and future projects are evaluated by the Municipal Engineer for potential improvements that can improve roadway use for all users per the resolution.

## Resources

### GENERAL:

#### Active Living Resource Center, Complete Streets Fact Sheet

<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/complete-streets-fundamentals/factsheets>

#### APA Complete Streets Best Practices Manual Page 8 of 11; 5 June 2015

<http://www.completestreets.org/resources/complete-streets-best-practices/>

#### Complete the Streets for Smart Growth

<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets>

#### Federal Highway Administration, US Department of Transportation, *Design Guidance for Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel: A Recommended Approach*,

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/design.htm>

#### Model Complete Streets Laws and Resolutions

<http://www.changelabsolutions.org/publications/laws-resolutions-cs>

### Monmouth County

Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders unanimously adopted Resolution 10-592 and became the first county in New Jersey to adopt a Complete Streets policy.

See <http://co.monmouth.nj.us/documents/149/e7%20completestreetspolicy.pdf>.

**National Complete Streets Coalition:**

<http://www.completestreets.org>

*Policy Elements:* <http://www.completestreets.org/changing-policy/policy-elements/>

*Creating a Complete Streets Policy:* <http://www.completestreets.org/policies.html>

**National Policy & Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity (NPLAN), *Model Complete Streets Laws and Resolutions***, February, 2010

<http://www.nplanonline.org/nplan/products/model-complete-streets-laws-and-resolutions>

**NJ Department of Transportation, Community and Mobility Form**

<http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/community/mobility/>.

**NJ Department of Transportation, *Complete Streets Policy Fact Sheet***, January 2010

<http://www.njbikeped.org/index.php?module=Downloads&func=display&lid=1622>

**NJ Department of Transportation, Internal Complete Streets Policy:** (Page 9 of 11 - 5 Jun 2015)

<http://www.completestreets.org/webdocs/policy/cs-nj-dotpolicy.pdf> and

<http://www.njbikeped.org/index.php?module=Downloads&func=display&lid=1622>

**Transportation Management Association(s):**

Your local Transportation Management Association (TMA) can provide expertise and guidance regarding your Complete Streets program. Visit the TMA Council of New Jersey's website to find out how to contact your town's local TMA:

<http://tmacouncilnj.org/>

**Voorhees Transportation Center, *Complete Streets in New Jersey, A Compilation of State, County and Municipal Policies***

<http://policy.rutgers.edu/vtc/>

**HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES FOR COMPLETE STREETS**

**A Health in All Policies Approach Complete Streets**, HNH Foundation, December 2014.

[http://www.nashuarpc.org/files/3014/2184/6127/Final\\_HiAP\\_Dec2014\\_wApp.pdf](http://www.nashuarpc.org/files/3014/2184/6127/Final_HiAP_Dec2014_wApp.pdf)

**Planning, designing and building sustainable communities that encourage people to live healthier lives by making it easier to walk, bike, and incorporate mass transit opportunities.** December 2012. Review this brochure on the relationship of community design and public health.

**City of Atlanta Bike Share Health Impact Assessment** <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/~media/Assets/External-Sites/Health-Impact-Project/AtlantaBikeshareHIAReport>

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<sup>1</sup> **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Climate Change – What You Can Do***, 2008;

<http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/wycd/road.html>