

Oregon Greenhouse Gas Reduction Toolkit: Strategy Report

OREGON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE



Complete Streets Policy

This report describes the importance of establishing a network of streets that are designed for all users, resulting in improved nonautomotive mode splits, and reduced greenhouse emissions.



What is it?

In recent years, roadways have been engineered to prioritize the throughput of automobiles, a practice that leaves users with little choice but to drive. A complete street, on the other hand, is designed for the convenience and safety of all users, whether in a car, on a bike, on foot, in a wheelchair, or using transit. Complete streets are designed to balance the needs of the community they serve in their specific geographic context.

"Streets are our most important public places" – Tony Nelesen, urban designer¹

Instituting a complete streets policy ensures that transportation planners and engineers consistently design and operate streets with all users in mind, both as new streets are constructed and as existing streets are upgraded. A complete streets policy commonly takes the form of a council resolution, legislation, executive order, or comprehensive plan policy. A 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 vehicle drivers and transit vehicle operators
- » Encourages street connectivity to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes
- » Is adoptable by all relevant agencies to cover all transportation facilities
- » Applies to both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations for the entire right-of-way
- » Clarifies any exceptions to the policy and establishes a procedure for exceptions
- » Directs the use of the latest and best design standards while recognizing the need for flexibility in balancing user needs and the context of the street
- » Directs that complete streets solutions will complement the context of the community
- » Establishes performance standards with measurable outcomes
- » Includes specific next steps for implementing the policy

How well does it work?

Complete streets are an important component of many greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction strategies. Without the appropriate transportation infrastructure, a community cannot accommodate the increase in pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users needed to reduce overall GHG emissions.

A complete streets policy can be instrumental in overcoming institutionalized preference toward the

¹ Cool Planning: A Handbook on Local Strategies to Slow Climate Change. Oregon Transportation and Growth Management Program. <http://www.oregon.gov/LCD/TGM/docs/coolplanninghandbook1312011.pdf>

