MORPC Complete Streets Policy

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MID-OHIO REGIONAL
MORPC
PLANNING COMMISSION

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Section 1. Complete Streets Defined

Complete Streets are roadways, highways, bridges, and other transportation facilities that are designed, implemented, operated, and maintained in an equitable and context-sensitive manner so that people of all ages, incomes, and abilities can use them safely. These streets consider the needs of all people, including, but not limited to, people walking, bicycling, using shared mobility devices and assistive devices, using transit and riding school buses, driving, and operating commercial and emergency vehicles.

Please refer to the appendix for key term definitions.

Section 2. Background and Vision

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) supports the development of a safe and sustainable transportation system that ensures accessibility for everyone using the transportation system. As Central Ohio experiences historic population growth, a regional Complete Streets policy can help to guide public transportation infrastructure investments in a manner that supports regional safety, multimodal mobility, and sustainability goals while accommodating population growth and shifts in development. This policy builds upon previous efforts to develop a comprehensive, multimodal transportation system and promotes integration with sustainable land use development.

This policy is consistent with regional goals and objectives established in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the Regional Sustainability Agenda (RSA), the Active Transportation Plan (ATP), the Central Ohio Transportation Safety Plan (COTSP), and other key regional plans and policies. The policy aligns with development principles established through the insight2050 initiative and sustainability principles outlined through the Sustaining Scioto Adaptive Management Plan.

Vision Statement

This Complete Streets Policy aims to enhance the quality of life in Central Ohio through improvements to transportation safety, equity, mobility, accessibility, connectivity, sustainability, and resiliency as well as public health and economic vitality. This vision will be implemented through street design that is context sensitive and incorporates principles and practices that focus the function of a street around the safe movement of people, balancing mobility for everyone with safe and appropriate travel speeds.

Section 3. Purpose

The Complete Streets policy outlines the requirements and recommendations for project development to ensure implementation of the vision set forth in *Section 2, Background and Vision*, as well as established regional goals and objectives.

The following principles guide this policy and serve as the basis for the recommendations and requirements established in *Section 5, Policy*.

Complete Streets:

1. Serve people of all ages and abilities using all modes of transportation, as well as the movement of goods, without loss of life or serious injury;
2. Are key to creating a Safe System, and specifically incorporate the six principles of the Safe System Approach;
3. Consider not only the presence of a transportation facility for vulnerable road users, but also the level of comfort and safety provided by that facility;
4. Provide safe and comfortable accommodation for vulnerable road users both *along and across* the right-of-way where necessary and appropriate; and
5. Require connected travel networks, best-practice design criteria, and context-sensitive approaches.

Section 4. Applicability and Review Process

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 MORPC Complete Streets 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 to ensure that all projects throughout our region accommodate people using all modes of transportation.

This Complete Streets Policy applies to all projects receiving MORPC-attributable federal funding, including the new construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, repair, maintenance, or planning of roadways, trails, bridges, and other transportation facilities. Projects on facilities where walking and bicycling is prohibited by law are still required to comply with the policy as it pertains to connections across them, such as underpasses and overpasses, as well as other modes of transportation that may travel along them, such as public transit. Additionally, projects limited exclusively to maintenance-type activities are required to comply with the policy but may be permitted to include low-cost accommodations that can feasibly be incorporated within the extent of the maintenance project.

All projects selected for their first commitment of MORPC-attributable federal funding starting with the 2024-2025 application cycle shall adhere to this policy and are required to follow the Complete Streets review process as detailed below. Projects approved for MORPC-attributable federal funding prior to 2024 are required to comply with the previous Complete Streets Policy, adopted in 2021. However, those projects should consider complying with this updated Complete Streets Policy where possible and are requested to provide related information during Commitment Updates, as required by the Policies for Managing MORPC-Attributable Funds. Projects utilizing any other funding sources are also encouraged to adhere to this policy.

Complete Streets Review Process

The following steps are part of the general review process of MORPC-funded projects.

1. **Step 1**: As described in the Policies for Managing MORPC-Attributable Funds, MORPC staff will host an applicant workshop following the announcement of the solicitation of applications. The workshop will include an overview of the Complete Streets Policy and provide an opportunity for project sponsors to discuss the policy requirements with MORPC staff.
2. **Step 2:** MORPC staff perform an initial screening of new funding requests through the attributable funding application process, which will include review of the proposed project's compliance with the Complete Streets Policy. Staff will be available throughout the funding application process to provide technical assistance related to the Complete Streets Policy requirements. Compliance with this Policy is a requirement for project eligibility and a factor in selection for funding. MORPC staff will provide relevant feedback to applicants regarding their project's compliance with the Policy, and any potential revisions needed for their final application.
3. **Step 3**: Project sponsors applying for MORPC-attributable federal funding are asked to acknowledge that they have read the Complete Streets Policy, and they must describe how their project will address the policy requirements. This currently includes listing the pedestrian, bicycle, and transit components that will be included in the proposed project. If the project does not provide any of these facilities, the project sponsor must explain if and what alternatives were considered and why they cannot be provided. MORPC staff will provide a summary of this information to the Attributable Funds Committee (AFC), who will ultimately determine the final funding commitments.

4. **Step 4:** After MORPC has committed funding to a project, MORPC staff will review the project throughout the project development process to provide assistance where needed and ensure that the requirements of the Complete Streets Policy are met. Due to the flexibility of the policy and the variety of approaches that may be taken to design a Complete Street, MORPC staff will work with the project sponsor throughout the project development process to find an acceptable design solution for both parties. Should a project design change significantly from the original scope (and funding application) to no longer be in compliance with the Complete Streets Policy, the project sponsor may be required to submit a new funding application. The AFC will determine if and when a new application is required.

Section 5. Policy

MORPC requires that all projects receiving MORPC-attributable federal funding adhere to this policy. Any project receiving MORPC-attributable funding must meet the requirements outlined below. Each of these requirements addresses one or more of the principles established in *Section 3, Purpose,* and helps Central Ohio to meet established regional goals and objectives. Projects utilizing any other funding sources are also encouraged to adhere to this policy.

Requirements

1. Each project shall use the most appropriate, context-sensitive design standards and procedures. For projects using MORPC-attributable federal funding, it will be necessary to meet or exceed standards and procedures acceptable to the Ohio and U.S. Departments of Transportation, as well as comply with State and Federal laws and regulations. Related information and resources can be found in *Section 7, Design,* regarding design criteria, design guidelines, and additional best practice design standards.
2. Designs shall include accommodation of people using all modes of transportation and be sensitive to the context of the project setting (existing land uses, proposed land uses, etc.). It is important to note that Complete Streets may look different for every project and road type. However, every project shall be designed to optimize the level of comfort and safety for the people who are most vulnerable on our roadways, with due consideration of issues such as accessibility, functionality, and connectivity. The tools and resources in the Active Transportation Plan (ATP) provide the relevant guidance for determining appropriate facility types based on roadway conditions.
3. People of all ages and abilities using all modes of transportation shall be accommodated during the entire life cycle of a project, including planning, design, construction, operations, and maintenance.
    a. This includes providing accommodations for people using all modes of transportation to continue to use the road safely and efficiently during any construction or repair work that infringes on the right-of-way and/or sidewalk.
4. Safety shall be prioritized for the people who are most vulnerable on our roadways. Safety improvements for vulnerable road users will not be compromised to achieve an improved level of service for less vulnerable users.
5. Consideration shall be given to street design that encourages safe travel speeds. Speed management and traffic calming elements including, but not limited to, road diets, medians, narrowing of lane widths, curb bump-outs at intersections, roundabouts, etc. should be considered where safe and appropriate.
6. Locations for enhanced street crossings shall be identified throughout the length of a project. The design of those crossings should include proven safety countermeasures that ensure high visibility and safety for vulnerable road users crossing the street.

7. A systems approach shall be used in developing every roadway project to ensure regional connectivity of Complete Streets elements throughout the entirety of the project limits.
    a. If there is an existing facility or another project planned or in development near this project, the two shall be coordinated to ensure consistency and future connectivity between the facilities serving the corridor.
    b. Logical termini shall be chosen to include connections through “pinch points,” such as overpasses, railroad crossings, and bridges. Logical termini shall also be designed to provide safe and adequate transitions at facility end points.
    c. If the project is adjacent to a destination point, such as a school, recreational facility, shopping center, hospital, office complex, or transit facility, the project shall provide the opportunity for the destination to have access to the project’s pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
8. Every project shall identify future planned facilities or services and likely future demand for all modes of transportation within the project limits. Where feasible, projects should make the necessary modifications to existing infrastructure to accommodate these future planned facilities and services, and the project design shall not preclude the provision of future improvements.
9. Every project shall involve the local transit agency in the design process to ensure that sufficient accommodation for transit vehicles and access to transit facilities is provided. The project sponsor shall engage the local transit agency at the start of the Project Development Process and provide the opportunity for the transit agency to participate throughout the entire process.
    a. 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.
    b. When designing a facility that includes or crosses an existing or future transit route, ensure that the appropriate pedestrian and ADA access is provided to and from the transit stops.

Recommendations

The recommendations outlined below should also be considered, as appropriate to the context of a project.

1. Street furniture, such as bike racks, benches or mobility hubs, should be considered as part of all projects, where appropriate, as long as they do not impede any user.
2. Project sponsors should consider including street trees and landscape components, with careful analysis of tree species, site, and design considerations. Considerations should include, but are not limited to, providing adequate space for tree roots to grow and selecting trees that require less maintenance and do not inhibit the movement of people using adjacent sidewalks or pathways.
    a. Any project that requires removal of existing trees as part of construction should provide an equal or greater number of replacement trees.
3. Each project design should be coordinated with appropriate access management strategies. Access management strategies should consider the placement of sidewalks and ramps to eliminate sight distance issues.
4. Although this policy focuses primarily on the engineering aspects of roadway projects, the project sponsor should provide education, engagement, encouragement, and equitable enforcement strategies during and after the project. The education component should include government officials, developers, the public, and other relevant parties.

5. While this policy focuses on transportation, local governments should review their related policies, regulations, and standards to ensure that they are complementary to the development of Complete Streets. This includes land use and zoning policies, as well as building design and development standards, etc.
6. Local agencies should regularly update transportation design standards and procedures, and coordinate with partners to ensure compatibility in those standards and procedures throughout the region. Agencies should also regularly train staff on any updates to the standards and procedures so that they can adhere to them appropriately.
7. Local governments are encouraged to adopt their own Complete Streets policies, consistent with this regional policy and federal and state design standards. State governments should work with the local Metropolitan Planning Organizations to ensure consistency in policies at the state, regional, and local level.

Section 6. Appeal Process

Project sponsors may request an exemption or re-review of their projects by the Appeals Committee if they cannot reach an agreement with MORPC staff regarding project compliance with the Complete Streets policy. The Appeals Committee is composed of six (6) representatives and will meet on an “as needed” basis. The voting membership consists of three (3) representatives from the Attributable Funds Committee (AFC) and three (3) representatives from the Active Transportation Committee (ATC). When an appeal is filed, the chairs of the AFC and ATC will appoint their respective representatives to the Appeals Committee.

MORPC staff will review the requests initially and provide a report with recommendations to the committee in advance of each meeting. The applicant will have the opportunity to review the report and add comments to it prior to its submittal to the committee. During each meeting, the committee shall discuss and evaluate the request(s) and vote on a recommendation. The committee may invite the applicant to attend the meeting(s). A vote of at least four (4) committee members is needed to act. If no agreement can be reached, the project sponsor must propose an alternative that can obtain the votes necessary for approval. Members with conflicts of interest on a particular project before the committee must recuse themselves from deliberation on that project.

Instead of an exemption, the Appeals Committee may also suggest a lesser level of accommodation or accommodation on a parallel route. All appeals and resulting decisions will be kept on record and made publicly available.

Section 7. Design

Project sponsors are required to work with MORPC and Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) staff to determine the most appropriate design for a project and to ensure that the design does not conflict with State or Federal laws and regulations. For example, all project designs must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act as well as the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). National best practice design guidance, standards, and recommendations should be referenced in the design and implementation of Complete Streets but may require the use of design exceptions or requests for experimentation.

Design Criteria

ODOT has developed manuals for use on transportation projects in the state of Ohio that comply with Federal laws and regulations and compile the relevant criteria established in various national manuals, guides, and related resources. These ODOT manuals are intended to minimize the need for referencing multiple resources, and tailor design criteria to the needs of communities and transportation facilities in Ohio.

The following ODOT manuals should be used for designing projects that receive MORPC-Attributable Funds:

- Location and Design Manual, Volume 1 – Roadway Design
- Multimodal Design Guide

Design Guides

When receiving MORPC-Attributable Funding for a project that is on the National Highway System (NHS), a local agency must seek approval from ODOT to use a locally preferred roadway design guide that differs from the ODOT manuals. The locally preferred guide must be officially adopted by the local agency and recognized by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as an "alternate roadway design guide." If the project is *not* on the NHS, a local agency does not have to obtain approval from ODOT to use a locally preferred roadway design guide, so long as it is adopted by the local agency and it is recognized by FHWA.

The following publications are recognized by FHWA as alternate roadway design guides, as of November 2023, and may be used in project design to develop Complete Streets:

General Street Design

- Global Designing Cities Initiative (GDCI)
  - *Global Street Design Guide*, 2016 and the *Designing Streets for Kids* supplement, 2020
- Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE)
  - *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach, 2010* and the supplemental *Implementing Context Sensitive Design Handbook*, 2017
- NACTO *Urban Street Design Guide*, 2013

Pedestrian Facilities

- AASHTO *Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities*, 2021

Bicycle Facilities

- AASHTO *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*, 2012
- NACTO *Urban Bikeway Design Guide*, 2014
- NACTO *Don't Give Up at the Intersection*, 2019
- NACTO *Designing for All Ages & Abilities*, 2014

Transit Facilities

- AASHTO *Guide for Geometric Design of Transit Facilities on Highways and Streets*, 2014
- NACTO *Transit Street Design Guide*, 2016

More information about these requirements and relevant publications can be found in the *Design Standards, FAST Act and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Provisions* memo on the FHWA website: www.fhwa.dot.gov/design/standards/231116.cfm

Additional FHWA Resources:

Other FHWA publications that support the development of complete streets are also available for reference. However, these are not officially recognized by the FHWA as alternate roadway design guides. These publications include, but are not limited to:

- Achieving Multimodal Networks: Applying Design Flexibility and Reducing Conflicts, 2016
- Bikeway Selection Guide, 2019
- Separated Bike Lanes Planning and Design Guide, 2015
- Crosswalk Marking Selection Guide, 2023
- Primer on Safe System Approach for Pedestrians and Bicyclists, 2021
- Pedestrian and Bicyclist Road Safety Audit Guide and Prompt List, 2020
- Global Benchmarking Report: Improving Pedestrian Safety on Urban Arterials, 2023

Additional resources and publications can be found on the FHWA website:
www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications

Section 8. Implementation and Evaluation

The Complete Streets Policy is part of MORPC's planning process and project selection for MORPC-attributable funding. The vision and goals of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Active Transportation Plan (ATP), and other key regional plans informed the development of this policy and will also guide MORPC staff in review of project compliance with the policy.

MORPC shall, at a minimum, evaluate this policy every two years in alignment with the updates to the Policies for Managing MORPC-Attributable Funds. The review will be completed in advance of or in tandem with updates to the Policies for Managing MORPC-Attributable Funds so that any changes to the Complete Streets Policy may be incorporated into that update. This evaluation may include recommendations for amendments to the Complete Streets Policy and subsequently be considered for adoption by the Transportation Policy Committee.

In order to evaluate the progress resulting from the policy, as well as potential needs for updating the policy, MORPC staff will document information related to project compliance with the policy. This will include regular reports to the Transportation Advisory Committee and Active Transportation Committee on project progress through the Complete Streets Review Process, as well as summaries of the challenges encountered, and resolutions made throughout the review process.

Appendix

Key Term Definitions from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Context Sensitive Design (CSD)	Context Sensitive Design is a design process that not only considers physical aspects or standard specifications of a transportation facility, but also the economic, social, and environmental resources in the community being served by that facility. A CSD approach helps to ensure projects: • Are safe for all users. • Use a shared stakeholder vision as a basis for decisions and for solving problems that may arise. • Meet or exceed the expectations of both designers and stakeholders, thereby adding lasting value to the community, the environment, and the transportation system. • Demonstrate effective and efficient use of resources.[1]
Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS)	The Context Sensitive Solutions process, as defined by FHWA, is a collaborative, interdisciplinary, and holistic approach to the development of transportation projects. The CSS process involves all stakeholders, including community members, elected officials, interest groups, and affected local, state, and federal agencies. The CSS process values equally the needs of agency and community, considering all trade-offs in decision-making. The CSS process is guided by four core principles: • A shared stakeholder vision to provide a basis for decisions. • A comprehensive understanding of contexts. • Continuing communication and collaboration to achieve consensus. • Flexibility and creativity to shape effective transportation solutions, while preserving and enhancing community and natural environments.[2]
Equity	Equity in transportation seeks fairness in mobility and accessibility to meet the needs of all community members. A central goal of transportation equity is to facilitate social and economic opportunities by providing equitable levels of access to affordable and reliable transportation options based on the needs of the populations being served, particularly populations that are traditionally underserved. It is important to note that transportation equity does not mean equal. An equitable transportation plan considers the circumstances impacting a community's mobility and connectivity needs, and this information is used to determine the measures needed to develop an equitable transportation network.[3]

[1] Understanding CSD and CSS, https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/css/what_is_css/
[2] Understanding CSD and CSS, https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/css/what_is_css/
[3] Environmental Justice, Title VI, Non-Discrimination, and Equity, https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/environmental_justice/equity/

Key Term Definitions (Continued)

Resilience	Resilience is the ability to anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to changing conditions and withstand, respond to, and recover rapidly from disruptions. The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, signed into law in December 2015, requires agencies to take resiliency into consideration during transportation planning processes.[4]
Road User	The term "road user" means a motorist, passenger, public transportation operator or user, truck driver, bicyclist, motorcyclist, or pedestrian, including a person with disabilities. (23 U.S.C. 148(a)(8)).
Shared Mobility	Shared mobility – the shared use of a vehicle, bicycle, or other mode – is an innovative transportation strategy that enables users to gain short-term access to transportation modes on an as-needed basis. The term *shared mobility* includes various forms of carsharing, bikesharing, ridesharing (carpooling and vanpooling), and on-demand ride services. It can also include alternative transit services, such as paratransit, shuttles, and private transit services (called microtransit), which can supplement fixed-route bus and rail services.[5]
Sustainability	Sustainability is often described using the "triple bottom line" concept, which includes giving consideration to three primary principles: Social, Environmental, and Economic. The goal of sustainability is the satisfaction of basic social and economic needs, both present and future, and the responsible use of natural resources, all while maintaining or improving the well-being of the environment on which life depends.[6]
Vulnerable Road Users	"Vulnerable road users" is a term applied to those most at risk in traffic. Thus, vulnerable road users are mainly those unprotected by an outside shield, namely pedestrians and two-wheelers, as they sustain a greater risk of injury in any collision against a vehicle and are therefore highly in need of protection against such collisions.[7]

[4] Resilience and Transportation Planning, https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/sustainability/resilience/publications/ratp/index.cfm
[5] Shared Mobility: Current Practices and Guiding Principles https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/fhwahop16022/fhwahop16022.pdf
[6] What is Sustainability? https://www.sustainablehighways.dot.gov/overview.aspx#quest1
[7] Safety of Vulnerable Road Users, https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/docs/oecd_safety.pdf