

## **VFHK Sample Policy**

### **Complete Streets**

The sample Complete Streets policy below provides model language for an official policy to create Complete Streets that are safe and convenient for diverse users and all modes of transportation. The policy works towards the creation of a safe multimodal transportation network by requiring that every road construction and reconstruction project makes a transportation network safe and comfortable for all users, preferably with an emphasis on implementation within communities that have historically been underserved. A Complete Streets approach requires that all users of all ages, incomes, abilities and disabilities – drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and people using public transit – be considered in all roadway construction, repair, and even routine maintenance (such as paving and painting) and reconstruction.

The language written in [*italics*] provides different options or explains the type of information that needs to be inserted in the blank spaces to customize the policy. While the model is designed as a statute, there are many different options for enacting a Complete Streets Policy. It can be achieved through legislation, executive order, or agency rulemaking at the state or local level, or through the Metropolitan Planning Organization, Regional Planning Commission, or other elected/administrative body that oversees transportation policies.

## Sample Complete Streets Policy

An Act to require that all transportation project planning, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, maintenance and operation consider the needs of all users and modes of transportation.

**SECTION 1. Findings.** The [State/County/City/Region] of [Name of State/County/City/Region] hereby finds and declares as follows:

*Comment: The information in “SECTION I. Findings” below is sample language for Complete Streets policies in general. The section should be tailored to the setting and situation covered by your specific campaign to highlight the need for the Policy to be enacted.*

1. Whereas, “Complete Streets” refers to a comprehensive and connected transportation network that is designed, implemented, operated, and maintained in an equitable way to allow for safe use by people of all ages, races, ethnicities, incomes, abilities and disabilities. Complete Streets consider the needs of all users, including without limitation: pedestrians, bicyclists, assistive device users, transit users and vehicles, and commercial and emergency vehicles using the transportation networks.
2. Whereas, Complete Streets support economic vibrancy and facilitate dynamic, livable communities by providing safe and efficient transportation networks to everyday destinations including employment, schools, grocery stores, medical care, local businesses, and places of worship,<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>
3. Whereas, streets are a key use of public space, shaping the experiences of residents and visitors in [State/ County/ City/ Region];
4. Whereas, Complete Streets provide the context for current and future development and are vital for sustainability, including increasing energy efficiency, reducing air pollution, and improving water quality;<sup>5,6</sup>
5. Whereas, Complete Streets support previous actions taken by [State/ County/ City/ Region] to support the safety and convenience of all users of the streets, including [if jurisdiction has adopted a Bike Plan, Multimodal Plan, Safe Routes to School resolution, or other planning or policy measures that are consistent with Complete Streets, reference those here];
6. Whereas, transportation networks that are not complete put all users at risk and are

especially dangerous for pedestrians, bicyclists, those taking public transportation, and specific vulnerable users including children,<sup>7,8</sup> people with disabilities,<sup>9,10</sup> older adults,<sup>11,12</sup> low income communities,<sup>13,14</sup> and communities of color;<sup>7,15</sup>

7. Whereas, traffic injuries and fatalities cause pain and suffering to the people of [State/ County/ City/ Region].
8. Whereas, Complete Streets improve public safety by reducing the incidence of traffic collision injuries and fatalities for users of all modes of transportation;<sup>16,17</sup>
9. Whereas, low levels of physical activity are one of the contributors to high rates of overweight and obesity in [State/ County/ City/ Region], with obesity levels of [X] compared to [Y nationwide/statewide], leading to related chronic diseases;
10. Whereas, multimodal infrastructure increases the number of people walking, biking, and using public transit, providing opportunities for increased physical activity, which can reduce the risk of chronic disease related to obesity and overweight, including hypertension, heart attack, stroke, and diabetes;<sup>18,19</sup>

***Comment:*** *Incorporating local data can strengthen your findings section.*

- *Data on traffic injuries or bicycle and pedestrian fatalities can be found through the National Highway Traffic Safety Association's [Fatality Analysis Reporting System](#). More detailed local data may be available from the crash database of your regional planning organization, your jurisdiction's department of transportation, or the local law enforcement office*
- *A variety of state-specific statistics related to transportation usage, injuries, and the like can be found at the [Bureau of Transportation Statistics Website](#).*
- *Obesity and chronic disease rates are available from [The State of Obesity](#) and the [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#)*

**SECTION 2. Policy.** [State/ County/ City/ Region] views all transportation improvements as opportunities to foster a healthy, safe, equitable, interconnected, accessible, and more livable community for all people. Therefore, it shall be the official policy of [State/ County/ City/ Region] to incorporate Complete Streets into all Transportation Projects that are within the [State's/ County's/ City's/ Region's] transportation network, including both projects that are part of the public right-of-way and private development projects. Complete Streets shall also be considered in all planning and land use decisions. The [State/ County/ City/ Region] shall consider all users of all abilities in all aspects of its transportation funding, decision-making,

planning, new construction, reconstruction, retrofits, maintenance, and operation of the transportation network. This policy will create a safe, convenient, reliable, efficient, integrated, and connected multimodal transportation network that will promote access, mobility, and health for people of all ages, races, ethnicities, incomes, abilities and disabilities, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, assistive device users, transit users and vehicles, and commercial and emergency vehicles.

### **SECTION 3. Definitions.**

1. “Complete Streets” means a comprehensive and connected transportation network that is designed, implemented, operated, and maintained in an equitable way to allow for safe use by people of all ages, incomes, abilities and disabilities. Complete Streets consider the needs of all users, including without limitation: pedestrians, bicyclists, assistive device users, transit users and vehicles, and commercial and emergency vehicles using the transportation networks.
2. “Committee” means the Complete Streets Advisory Committee established in this Chapter.
3. “Low-Income Community” means any population census tract that meets one of the following criteria, as reported in the most recently completed decennial census published by the U.S. Bureau of the Census:
  - a. The poverty rate for the census tract is at least 20 percent, or
  - b. In the case of a low-income community located:
    - i. Outside of a metropolitan area, the median family income (MFI) for such tract does not exceed 80 percent of statewide MFI, or
    - ii. Within a metropolitan area, the MFI for such tract does not exceed 80 percent of statewide MFI or metropolitan area MFI.
4. “Moderate-Income Community” means any population whose incomes are between 81 percent and 95 percent of the median income for the area.
5. “Policy” means the policy enacted by this chapter requiring Complete Streets principles to be incorporated into all Transportation Projects.
6. “Priority Community” means an area with history of disinvestment or underinvestment, an area with poor health outcomes, and/or an area with diminished access to transportation options. Priority Communities are often associated with racial and ethnic disparities.

***Comment:*** *Priority Communities are areas that are too often overlooked and underserved, resulting in inequitable treatment. It is important to identify these areas and prioritize policy implementation in these communities. States, counties, and cities should have information available to help identify areas that lack transportation options and have historic underinvestment in infrastructure. Additionally, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has online tools available to help identify areas with poor health outcomes: [Better Data for Better Health](#).*

7. “Transportation Project” means the construction, reconstruction, resurfacing, repair, restoration, rehabilitation, and/or other to streets, roadways, highways, bridges tunnels, sidewalks, bike paths, and other parts of the transportation network. “Transportation Project” does not include minor routine upkeep, interim measures on detour routes, or projects with a total cost of less than [\$X].

***Comment:*** *The term and definition for “Transportation Project” should consider any existing related project terms within the jurisdiction. e.g. capitol project, major maintenance project, annual maintenance project, minor repairs, street projects, etc.*

#### **SECTION 4. Policy Requirements**

1. All relevant departments and agencies of [State/ County/ City/ Region] shall:
  - a. Make Complete Streets a routine part of everyday operations;
  - b. Approach every Transportation Project and program as an opportunity to improve the transportation network for all users; and
  - c. Work in coordination with other departments, agencies, and jurisdictions to achieve Complete Streets.
2. All Transportation Projects within the [State/ County/ City/ Region] conducted, funded, and/or approved by [the Department of Transportation, Metropolitan Planning Organization, and/or local jurisdiction] shall contribute to a transportation network that enables reasonably safe travel for all modes of transportation and which address the current and future needs of all users and all modes of transportation.

3. This Policy applies to all Transportation Projects [*statewide/ countywide/ citywide/ regionwide*], but the [*State/ County/ City/ Region*] shall prioritize Policy implementation in Low-Income Communities, Moderate-Income Communities, and Priority Communities. The [*State/ County/ City/ Region*] shall identify these priority communities within [*X timeframe*] of Policy adoption, and shall review and update the list of priority communities annually to ensure that the Policy is being properly prioritized in those areas.
4. This Policy must consider current and future land uses and transportation needs. It must be implemented in a context-sensitive manner with respect to the surrounding area, its natural and built environments, and the demographics of the people living in the surrounding communities. The Policy must allow for a transportation network that improves safety and mobility, is flexible and sensitive to community needs, and balances economic, social, and environmental objectives.
  - a. The [*State/ County/ City/ Region*] shall support complementary transportation, land use, development, and zoning policies, and shall require coordination between the different departments to better integrate transportation, land use, and planning policies and projects.
  - b. The [*State/ County/ City/ Region*] shall review and revise land use, planning, zoning, and other relevant policies and procedures to incorporate Complete Streets elements into those policies. The review and revision must be complete within [*X timeframe*] of enactment of this Policy.
  - c. When revising existing or developing new transportation plans and design guidelines, the [*State/ County/ City/ Region*] shall specify within the plans how the transportation projects will serve current and future land use.
  - d. When planning a large-scale transportation project, the [*State/ County/ City/ Region*] must consider how the project will impact the surrounding community and must work to avoid or mitigate any negative consequences that may disrupt or displace residents.

***Comment:*** *Community character and history, as well as current and future land use, should be considered when implementing a Complete Streets Policy. The Policy should be sensitive to community needs in order to avoid unintended consequences that may disrupt or displace residents. For example, a large-scale transportation project can trigger an increase in land values and housing costs, therefore there should be measures to preserve housing affordability.*

## SECTION 5. Implementation

1. Within [*X timeframe*] of Policy adoption, [*appropriate implementing agency(ies), such as Department of Transportation, Department of Public Works, Department of Planning*] shall establish a plan to address short-term and long-term steps necessary to create a comprehensive and integrated transportation network that balances the needs of all users, incorporating and achieving Complete Streets through incremental change.
2. Within [*X timeframe*] of Policy adoption, [*implementing agency(ies)*] shall adopt or develop transportation design manuals, standards and guidelines based upon best practices in urban design or street design. The manual must be made publicly available online.
3. Within [*X timeframe*] of Policy adoption, a Complete Streets Community Engagement Plan shall be developed in order to inform and receive input on the equitable implementation of the Policy from the public.
4. [*Implementing agency(ies)*] shall create plans, set goals, and provide training to staff to ensure the successful implementation of the Policy in Low-Income Communities, Moderate-Income Communities, and Priority Communities. The agency(ies) must identify barriers and solutions to the equitable implementation of Complete Streets, and work with other agencies as appropriate within the [*State/ County/ City/ Region*] on equitable implementation.
5. Within [*X timeframe*] of Policy adoption, a Complete Streets Advisory Committee representing a broad range of transportation, accessibility, and community stakeholders in [*State/ County/ City/ Region*] shall be established to support and oversee the implementation of this Policy. The Committee shall be organized and appointed by [*implementing agency(ies) or other appropriate person/group*].

**Comment:** *The primary role of a Complete Streets committee is to create an accountability mechanism for the implementation of the policy. The number of members and composition of a Committee will likely be dictated by local needs and political considerations. Composition should be diverse and include strong community representation, including both internal and external stakeholders and representatives from Priority Communities. Potential members can include: state/county/city staff, professionally affiliated members focused on multimodal transportation, economic development, or land use, and residents from a diverse range of communities/neighborhoods with no aligned professional representation.*

- a. The Committee shall be supported by *[implementing agency(ies)]* staff, and shall consist of  *[# ]* members, with the following composition:
  - i. *[Insert composition requirements]*
- b. Duties of the Committee shall include:
  - i. Establishing Complete Streets performance measures;
  - ii. Reviewing and approving/denying Complete Streets exceptions requests;
  - iii. Receiving *[bi-weekly/monthly/quarterly/semi-annual]* reports on Complete Streets implementation;
  - iv. Reviewing and making recommendations regarding Complete Streets priority areas for investment and improvement, with a focus on Low-Income Communities, Moderate-Income Communities, and Priority Communities;
  - v. Reviewing the annual Complete Streets implementation report and providing related feedback and recommendations to *[implementing agency(ies)]* regarding areas of strong progress, needs for improvement, and equity considerations.
  - vi. *[Insert additional duties if needed]*
- c. The Committee shall meet at least *[monthly/quarterly]*. Meetings of the Committee shall be advertised, open to the public, held in accessible locations, and include the opportunity for public comment.

**Comment:** *Different jurisdictions have different requirements and processes around committees; language and structure of this provision should be modified to comply with local process and requirements.*



6. The *[implementing agency]* shall offer annual training opportunities to staff, Committee members, community leaders, and the general public so that everyone understands the importance of Complete Streets. Training topics can include, but are not limited to, Complete Streets design and implementation, community engagement, and health equity. The *[implementing agency]* may contract with an outside vendor with appropriate expertise to organize and provide these training opportunities.

## **SECTION 6. Performance Measures**

1. To evaluate Policy implementation and assess how well the transportation network is serving all users, the Complete Streets Committee, in consultation with the *[implementing agency(ies)]*, shall establish performance targets and identify performance measures. The performance measures shall be established within *[X timeframe]* after the Committee has been established.
  - a. In choosing performance measures, the Committee shall consider data availability and strategies for systematic collection of data over time.
  - b. The Committee shall consider both quantitative and qualitative performance measures, and shall include performance measures that track progress on equitable implementation in Low-Income Communities, Moderate-Income Communities, and Priority Communities.
  - c. Performance measures shall include, but are not be limited to:
    - i. Changes to the transportation planning process to make Complete Streets a routine part of day-to-day decision making.
      1. Progress in reviewing/revising plans, policies, design guidelines, decision-making frameworks, and other relevant documents and procedures to address Complete Streets requirements
      2. Number of people trained, and hours of training offered annually to staff, Committee members, community leaders, and the general public related to Complete Streets.
      3. Progress in engaging the public, with special focus on residents in Low-Income Communities, Moderate-Income Communities, and Priority Communities.

ii. New Complete Streets investments.

1. Percentage of new miles of bicycle infrastructure and pedestrian infrastructure relative to baseline existing infrastructure, with breakout numbers for new infrastructure in Low-Income Communities, Moderate-Income Communities, and Priority Communities.
2. Percentage of funding allocated to projects that include pedestrian, bicycle, and/or transit infrastructure, by neighborhood
3. Percentage of Transportation Projects taking place in Low-Income Communities, Moderate-Income Communities, and Priority Communities.
4. Percentage of Complete Streets exceptions granted in Low-Income Communities, Moderate-Income Communities, and Priority Communities.

iii. Community Benefits.

1. The number, locations, and cause of collisions, injuries, and fatalities by mode of transportation and by demographic group (mode, age, gender, income, race, ethnicity, and disability status);
2. Trip and commute mode percentages (e.g., drive alone, carpool, transit, bicycle, walk), by demographic group (mode, age, gender, income, race, ethnicity, and disability status);
3. Number of children walking or bicycling to school, by school and by demographic group (mode, age, gender, income, race, ethnicity, and disability status);
4. Percentage of people living within walking distance (a quarter mile) of a park, transit stop, or low-stress bike route, by demographic group (mode, age, gender, income, race, ethnicity, and disability status);

2. *[The implementing agency(ies)]* shall be responsible for collecting and reporting baseline and annual data for selected performance measures.

***Comment:*** *Selecting performance measures is an exercise in balance. It requires balancing everything that it would be interesting to know about Complete Streets performance with what is practical and efficient. The goal is to generate a list of what can reasonably be tracked, with a reasonable expenditure of time and money, to give a decent snapshot of how well things are working*

## **SECTION 7. Reporting Requirements**

1. On a *[quarterly/semi-annual/annual]* basis, the *[implementing agency(ies)]* shall coordinate and submit a Complete Streets Implementation report to the Complete Streets Advisor Committee and *[whoever oversees the implementing agency(ies) e.g. the governor, state legislature, county board, city council]*. The report shall be publicized and made publicly available online. The report shall include, but not be limited to:
  - a. Baseline and current data, trends, and analysis related to performance measures;
  - b. A summary of all Transportation Projects planned or undertaken, their funding, and their status, including a full list and map, with clear identification of which Transportation Projects are located in Low-Income Communities, Moderate-Income Communities, and Priority Communities;
  - c. All exceptions granted pursuant to Section 8 of this Policy, with information noting exceptions for Transportation Projects in Low-Income Communities, Moderate-Income Communities, and Priority Communities.
  - d. A summary of all updates to plans, policies, street design standards, manuals and procedures, zoning and municipal codes conducted pursuant to this Policy or likely to affect implementation of this Policy;
  - e. A summary of all staff Complete Streets trainings and professional development;
  - f. An overview of progress toward the objectives of the Policy;
  - g. Recommendations for improving implementation of this Policy, including effectiveness, equity, and additional policy needs.

2. [Implementing agency(ies)] shall complete a specific equity evaluation of Complete Streets Policy implementation in Low-Income Communities, Moderate-Income Communities, and Priority Communities to be submitted with the [quarterly/semi-annual/annual] report. The report shall include, but not be limited to:
  - a. A summary of how the Policy implementation is being prioritized in Low-Income Communities, Moderate-Income Communities, and Priority Communities;
  - b. An analysis of Policy implementation in the [State/ County/ City/ Region] overall versus Policy implementation in Low-Income Communities, Moderate-Income Communities, and Priority Communities.

***Comment:** Consider what types of information will be helpful to ensure accountability around making sure high-need communities are benefiting fairly from Complete Street projects, and add additional necessary elements to the equity evaluation as needed.*

## **SECTION 8. Exceptions.**

1. Exceptions to this Policy may be granted in the following situations:
  - a. Application of Complete Streets principles is not practicable because certain users are prohibited by law from using the part of the transportation network in question, such as interstate freeways or pedestrian malls;
  - b. Cost of accommodation is excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use;
  - c. There is a documented absence of current and future need for the application of Complete Streets;
  - d. Significant adverse environmental impacts outweigh the positive effects of the Complete Streets infrastructure;
  - e. Emergency repairs that require an immediate, rapid response
2. There shall be a transparent review process for all proposed exceptions to the Policy.

- a. All proposed exceptions to the Policy must be reviewed and ruled on by the Committee, in consultation with the *[implementing agency(ies)]*.
  - b. Any proposed exception must be submitted in writing to the Complete Streets Advisory Committee along with clear, supportive documentation justifying the exception and noting how the project fits into one of the allowable exception situations.
  - c. A proposed exception must be submitted at least [#] days prior to a Committee meeting.
  - d. A ruling on whether or not to grant the exception must be made within [#] days of a Committee meeting, and must be accompanied by written, publicly-available, supporting information that indicates a basis for the decision
  - e. All proposed exceptions must be mode-specific, specifying which Complete Streets principles should be exempted. Infeasibility of one mode of transportation should not exempt a project from incorporating other Complete Streets principles.
  - f. All proposed exceptions must be announced through a public notice. The submitted exception and supporting documentation must be publicly-available, and there must be the opportunity for public comment prior to a ruling on the exception.
3. An exception for emergency repairs that require an immediate, rapid response, such as a water main leak, may receive expedited approval by the *[implementing agency(ies)]* without being subject to the full review process. However, temporary accommodations for all modes should still be made whenever feasible. Additionally, depending on the severity of the repairs, opportunities to improve multimodal access should still be considered where possible.

***Comment:*** *The exceptions process must be transparent and allow for public feedback on any proposed exceptions to the Policy. The Advisory Committee can be tasked with reviewing and approving exception requests with input from the implementing agency staff, or the process can require a high-level administrative sign off. Whatever the process, it must require documentation, a clear decision-making procedure, and written approval complete with justification for any granted exceptions.*

**SECTION 9. Additional Steps and Rule Making.** The [Commissioner/Director/other title] of the [Implementing agency(ies)] shall equitable implement, administer, and enforce this chapter, and may adopt rules consistent with the Policy as necessary to carry out the purpose of and enforce this chapter.

**SECTION 10. Preservation of Local Authority.** Nothing in this chapter shall preempt or prevent any political subdivision from establishing additional or more rigorous requirements consistent with the purposes of this Policy.

*Comment: A “Preservation of Local Authority” clause should be included if there is a more-local level of government below the governmental body enacting this Policy so as not to prevent a local government from going above and beyond this Policy. (e.g. this clause would be included in a state statute so as not to preempt a city or county.)*

**SECTION 11. Severability.** If any portion of this chapter, any rule or regulation made under this chapter, or the application of this chapter to any person or circumstance is held invalid by any court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of the chapter, rule or regulation, and the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances shall not be affected.

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<sup>2</sup> Gotschi, Thomas (2011). Costs and Benefits of Bicycling Investments in Portland, Oregon. Journal of Physical Activity and Health, Vol. 8, Supplement 1, pp. S49-S58. Retrieved from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21350262/>.

<sup>3</sup> The American Institute of Architects. (2005). What makes a community livable? Livability 101. Washington, DC: The American Institute of Architects. Retrieved from [http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/livability101\\_2005.pdf](http://www.reconnectingamerica.org/assets/Uploads/livability101_2005.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation. (2010). Livability in transportation guidebook: Planning approaches that promote livability. Retrieved from [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability/case\\_studies/guidebook/livabilitygb10.pdf](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/livability/case_studies/guidebook/livabilitygb10.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Komanoff, C., Roelofs, C., Orcutt, J., & Ketcham, B. (1993). Environmental benefits of bicycling and walking in the United States. Transportation Research Record: 1405. Retrieved from <https://onlinepubs.trb.org/Onlinepubs/trr/1993/1405/1405-002.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Kramer, M. (2014). Enhancing Sustainable Communities with Green Infrastructure. Washington, D.C.: United States Environmental Protection Agency. Retrieved from <https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2014-10/documents/green-infrastructure.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2018, April). DOT HS 812 491: Children. Retrieved from <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812491>

<sup>8</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2018, January). DOT HS 812 476: School-transportation-related crashes. Retrieved from <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812476>

<sup>9</sup> Wheel for Wellbeing. (2017, November). A guide to inclusive cycling. Retrieved from <https://wheelsforwellbeing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/v2-Nov-2017.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Smart Growth America. (n.d.). Benefits of Complete Streets: Complete Streets help people with disabilities. Retrieved from <https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/cs/factsheets/cs-disabilities.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2018, May 2018). DOT HS 812 500: Older population. Retrieved from <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812500>

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