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Complete Streets Guidance and Policy Template for the National Capital Region

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I. Purpose

The purpose of this Complete Streets guidance and policy template is to encourage TPB member jurisdictions and agencies that do not already have a Complete Streets policy, or who are revising an existing policy, to adopt a Complete Streets policy that includes common elements that the TPB believes represent current best practices.

II. Definitions

- (1) COMPLETE STREET.—The term “complete street” means a travel corridor that safely and adequately accommodates motorized and non-motorized users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, freight vehicles, and transit riders of all ages and abilities.
- (2) COMPLETE STREETS POLICY; COMPLETE STREETS PRINCIPLE.—The terms “complete streets policy” and “complete streets principle” mean

A transportation law, policy, or principle at the local, state, regional, or federal level that ensures the safe and adequate accommodation, in all phases of project planning, development, and operations, of all users of the transportation network, including pedestrians and transit riders of all ages and abilities, bicyclists individuals with disabilities, motorists, and freight vehicles.

III. Ten Elements of an Ideal Complete Streets Policy

The following ten elements, which are endorsed by the National Complete Streets Coalition, should be part of a comprehensive Complete Streets policy. An ideal Complete Streets policy:

- Includes a vision for how and why the community wants to complete its streets.
- Specifies that “all users” includes pedestrians, bicyclists and transit passengers of all ages and abilities as well as trucks, buses and automobiles.
- Encourages street connectivity and aims to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes.

- Is adoptable by all agencies to cover all roads.
- Applies to both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations for the entire right of way.
- Makes any exceptions specific and sets a clear procedure that requires high-level approval of exceptions.
- Directs the use of the latest and best design standards while recognizing the need for flexibility in balancing user needs.
- Directs that complete streets solutions will complement the context of the community.
- Establishes performance standards with measurable outcomes.
- Includes specific next steps for implementation of policy.

IV. Complete Streets Policy Template

Beginning on the effective date of this policy, all publicly funded or maintained transportation projects in (insert Jurisdiction or Agency) shall accommodate the safety and convenience of all users in accordance with Complete Streets principles.

Inclusions

1. All publicly funded or maintained transportation projects funded shall accommodate the safety and convenience of all users in accordance with Complete Streets principles. Roadways, sidewalks, shared use paths, street crossings, pedestrian signals, signs, street furniture, transit stops and facilities, and all connecting pathways should be designed, constructed, operated and maintained so that all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit vehicles and riders, freight vehicles, motorists, and people with disabilities, can travel safely and independently.
2. Complete Streets principles shall apply to new road construction and road modification projects, including design, planning, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, maintenance, and operations, for the entire right of way. In particular,
 - The design and construction of new facilities should anticipate likely future demand for bicycling and walking facilities and not preclude the provision of future improvements.
 - Transportation projects should address the need for bicyclists and pedestrians to cross corridors as well as travel along them. Even where bicyclists and pedestrians may not lawfully travel on a roadway that is being improved or

constructed, they will likely need to be able to travel along that corridor and to cross that corridor safely and conveniently. Therefore, adequate and nearby parallel travelways should be provided or improved and the design of intersections and interchanges should accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians in a manner that is safe, accessible and convenient.

- Safe and adequate rail crossings for motorized and non-motorized users should be provided. Where safety and security considerations permit, rail transit and freight rail projects should accommodate non-motorized users within the travel corridor, especially on new and reconstructed rail transit and freight rail bridges.
 - Transportation projects should address the need for pedestrians and bicyclists to access transit. Transit users rely on walking and cycling to link transit stops with destinations and special attention must be given to facilities near transit for traveling along roads, crossing roadways, and connectivity to destinations.
3. Improvements for the safe and convenient travel by pedestrians or bicyclists on, along, and across streets should be fully assessed, considered, and documented as a routine element of pavement resurfacing projects.
 4. Transportation projects should comply with up-to-date design standards, particularly standards relating to providing access for individuals with disabilities. Construction, maintenance and operations should be conducted in such a manner as to maintain safe and adequate access for pedestrians, including individuals with disabilities.
 5. Complete Streets principles should be applied in due consideration of the urban, suburban, or rural context in which a project is located. While all users should be accommodated, modal priorities may vary by area and facility. One size does not fit all.

Exemptions

1. This policy shall not apply to a new road construction or modification project for which, as of the effective date of the adoption of the policy, at least 30 percent of the design phase is completed.
2. An affected roadway prohibits, by law, use of the roadway by specified users, in which case a greater effort should be made to accommodate those specified users elsewhere in the travel corridor, including on (or along) parallel roadways and roadways that cross or otherwise intersect with the affected roadway.
3. The cost to the exempted project in achieving compliance with the applicable complete streets policy would be excessively disproportionate (as defined in the 2001 US Department of Transportation Guidance on Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel), as compared to the need or probable use of a particular complete street; or

4. The existing and planned population and employment densities or level of transit service around a particular roadway are so low that there is a documented absence of a need to implement the applicable complete streets policy,
5. While safe and adequate rail crossings should be provided, passenger and freight rail projects shall not be required to accommodate other motorized users in the railway right of way.
6. Project-specific exemptions shall be approved by a senior manager of the responsible agency.

V. Documentation and Reporting

1. Transportation Planning Board staff shall conduct a periodic survey of the TPB member agencies regarding their adoption and implementation of Complete Streets policies.
2. Transportation Planning Board member agencies will be asked to report periodically on the pedestrian and bicycle facilities that have been newly created or substantially improved.
3. Implementation of Complete Streets principles may be measured in the regional Transportation Improvement Program.

VI. Promotion

As feasible, the Washington Region will conduct training on Complete Streets best practices for personnel responsible for the design, construction, and maintenance of streets.