

# Oregon Greenhouse Gas Reduction Toolkit: Strategy Report

## OREGON SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVE



## Complete Streets Policy

This report describes the importance of establishing a network of streets that are designed for all users, resulting in improved nonautomotive mode splits, and reduced greenhouse emissions.



### What is it?

In recent years, roadways have been engineered to prioritize the throughput of automobiles, a practice that leaves users with little choice but to drive. A complete street, on the other hand, is designed for the convenience and safety of all users, whether in a car, on a bike, on foot, in a wheelchair, or using transit. Complete streets are designed to balance the needs of the community they serve in their specific geographic context.

*"Streets are our most important public places" – Tony Nelessen, urban designer<sup>1</sup>*

Instituting a complete streets policy ensures that transportation planners and engineers consistently design and operate streets with all users in mind, both as new streets are constructed and as existing streets are upgraded. A complete streets policy commonly takes the form of a council resolution, legislation, executive order, or comprehensive plan policy. A complete streets policy:

- » Includes a vision for how and why the community wants to complete its streets
- » Specifies that "all users" includes pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as vehicle drivers and transit vehicle operators
- » Encourages street connectivity to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes
- » Is adoptable by all relevant agencies to cover all transportation facilities
- » Applies to both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations for the entire right-of-way
- » Clarifies any exceptions to the policy and establishes a procedure for exceptions
- » Directs the use of the latest and best design standards while recognizing the need for flexibility in balancing user needs and the context of the street
- » Directs that complete streets solutions will complement the context of the community
- » Establishes performance standards with measurable outcomes
- » Includes specific next steps for implementing the policy

### How well does it work?

Complete streets are an important component of many greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction strategies. Without the appropriate transportation infrastructure, a community cannot accommodate the increase in pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users needed to reduce overall GHG emissions.

A complete streets policy can be instrumental in overcoming institutionalized preference toward the

<sup>1</sup> Cool Planning: A Handbook on Local Strategies to Slow Climate Change. Oregon Transportation and Growth Management Program. <http://www.oregon.gov/LCD/TGM/docs/coolplanninghandbook1312011.pdf>

automobile and creating pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities as a matter of course. The Moving Cooler<sup>2</sup> report provides an estimate of GHG reductions that are possible through implementing a package of pedestrian and bicycle improvements, which includes providing complete streets. The report estimates a 0.2 to 0.5 percent cumulative reduction by the year 2050.

## How can it benefit my community?

In addition to reducing automobile use and GHG emissions, complete streets can:

- » Increase transportation access and equity for all citizens, regardless of automobile ownership
- » Improve safety
- » Improve public health by promoting active transportation
- » Create an attractive pedestrian environment with economic benefits for local businesses and land values
- » Increase community involvement and activity in developing policy and promoting projects

## What does it cost?

Complete streets can be created at a cost similar to roadways without sufficient sidewalks and bike lanes<sup>3</sup>, particularly when narrowing street width. This approach saves money at the onset of the project and reduces maintenance costs over the long-term.<sup>4</sup> Many complete street strategies, such as road diets, narrower travel lanes, and tighter turning radii, can be installed during routine road resurfacing at little or no extra cost.<sup>5</sup>

Policy adoption can range from quick and easy, as with a simple city council resolution, to sophisticated and far-reaching, such as a revision of design guidelines or a comprehensive plan update. Each policy type has its own benefits and drawbacks.<sup>6</sup>

## Where has it been used?

There are 488 complete streets policies now in place in the US.<sup>7</sup> Notable examples include:

**Seattle, Washington** – Seattle’s complete streets policy, adopted in 2007, reads: ““SDOT will plan for, design and construct all new City transportation improvement projects to provide appropriate accommodation for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and persons of all abilities, while promoting safe operation for all users.”<sup>8</sup>

**Newport, Oregon** - In 2010, Newport, Oregon unanimously adopted Resolution 3508, a complete streets policy to take into consideration motorized and non-motorized transportation options in the design and planning of future transportation projects. <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/cs-2012-policy-analysis.pdf>

**Ada County, Idaho** – Ada County adopted a complete streets policy as an element of its Transportation Land Use Integration Plan in 2009. Its goals were to: Clearly state ACHD’s commitment to all users of the public right-of-way; Provide a policy foundation for several other TLIP products and the Bicycle Master Plan; and Inform project level decisions regarding the need for a multimodal transportation network.<sup>9</sup>

## Where can I learn more?

- » The National Complete Streets Coalition: <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets>
- » Complete Streets Policy Workbook: <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/cs/cs-policyworkbook.pdf>
- » Complete Streets: Best Policy and Implementation Practices. Barbara McCann and Suzanne Rynne. <http://www.planning.org/pas/brochure/pdf/report.pdf>
- » The Best Complete Streets Policies of 2012: <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/cs-2012-policy-analysis.pdf>

*The Toolkit is a component of the Oregon Sustainable Transportation Initiative (OSTI), which was formed to address the requirements of Senate Bill 1059 (2010).*

*For more information, please visit:*

<http://cms.oregon.gov/ODOT/TD/TP/pages/ghgtoolkit.aspx>



<sup>2</sup> Moving Cooler: An analysis of transportation strategies for reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions. July, 2009. Pg. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Shapard, James. “Do Complete Streets Cost More than Incomplete Streets?” August 1, 2012. Accessed 5/30/13. <http://njbikeped.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/4-Do-Complete-Streets-Cost-More-than-Incomplete-Streets.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/implementation/factsheets/costs>

<sup>5</sup> LaPlante, John, PE PTOE. “Complete Streets: Can we afford them?” Presentation to the Institute of Transportation Engineers. August 15, 2011. Accessed 5/30/13. <http://www.ite.org/meetings/2011AM/Complete%20Streets%20-%20Can%20We%20Afford%20Them%20-%20John%20LaPlante.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/ocp/documents/complete\\_streets\\_files/APA\\_Report\\_Final.pdf](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/tpp/offices/ocp/documents/complete_streets_files/APA_Report_Final.pdf), pg. 25

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/cs-2012-policy-analysis.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://clerk.seattle.gov/~scripts/nph-brs.exe?d=CBOR&s1=115861.cbn.&Sect6=HITOFF&l=20&p=1&u=/~public/cbor2.htm&r=1&f=G>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/cs/policy/cs-id-adacounty-policy.pdf>