

Complete Streets

What Is a Complete Street?

A Complete Street is a street designed to feel safe and welcoming to all users. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. Complete Streets allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from train and subway stations.



Photo: Planetizen

The Complete Streets movement is growing. To date, over 1325 agencies at the local, regional, and state levels have adopted Complete Streets policies, totaling more than 1400 Complete Streets policies nationwide.¹

Benefits of a Complete Street



Saving Lives: When we design our streets to prioritize moving cars—not people—as quickly as possible, we create dangerous, high-speed environments that result in traffic violence, injury, and death. A Complete Streets approach puts safety before speed.

Strengthening Social Fabric: Complete Streets help to create streets that are not only sustainable transportation networks, but great public spaces where people can linger and connect.



Increasing Physical Activity: Complete Streets help to address climate change and promote healthy living by providing safe and convenient options that encourage more people to be active, easing traffic congestion.

Building Smarter Streets: A Complete Streets approach strives for an environmentally sensitive approach that incorporates “smart” methods such as intelligent signaling and wayfinding systems.



How Does It Work?

There is no “one-size fits all” approach for Complete Streets. Ideally, each complete street is designed to respond to its unique community context.

A Complete Street in a rural area will look quite different from a Complete Street in a highly urban area, but both are designed to encourage safety, access, active transportation, and connection for everyone using the road.

¹ National Complete Streets Coalition: <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/>

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Complete Streets Case Study: Commonwealth Avenue






Image: BETA Group Inc.

The redesign of Commonwealth Avenue demonstrates a Complete Streets approach, with consideration for the safety of people on foot, bike, in vehicles, and getting on and off buses and trains built into its design. The project is currently under construction and when completed, will include improved intersections and crossings, redesigned bus stops, physically protected bike lanes, new street lighting, landscaping, newly paved roads, and new street furniture.

The local advocacy community, including LivableStreets, successfully influenced the project, helping to make Commonwealth Avenue one of the most innovative multi-modal corridors in the country.

What You Can Do

-  **Advocate:** Participate in public meetings and speak up about the benefits of Complete Streets.
-  **Educate:** Share this fact sheet, talk to neighbors, build community support and then meet with decision makers, the media, experts and others to discuss the benefits of Complete Streets.
-  **Activate:** Explore how your community can take steps to organize a demonstration project to simulate traffic calming measures, and influence municipal leaders to take action.

icons courtesy of canva and the noun project, creators Stephen Plaster, mikicon, chabib ali machbub, Kangrif, Gregor Cresnar, LA Great Streets