

MORPC Complete Streets Policy (DRAFT) – February 26, 2010**1. Background**

MORPC has long been a proponent of creating a multimodal, safe and efficient transportation system that ensures accessibility to all roadway users. In order to increase the number of projects that provide bicycle and pedestrian facilities in central Ohio, MORPC adopted a Routine Accommodation policy in 2004. This policy recognized the importance of and encouraged the construction of non-motorist facilities by putting a mechanism in place that required all project sponsors receiving MORPC-attributable federal funding to provide bicycle and pedestrian facilities in their design and construction phases as appropriate.

Since 2004, MORPC has engaged in intensive research to better understand how it can help make the region as attractive, livable, and prosperous as possible. The foundation of this research was a multifaceted growth strategy called *Regional Connections*. The objectives of *Regional Connections* were to create an understanding of central Ohio's anticipated growth over the next 20 to 30 years, and to formulate a strategy to address this growth in a way that would enhance the region aesthetically and economically. In 2007, MORPC adopted the recommendations of *Regional Connections* as "a significant guiding framework for Commission policy decisions." The defined "Vision for Place" is as follows and addresses the need for an integrated transportation system:

A physical environment that accommodates future growth efficiently and is distinguished by high quality neighborhoods and communities and careful stewardship of natural resources and agriculture land. Integrated uses and more intensive utilization of land in neighborhoods and communities are evident throughout the region. Development occurs concurrent with the extension of appropriately sized utilities and roads, and development policies are based on an understanding of the economic impacts to affected local governments. Places are connected by a range of transportation choices, including roads, public and private transit, and paths for walking and biking.

This Complete Streets policy builds upon these efforts and promotes a multimodal transportation system that is integrated with sustainable land use developments. Its main objective is to design and build roads that safely and comfortably accommodate all users of roadways, including motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, transit and school bus riders, people with disabilities, delivery and service personnel, freight haulers, and emergency responders. It includes people of all ages and abilities.

According to MORPC's Strategic Plan, "MORPC will be the regional voice and a catalyst for sustainability and economic prosperity in order to secure a competitive advantage for central Ohio." This plan identifies five priorities to fulfill this mission. Three of these priorities are clearly addressed by this Complete Streets policy:

- *Improve sustainability:* It is critical for the region to embrace sustainability, which is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. MORPC will promote sustainable policies and patterns of development in the region.
- *Increase mobility:* MORPC will advance a sustainable multimodal transportation system that recognizes our energy and environmental needs and will safely, cost effectively, and efficiently move people and goods.
- *Be a leader in regional, state and national policies:* Solutions to regional problems are often rooted in established public policy. MORPC should be an advocate and catalyst for change at the regional, state and national levels. The organization should be bold, proactive and a leader in implementing policy changes that will have positive benefits for the region.

Furthermore, the Strategic Plan points out seven strategies that will be implemented to support those priorities. Three of these strategies will be promoted by this policy:

- To improve sustainability in the region, MORPC will facilitate implementation of the principles embodied in the Central Ohio Green Pact.
- Increase affordable transportation options throughout the region by seeking and funding infrastructure projects for driving, walking and bicycling, increasing ridesharing services, and supporting transit.
- MORPC will expand and sustain the availability of affordable housing through programs and services that incorporate sustainability, collaboration, and mobility.

Building complete streets provides many benefits to residents, business owners, developers, and the community as a whole. First and foremost, embracing the complete streets concept will create balanced transportation systems by providing accessible, safe, and efficient connections between destinations. It will bolster economic growth and stability while increasing property values. It will ensure job growth, reduce crashes through safety improvements, improve public health and fitness, reduce harmful emissions, and reduce the overall demand on our roadways by allowing people to replace motor vehicle trips with active transportation options. Secondly, integrating sidewalks, bike facilities, transit amenities, or safe crossings into the initial design of a project spares the expense and complications of retrofits later.

2. Definition

Complete Streets are roadways designed to safely and comfortably accommodate all users, including, but not limited to motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, transit and school bus riders, people with disabilities, delivery and service personnel, freight haulers, and emergency responders. “All users” includes people of all ages and abilities.

3. Vision/Purpose

To create an equitable, balanced, and effective transportation system where every roadway user can travel safely and comfortably and where sustainable transportation options are available to everyone.

The **goals** of this *Complete Streets* Policy are:

- 1) To create a comprehensive, integrated, and connected transportation network that supports compact, sustainable development and provides livable communities.
- 2) To ensure safety, ease of use, and ease of transfer between modes for all users of the transportation system.
- 3) To provide flexibility for different types of streets, areas, and users.

4. Policy

Policy Statement

1. MORPC will promote the Complete Streets concept throughout the region and, therefore, recommends that all local jurisdictions and the state adopt comprehensive Complete Streets policies, consistent with the Regional Policy. MORPC will seek incorporation of the Complete Streets concept and policy into the development of all transportation infrastructures within

the region at all phases of their development, including planning and land use control, scoping, design approvals, implementation, and performance monitoring.

2. MORPC requires that all projects receiving MORPC-attributable federal funding adhere to this policy. MORPC members receiving MORPC-attributable federal funding shall fill out the checklist accompanying this policy. More information on the review and appeals process is available in the Applicability section. Projects utilizing any other funding sources are also encouraged to adhere to this policy.

Applicability

This Complete Streets Policy applies to all projects involving the new construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, repair, or maintenance of roadways that will use federal funds allocated through MORPC.

Review process - A MORPC checklist accompanying the policy shall be used by the project sponsor during the project definition, scoping, funding application, and project design stages. The checklist will be used to help understand the compliance of each project with this policy. MORPC staff will review all projects throughout the design phase to ensure that the requirements are met and to provide assistance where needed. MORPC staff will provide a final review document to the project sponsor.

Appeal process - Project sponsors may request an exemption or re-review of their projects by the Appeals committee if they feel the required accommodation places an undue hardship on the project, the project sponsor, or the project area. The level of accommodation to be provided should not make the project ineligible for the primary funding source (e.g., safety improvements).

The Appeals committee is made up of a total of six (6) people who are appointed by the Policy Committee Chair. It consists of three (3) representatives of local communities, two (2) public members, and one (1) MORPC staff who are all knowledgeable about transportation design. The Appeals committee will meet on an “as needed” basis and membership will rotate every two years. MORPC staff will review the requests initially and provide a report with recommendations to the committee in advance of each meeting. A quorum will consist of at least three (3) voting members, and a simple majority of the quorum is needed to act. MORPC staff will not be allowed to vote. In addition, members with conflicts of interest on a particular project before the committee must recuse themselves from deliberation on that project. Requests will be evaluated and exemptions will be documented by MORPC staff. Instead of an exemption, the Appeals committee may also suggest a lesser level of accommodation. All exemptions will be kept on record and made publicly available.

In the event that the sponsor disagrees with the action of the Appeals committee, the sponsor may appeal to the MORPC committee process which may or may not elect to hear the appeal request.

Requirements

- Each project shall use the most appropriate design standards and procedures.
- Project sponsors shall fill out Section B of the checklist accompanying this policy and provide completed form to MORPC.
- Designs shall include accommodation of all users and be sensitive to the context of the project setting. It is important to note that Complete Streets may look different for every project and road type. For example, wide lanes or paved shoulders may be sufficient in a rural area, whereas sidewalks and/or bike lanes are needed in an urban setting. Also, when re-striping projects are considered, where the right-of-way will not change, options such as

bike lanes, sharrows, and pedestrian crosswalks could still be implemented. More information and examples will be provided as part of the checklist and toolkit.

- If the project's corridor touches or is near another jurisdiction or another project in the area, a systems approach shall be taken and cross-jurisdictional connections must be considered.
- If there is another project planned or in development near this project the two should be coordinated to ensure consistency in the facilities serving the corridor.
- Logical termini should be chosen to include connections through "pinch points," such as overpasses, railroad crossings, and bridges. Logical termini should not be chosen so that the project ends before such a "pinch point" unless there is a compelling reason to do so.
- Project boundaries shall be selected so that they can accommodate existing and future connections.
- If the project serves a destination point, such as a school, recreational facility, shopping center, hospital, or office complex, the project shall ensure that the destination point has access to the project's pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- Every project shall involve the local transit agency in the design process to ensure that sufficient accommodation of transit vehicles and access to transit facilities is provided.
- Public transit facilities shall be designed with the goals of Complete Streets in mind, by including sidewalks, bicycle connections, or secure bicycle parking, among others.
- Every project shall ensure that utility/telecommunications infrastructure is appropriately accommodated to allow for existing and future growth. Efficient use of right-of-way during construction and maintenance should be considered to improve access to utility systems, including future broadband networks. This policy is not intended to create new rights for utilities outside those provided by existing law and contract.
- Every project shall ensure that the provision of accommodations for one mode does not hinder another (e.g., a bus shelter should not block the clear walking zone on the sidewalk).

5. Recommendations

- All users should be considered during the entire life cycle of a project, including planning, design, construction, operations, and maintenance.
- Street furniture, such as bike racks or benches, should be considered as part of all projects as long as they do not impede any user.
- Traffic-calming elements should be considered where safe and appropriate.
- Special consideration should be given to future planned facilities or services.
- Each project design should be coordinated with appropriate access management strategies.
- Although this policy focuses on engineering projects, the project sponsor should provide education, encouragement, and enforcement strategies during or after the project. The education component should include government officials, developers, and the public. A toolkit designed by MORPC staff will provide best practices, ideas, and resources to help with these efforts (see Implementation section).
- While this policy focuses on transportation, local governments should review their land use and zoning policies to provide for mixed-land use developments and projects that provide direct non-vehicular connections within a given development.

- Each local community should regularly update its project design standards and procedures and train its staff to adhere to them.
- Both the state and local governments should be encouraged to adopt their own Complete Streets policies, consistent with this regional policy.

6. Implementation

Upon approval and adoption of this Complete Streets policy, it will become part of MORPC's planning process and project selection for MORPC-attributable funding. The principles of this policy will also guide MORPC staff in the preparation of the Regional Transportation Plan and other plans it prepares or to which it contributes.

A toolkit will be developed and provided to each community in modules as they become available. The objective of this toolkit is to assist project sponsors in developing Complete Streets projects. This toolkit will contain model policies, sample design standards, examples for land use and zoning practices, educational and enforcement strategies, and information on other resources.

7. Evaluation

MORPC shall, at a minimum, evaluate this policy and the documents associated with it on an annual basis. This evaluation may include recommendations for amendments to the Complete Streets Policy and subsequently be considered for adoption by the Metropolitan Planning Organization utilizing its then current public and member involvement procedures.