

City of Iowa City, Iowa

Complete Streets Policy

The Vision

The City of Iowa City intends and expects to realize long-term cost savings in improved public health, reduced fuel consumption, better environmental stewardship, and reduced demand for motor vehicle infrastructure through the implementation of this Complete Streets Policy. Complete Streets also contribute to walkable neighborhoods, make the community attractive to new business and employment, create a sense of community pride, and improve quality-of-life.

Users and Modes

This policy defines Complete Streets by this outcome: all current and projected users of the public right-of-way are intended to conveniently reach their destinations via public rights-of-way, regardless of their chosen mode of transportation for that street or road to be considered “complete.” The design, operation, and maintenance of the City of Iowa City’s street network **will** create a connected grid of streets accommodating a safe, easily accessible, convenient, comfortable, and visually appealing manner for all users of all ages and abilities, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, children, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, freight carriers, emergency responders, and adjacent land users.

Implementation

The City of Iowa City **will** provide for the needs of all users and abilities in all planning, design, construction, reconstruction, retrofit, operations, and maintenance activities and products within the public right-of-way. Each City Department that performs physical improvements in the right-of-way (streets, sidewalks, landscaping, public utilities, etc.), and private developers that build infrastructure (streets, public utilities, etc.) for dedication to the City **will** perform such work in compliance with this policy. While some streets and roads may require changes to the right-of-way to better accommodate non-motorized users, many low volume streets and roads **will** require only minor changes, such as signage or restriping, or no changes at all (see *Context Sensitive Design*, below).

Complete Streets are generally accomplished through adding the following to the public right-of-way: sidewalks, bike lanes, shared use lanes (sharrows), bus stops, public spaces, improved way-finding signage, utility corridors, etc. Projects in the right-of-way **will** incorporate sidewalks, ADA-compliant curb ramps, ADA-compliant bus stops, bicycle facilities, and any other reasonably applicable facilities. In particular, capital projects **will** incorporate complete street facilities found in City Council adopted plans, including (but not limited to) the *Comprehensive Plan*, bicycle and pedestrian plans, *ADA Accessibility Transition Plan*, and district plans.

This Complete Streets Policy and associated project documentation applies to any NEW STREET, RECONSTRUCTED STREET, or STREET MAINTENANCE within the public right-of-way (see Definitions section for CAPITALIZED items) with the following clarifications:

- A. NEW STREETS and RECONSTRUCTED STREETS either built by the City or by a developer for City ownership **will** implement complete streets – applies in all zoning designations and land uses.
- B. STREET MAINTENANCE projects – whereas all NEW STREET and RECONSTRUCTED STREETS **will** implement multi-modal transportation elements, it is not expected for maintenance and rehabilitation projects to change geometric features and functional elements to upgrade to multi-modal transportation elements, although items that fit within the existing geometrics should be implemented (e.g. re-striping, signage upgrades, sidewalks, etc.).
- C. PRIVATE STREETS – sidewalks and ADA-compliant curb ramps are required; otherwise PRIVATE STREETS are exempt from this policy.
- D. Co-Jurisdictional streets – Complete Streets **will** be considered in conjunction with other jurisdictions’ policies or practices.
- E. Existing and new bus stops within a project corridor **will** be ADA compliant.

Design Criteria and Context Sensitive Design

Each street and right-of-way design should be practically undertaken to complement the neighborhood in which it exists, while complying with accepted or adopted design standards and other guidelines based upon resources identifying best practices in urban design and street design, construction, operations and maintenance when implementing improvements intended to fulfill this Complete Streets policy. The City **will** consider all available design options in the following manuals to ensure access for all modes:

- *AASHTO Green Book: A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets*, by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
- *AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*, by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
- *Urban Street Design Guide*, by the National Association of City Transportation Officials
- *Urban Bikeway Design Guide*, by the National Association of City Transportation Officials
- *Iowa Statewide Urban Design Standards*, by the Institute for Transportation at Iowa State University
- *Iowa City, Iowa City Code, Title 15 – Land Subdivision*, by the City of Iowa City

Connectivity and All Agencies

The City of Iowa City **will** design, operate, and maintain a transportation network that provides a connected network of facilities accommodating all modes of travel. To achieve a connected network, the City **will** foster partnerships with the State of Iowa, the Federal Highway Administration, the Metropolitan Planning Organization of Johnson County, school district, Johnson County, surrounding cities, citizens, businesses, interest groups and neighborhoods to implement the Complete Streets policy throughout Iowa City.

Exceptions

Exceptions to the Complete Streets policy must be documented in writing by the City Engineer with supporting data that indicates the reason for the decision. The documented decision(s) **will** be reviewed by the City Manager or designee. Exceptions are limited to the following:

- **Where there are relatively high safety risks.** There are times bicycle and pedestrian facility standards cannot be met due to roadway topographic constraints or it is impractical to make the street safe for shared use. Roads with a combination of traffic volumes exceeding 18,000 vehicles per day, constrained and fixed rights-of-way, or posted speeds of 45+ mph may need special consideration. This type of exception is highly problematic because high traffic volume is often an indication that a road is the most direct connection between multiple origins and destinations, and pedestrians, cyclists and transit users should not be denied access to those destinations. For this exception to be granted, the City **will** enhance alternate routes (e.g. signage, bike boulevard treatments, shared-use trail spurs, bike lanes, shared-lane markings, etc.).
- **Where bicyclists and pedestrians are prohibited by law from using the roadway.**
- **Where a main road has multi-modal facilities for all users of the right-of-way, the PUBLIC FRONTAGE ROAD may be exempt from this policy.**
- **Where the project consists primarily of the installation of traffic control, including pre-timed traffic signals, or safety devices and little or no additional right-of-way is to be acquired.** However whenever new traffic control detection devices are installed they must be capable of detecting bicycles. All new pedestrian crossing devices must also meet the most current accessibility standards for controls, signals, and placement.
- **Where a project involves emergency maintenance activities designed to keep assets in serviceable condition or when interim measures are implemented on temporary detour routes.**
- **Where the Director of Public Works and the Director of Neighborhood & Development Services jointly determine the construction is not practically feasible due to significant or adverse environmental impacts to waterways, floodplains, significant street trees, remnants of native vegetation, wetlands, or other critical areas.**

- **Where the cost of establishing bikeways or walkways would be excessively disproportionate to the cost of project.** In accordance with federal guidelines, excessively disproportionate is defined as exceeding twenty percent of the cost of the total transportation project (including right of way acquisition costs). This exception must consider probable use through the life of the project, a minimum of 20 years.
- **Where scarcity of population or other factors indicate an absence of need for current and future conditions.** This exception must take the long view and consider probable use through the life of the project, a minimum of 20 years.
- **Where the Average Daily Traffic count (ADT) is projected to be less than 1,000 vehicles per day over the life of the project.**

Performance Measures

The City **will** measure the success of Complete Streets policy by using the following measures:

- Miles of bike lanes, trails, shared lane arrows striped or built
- Linear feet of pedestrian accommodations built
- Number of ADA accessibility accommodations built
- Number of exemptions from this policy approved
- Number of projects in which street trees were planted

Definitions

- A. **COMPLETE STREET:** a street that accommodates convenient and safe use by everyone, regardless of age, ability, or mode of travel.
- B. **CONTEXT SENSITIVE DESIGN SOLUTION:** a design which balances safety, mobility and transportation needs, while preserving scenic, aesthetic, historical, environmental, neighborhood and community values and characteristics.
- C. **STREET:** The STREET is considered to be the subgrade, base, pavement, grading, storm sewer, and sub-drains. (i.e., all of the elements required to build, operate, and maintain the street.)
- D. **NEW STREET:** a street constructed where one has not previously existed.
- E. **RECONSTRUCTED STREET:** an existing street that has rehabilitation done to it, which is estimated at 50% or higher of the cost of NEW STREET (excluding utilities except storm sewer or sub-drains), will also be considered a RECONSTRUCTED STREET for the purposes of this policy.

- F. PUBLIC STREET: a roadway owned and maintained by the City of Iowa City, providing frontage for (a) parcel(s) of property as set forth in the City Code of Iowa City, Title 14 Zoning Code.
- G. PRIVATE STREET: a privately owned and maintained roadway established by final platting or otherwise established as approved by the City of Iowa City, providing frontage for (a) parcel(s) of property as set forth in the City Zoning regulations.
- H. PUBLIC FRONTAGE ROAD: a roadway located with portions of PUBLIC STREET right-of-way, frontage road reservation easement or adjoining other streets, which have access control.
- I. STREET MAINTENANCE: rehabilitation of a street, which generally restores the functionality of the existing street components (either primarily as a street project or in conjunction with underground public utility construction), without significantly altering or adding to those components, and which is estimated at less than 50% of the cost of a NEW STREET with those same components. Utility construction (except storm sewer or sub-drains) is excluded from this cost calculation.
- J. PARKWAY: The non-driveway area of public right-of-way between the back of curb or edge of roadway and the right-of-way line.