

Complete Streets Policy

Capitol Region Council of Governments

January 22, 2020

I. Policy Statement

CRCOG will continue to advance and support complete streets in the Capitol Region.

This policy will contribute to the State of Connecticut meeting the complete streets objectives established by state law (Connecticut General Statutes Sec. 13a-153f.) and the Complete Streets Policy of the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT).

This policy will be a living document, adapting to the Capitol Region's needs as they change over time. While this policy is applicable at the regional level, member municipalities are encouraged to adopt and maintain local complete streets policies.

II. Modal Hierarchy and Accommodation of Diverse Users

Through this policy, the region's decision-making process will strive to protect those most vulnerable to harm, while accommodating a wide range of modes, by incorporating the modal hierarchy below.

The modal hierarchy recognizes that many people living in the CRCOG region lack regular or convenient access to an automobile. It also recognizes that many people who do have auto access would prefer to walk, bike, or take transit.

The following modal hierarchy shall apply to all urban, town center, and village center place types and to all streets and roads where development ordinances or land use plans call for walkable or multimodal corridors.

1. People walking, in wheelchairs, or using other assistive devices
2. People taking transit
3. People biking
4. People moving goods for local delivery
5. People in personal automobiles accessing local destinations

The modal hierarchy is intended to serve as a general framework for planning and programming, including project application review, to encourage context-specific design solutions on individual corridors, with consideration of land use planning, public input, and relevant data. In other words, what constitutes a complete street in one area may look quite different than a complete street in another. However, regardless of context, this policy seeks to expand transportation options for the most vulnerable users of the system. The Design section of this policy identifies resources to guide the accommodation of various users of the transportation system in different land use contexts.

III. Commitment in All Projects and Phases

All Projects

All projects receiving funding through CRCOG, or submitted as candidates for State funding, must adhere to this policy. CRCOG will work with CTDOT to develop a process to consider the requirements of this policy when selecting projects for funding through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

All Phases

Except for projects that have received an exception (see Exceptions section), consideration of complete streets and the provision of accommodations for all users will be built into projects from the beginning of project development and will persist through all phases. Project phases include planning, programming, environmental documentation, design, right-of-way acquisition, procurement/bidding, construction, construction engineering, reconstruction, and operations. Accordingly, vulnerable users, including bicyclists and pedestrians, and transit must be reasonably accommodated during the construction phase of projects.

This policy also applies to all CRCOG planning activities that involve public rights-of-way, including the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

IV. Exceptions

A. Criteria for Project Exceptions

Exceptions to this policy shall be considered on a project-by-project basis. The following list, which is not necessarily exhaustive, includes criteria and examples of potential exception conditions.

- Projects where certain users are legally excluded, like controlled-access highways or pedestrian-only streets. Partial exceptions may apply to ensure projects consider all users that are not legally excluded.
- Projects for which there is already a parallel off-road facility, such as a multi-use path. This exception should not lead to an unreasonable detour for users to access destinations along the corridor with the project.
- Projects where no transit routes exist or are planned may be exempt from including transit accommodations.
- Projects where there is no existing or potential/expected demand for a particular user group.
- Cost-prohibitive projects
 - If an applicant is seeking an exception based on cost, a breakdown of the project cost with and without complete streets facilities is required.

- Projects where extreme topographical or natural resource constraints, or the need for excessive right-of-way acquisition, lead to disproportionate costs for including complete streets elements, or when there is a compelling reason that a complete streets element of a project must terminate prior to making a logical connection to the existing network for a particular mode.
- Projects where complete streets elements are not consistent with local plans, visions, and/or standards.

B. Pre-application Information

In advance of soliciting project applications, CRCOG may hold a pre-application workshop to clarify complete streets requirements and potential exceptions.

C. Complete Streets Compliance Form

All project applications shall include a Complete Streets Compliance Form (Appendix D). On this form, applicants will identify either their project's included complete streets elements or the reasoning for why the project qualifies for an exception. Applicants should cite at least one of the above exception criteria or make a comprehensive case for a different type of exception.

D. Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel Needs Assessment Form

All project applications shall include a completed CTDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel Needs Assessment (BPTNA) form.

E. Compliance Process

Upon receiving an application for funding, CRCOG Transportation and Policy/Planning staff will review it for all eligibility factors, including compliance with this policy via the submitted Complete Streets Compliance Form. Staff must consider project context in their review (as described in Appendix C). If staff determines that a project requires an exception that has not been identified or that the identified exception is not applicable, staff will coordinate with the applicant regarding identified issues and possible solutions. The applicant will then have an opportunity to resubmit the form and application, along with any additional supporting materials, to address these concerns. If the applicant and staff cannot come to agreement regarding the compliance of a project, both parties will present information to the Transportation Committee, which will then determine a project's compliance and funding eligibility.

F. Communication

All exceptions shall be recorded in approved minutes of the Transportation Committee.

V. Appendix A: Coordination

A. Courtesy Review

Municipalities are encouraged to invite representatives from neighboring municipalities to review potential projects that may impact those communities.

B. Interagency Coordination

For all projects, applicants are encouraged to consult with relevant agencies before applying for CRCOG-allocated funds. The agencies to be consulted will vary based on the specifics of each project, but may include the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CTDEEP), State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), the Army Corps of Engineers, etc.

C. Land Use Referral and Regulations

Under state law, notifications and opportunities for review and comment must be given to regional councils of governments for updates to municipal POCDs, certain zoning map and text amendments, and proposed subdivisions. These referrals may afford CRCOG and the municipality an opportunity to formally communicate on opportunities to support complete streets policies and the construction of complete streets elements as part of new development.

CRCOG's member municipalities are encouraged to review their zoning and subdivision regulations for opportunities to better integrate complete streets elements. Several resources, including CRCOG's Sustainable Land Use Code project, can assist communities in such a review.

D. Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) Coordination

CRCOG recognizes that CTDOT is an important partner and that CTDOT has committed to complete streets across the state through its Complete Streets Policy. CTDOT is encouraged to continue incorporating complete streets into all projects and to closely coordinate with municipalities, throughout the project development process, on projects located within or near those respective municipalities' limits. Strong coordination between CTDOT and CRCOG will strengthen the region's ability to deliver complete streets projects. CTDOT is encouraged to hold routine consultations with CRCOG on complete streets opportunities relating to projects using state or federal funding.

VI. Appendix B: Design Considerations

A. Municipal Design Standards

CRCOG encourages member municipalities to evaluate their local design guidelines and engineering standards to align them with complete streets best practices and this policy's modal hierarchy.

B. Education and Training

CRCOG will support complete streets design efforts by providing education and training opportunities for both CRCOG staff and municipal staff.

C. Context-specific Design

Street design will be context-specific. Projects in rural areas should accommodate all users in a way that fits with a rural context. Logical project termini shall be chosen to include connections through challenging design areas, such as overpasses, rail crossings, bridges, or unsafe intersections. Projects shall not terminate before such obstacles unless there is a compelling reason to do so.

D. Design Guidelines

Current adopted or accepted design guidance, as defined by the list provided below, should be followed for all projects. Best practice design guidelines will be revisited by CRCOG and its member communities with each update of the Complete Streets Policy.

Project designs receiving CRCOG-allocated funds shall adhere to FHWA and-or CTDOT requirements, as necessary, but may include treatments that can be piloted through the MUTCD experimentation process. Innovative design options that provide an additional level of safety and comfort for vulnerable users are encouraged.

Quick-Build and Temporary Complete Streets Projects

For eligible funding sources, CRCOG supports and encourages the use of temporary or quick-build materials to test designs or rapidly install complete streets designs without major reconstruction in the short-term.

Best Practice Design Standards and Guidelines

- American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)
 - Guide for the Planning, Designing, and Operation Pedestrian Facilities
 - Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities
 - Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets (Green Book)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
 - Separated Bike Lane Planning and Design Guide
 - Achieving Multimodal Networks: Applying Design Flexibility & Reducing Conflicts
- National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)
 - Urban Street Design Guide

- Transit Street Design Guide
 - Urban Bikeway Design Guide
- Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)
- U.S. Access Board
 - USDOT ADA Standards
 - Proposed Accessibility Guidelines for Pedestrian Facilities in the Public Right-of-Way (PROWAG)
- Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT)
 - Highway Design Manual
 - Bridge Design Manual
 - Drainage Manual
 - Utility Accommodation Manual
 - Traffic Control Signal Design Manual
- Local Design Guidelines

VII. Appendix C: Land Use and Context Sensitivity

A. Evaluating Needs and Potential of Streets

Each project needs a review of context and the subject area's role within a community and larger regional network. Through evaluation of the existing and expected future conditions around a project area, complete streets alternatives may be developed.

1. Existing Conditions

Existing crash history, land use, zoning, density of residents and uses, modal usage, and space constraints, are to be considered as part of every project to evaluate the needs of all users within a given project area and to determine appropriate design treatments.

2. Future Conditions

Future or potential land use, zoning, density of residents and uses, modal usage, and space constraints, as determined by growth patterns, planning documents, and projections, are to be considered to anticipate future needs and potential of all users within a given project area and to determine appropriate design treatments.

B. Responding to Context

Different design treatments will be appropriate depending on the land use, transportation network needs, and space constraints of a project area. For example:

- On streets with higher motor vehicle speeds and/or volumes:
 - Physical separation between bicycle facilities and general travel lanes is preferred.
 - Pedestrian facilities should be buffered from general travel lanes by context-sensitive elements such as a planting strip.
- Streets that need to accommodate buses or large trucks may need to give more consideration to the effects of lane widths.
- Streets with higher land use density should accommodate higher pedestrian volumes.
- Streets in rural town centers that are designed for slow speed may not need separated bicycle facilities.
- Well-designed streetscape improvements can change the context of a street through placemaking, making it more walkable and human-centered.

VIII. Appendix D: Complete Streets Compliance Form

Criteria for Exceptions

Legal Exclusion: Projects where certain users are legally excluded, like controlled-access highways or pedestrian-only streets. Partial exceptions may apply to ensure projects consider all users that are not legally excluded.

Existing Parallel Facility: Projects for which there is already a parallel off-road facility, such as a multi-use path. This exception should not lead to an unreasonable detour for users to access destinations along the corridor with the project.

Lack of Transit Service: Projects where no transit routes exist or are planned may be exempt from including transit accommodations.

No Demand: Projects where there is no existing or potential/expected demand for a particular user group.

Cost-Prohibitive: If an applicant is seeking an exception based on cost, a breakdown of the project cost with and without complete streets facilities is required.

Physical Constraints: Projects where extreme topographical or natural resource constraints, or the need for excessive right-of-way acquisition, lead to disproportionate costs for including complete streets elements, or when there is a compelling reason that a complete streets element of a project must terminate prior to making a logical connection to the existing network for a particular mode.

Inconsistent with Local Plans, Visions, and/or Standards: Projects where complete streets elements are not consistent with or are otherwise precluded by local plans, visions, and/or standards.