

## Complete Streets Types of Policy

**Ordinance.** Ordinances legally require the needs of all users be addressed in transportation projects and change city code accordingly. Ordinances may also apply to private developers by changing zoning and subdivision requirements. Ordinances require strong support from the community and elected officials, and are enforceable by law, with strong support from elected officials in place, ordinances are a worthy pursuit.

**Resolution.** Issued by a community's governing body, resolutions are non-binding, official statements of support for approaching community transportation projects as a way to improve access, public health, and quality of life. Resolutions are often a very helpful first step, providing the political support for a Complete Streets approach. However, as they do not require action, they may be forgotten or neglected if an implementation plan is not created.

**Plans.** Complete Streets policies can be found within community comprehensive plans or transportation plans. The process of updating a plan, or adopting a new one, provides an excellent opportunity to engage all sectors of the community. Plans are a good home for basic Complete Streets policies, most often listed among the community's goals for the future, and they can provide some implementation guidance by identifying specific corridors in particular need of increased multimodal planning and design.

**City policies.** A city council may also take action by adopting a Complete Streets policy as official city policy. Generally, this means that a Complete Streets policy is developed by an internal group of stakeholders, which may include representatives from planning, engineering, public works, economic development, health, and/or elected officials, or a broader group that includes residents and community stakeholders. This document is then taken to the full Council for discussion and a vote. These policies tend to be lengthier and more detailed than resolutions or ordinances, and can build partnerships between agencies, community members, and decision makers in a more robust way than resolutions or ordinances. Like resolutions, such policies are not legally binding; however, the community, political, and agency support for change tends to be very high, resulting in a shared, lasting push for implementation of the policy.

**Design guidelines.** Communities may decide to integrate Complete Streets planning and design into new design guidance for their streets. Creating new guidance is a great way to ensure that each street project's design is compliant with Complete Streets goals. Manuals can take years to develop and can often happen without much public input.

**Departmental policy.** A relatively uncommon, but still useful, policy adoption method is for a city department to issue its own Complete Streets policy directive. These policies are issued by the department head and usually created “in house” by that department. They are more detailed in procedure change than resolutions or ordinances. Though not mandated by law, such policies generally have good support from transportation professionals and are likely to be accompanied by changes in practice to ensure implementation. If departmental leadership is strong and committed to Complete Streets, but elected officials’ support is wavering, this is a good option for your community.

**Executive order.** Another uncommon policy is one issued by the city’s chief executive, often the mayor. These executive orders are most helpful in defining the problem and directing department heads to make the necessary changes. Though such policies reflect strong political will, they only last as long as the current mayor sits in office, and may not have sustained support from other elected officials, decision makers, and the community. If you have a committed executive branch with oversight of departmental leadership, but weaker support from the legislative branch, this type of policy can enable departments willing to move ahead with Complete Streets changes.

**Tax levy.** Some communities have decided to pursue an additional tax that will fund transportation improvements. Usually approved by a general vote of residents, these levies have specific requirements and goals, which can include provisions to ensure Complete Streets: pavement maintenance; sidewalk development and repair; tree planting and care; transit enhancements; bicycle network implementation; improved pedestrian crossings; and other needed work. Though uncommon, transportation departments that show a commitment to improving streets for everyone can achieve wide public support for additional taxation. This type of policy is best considered if your community has used such measures in the past or if a broad-based advocacy campaign can support the initiative.

**Ballot measure.** Rare, though possible, is a citizen-led campaign for a Complete Streets law enacted not by a body of elected officials but by direct ballot by the general voting public. These measures are, like ordinances, enforceable by law and more difficult to ignore. Campaigns in favor of ballot measures create a high level of community support for Complete Streets, but important stakeholders such as transportation departments and elected officials may be left out of the process. If your Council is unwilling to pass an ordinance, but your transportation agency is more supportive and a network of advocates can be activated, you may want to explore this option.

Source: COMPLETE STREETS Local Policy Workbook, National Complete Streets Coalition.

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