

Complete Streets Policy (2021)

The City of Minneapolis is committed to building a complete and integrated public right-of-way to ensure that everyone can travel safely and comfortably along and across a street regardless of whether they are walking, rolling, biking, taking transit, or driving. In 2016 the City of Minneapolis Complete Streets Policy was created to inform decision-making throughout all phases of transportation projects and initiatives. Several changes in the modal landscape have occurred in the years since, and the City has completed work on other relevant planning documents and policies as well, which are reflected in this update. The overarching policy purpose is the establishment of a modal priority framework that prioritizes public modal use in the following order:

1. walking and rolling;
2. biking, taking micromobility, and transit;
3. driving cars, trucks, and providing access for smaller freight vehicles; and
4. operating large freight vehicles,
5. Green stormwater infrastructure is incorporated into projects per Chapter 54 of City ordinances as determined through design.



1. Purpose and Vision

In the 20th century, transportation planning and infrastructure investments in Minneapolis – as in most US cities – became skewed towards providing more efficient movement for travel of cars and trucks. Minneapolis is committed to rebalancing its transportation network by clearly prioritizing walking, rolling, biking, and taking transit, over cars and trucks or providing access for freight vehicles. This approach is consistent with – and builds on – guidance that Minneapolis has already established in Minneapolis 2040 and the Transportation Action Plan.

Complete Streets are streets for everyone. They are designed and operated to prioritize safety, comfort, and access to destinations for all people who use the street, especially people who have experienced systemic underinvestment or whose needs have not been met through a traditional transportation approach, including older adults, people living with disabilities, people who cannot afford or do not have access to a car, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, jobs, and schools, bicycle to work, and move actively with assistive devices. They allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk or move actively to and from transit stations. There is no singular design prescription for Complete Streets; each one is unique and responds to its community context.

By adopting this Complete Streets Policy the City is committing to routinely design and operate the entire right of way to prioritize safer slower speeds for all people who use the road, over high speeds for motor vehicles. This means that every transportation project will make the street network better and safer for people walking, biking, riding transit, moving actively with assistive devices and driving, making Minneapolis a better place to live.¹

¹ The preceding two paragraphs are modified from the Smart Growth America definition of Complete Streets. Their original text and additional resources can be found at <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/>

. By implementing this Complete Streets Policy:

- Transportation in Minneapolis will happen on a well-maintained network that is complete, comfortable, integrated, efficient, and safer.
- Safety will be improved through coordination with the Vision Zero policy, and improving conditions and outcomes for those most likely to be the victim of transportation-related crashes;
- Transportation-related decisions will align with Minneapolis 2040, which intends to: “support a multimodal network that prioritizes walking, rolling, biking and transit. The policies are intended to achieve outcomes that increase equity in our transportation system, address climate change and reduce carbon emissions, improve human health through improved air quality and increases in active travel, and enable the movement of people, goods, and services across the city.”;
- The City will advance its goal of having 3 out of every 5 trips taken by walking, biking, or transit by 2030, as adopted in the Transportation Action Plan;
- The health of Minneapolis residents, workers, and visitors will be improved through walking, rolling, biking and micromobility;
- The environment, in terms of local greenhouse gas emission reduction, water quality and climate change, will be positively impacted by the City’s transportation-related decision-making;
- Street design will support the local economy and attract and retain businesses through the provision of safer, efficient transportation options and vibrant public spaces;
- City streets and sidewalks – our largest public space – will foster livable, walkable, bicycle-friendly, green neighborhoods by including healthy trees, plants, permeable surfaces, and design features that help define the character of a street while providing added benefits of shade, summer cooling, reduced energy consumption, and improved water quality;
- Minneapolis will create an integrated transportation network that provides all residents access to employment, education, and other needs for daily living, regardless of their age, access to, or ability to operate a car or truck; and,
- The City will ensure private development contributes to the objective of this policy.

2. Policy Framework

Several City initiatives have changed the transportation planning and programming process since the adoption of the original Complete Streets Policy in 2016.

Important highlights include:

- In 2017 the City committed to Vision Zero, eliminating fatalities and serious injuries on City streets by 2027.
- A climate emergency was declared by the City Council in 2019 in response to the continued threat of climate change on city residents, businesses, systems, and infrastructure. The impacts of climate change remain a global concern with local impacts. Weather events have become less regular and have increased in severity. This has changed the impacts on the stormwater infrastructure and snow management needs.
- The Vision Zero Action Plan was first adopted in 2019 which set out specific activities to improve safety within three years, with updates on a regular basis.

- In 2019 the City adopted Minneapolis 2040, a comprehensive plan for growth and development which included transportation as a key element in achieving long-range goals.
- Racism was declared a public health emergency in mid-2020 following the death of George Floyd on a Minneapolis street. Racial injustice is experienced by residents of and visitors to Minneapolis while using public spaces, including the right of way.
- In late 2020 the City adopted the Transportation Action Plan which establishes a ten-year vision for the City to implement changes across all modes and transportation networks.

These policy statements and documents, along with the Complete Streets Policy, work together and reinforce complementary goals. Together, they advance the priorities set forth on how the right of way should be used.

Public right of way, in addition to serving a transportation role, is the largest public space in the City, comprising 22% of the land. To truly serve the highest-priority modes and reach the City’s mode shift goal of 3 of 5 trips taken by walking, rolling, biking or transit by 2030, streets must be vital, healthy places, supporting safe travel by all modes, and include healthy trees, plants, permeable surfaces, public art, and other design features. These elements help define the character of a street, provide shade and cooling, reduce energy consumption, absorb and cleanse stormwater runoff, and support car and bicycle sharing. Because of the potential for these improvements to result in positive outcomes for street users, it is most important to implement these elements along busier streets with higher density land uses, identified as Urban Neighborhood Connectors, Mixed Use Community Connectors, Mixed Use Commercial Connectors, Mixed Use Regional Connectors, and Downtown Core in the Street Design Guide. .

The City establishes a modal priority framework that prioritizes people as they walk, roll, bicycle, and take transit over driving, deliveries, and parking. The modal priority framework will inform City transportation related decision-making. Minneapolis offers modal options through networks of interconnected routes, but there will be City streets that do not have specific accommodations for all modes, e.g., car-free streets, trails, interstate routes that prohibit walking and bicycling, streets without transit routes, or streets without dedicated bicycle facilities. The right of way is also needed for other uses than just transportation, such as stormwater management, snow storage, and community space.

Although not identified specifically, emergency service providers are unique users of the transportation system and require special consideration to allow for reasonable and efficient access to destinations in all parts of the city. Similarly, the movement of commercial goods and services will continue to be a priority for the City, with an understanding that larger vehicles may present challenges within constrained urban environments.

This modal priority framework is established for the following reasons:

1. To allocate space across modes and rebalance the network,
2. To significantly reduce space for cars as key to making walking, biking, and transit competitive and attractive options.
3. All trips begin or end with walking (with or without mobility device), regardless of the primary mode(s) of travel.
4. Each icon on the graphic represents the mode and any supportive features that accommodate their uses; e.g. the car graphic is inclusive of parked or traveling vehicles with any number of passengers. Similarly, bicycle and scooters are inclusive of parking for bicycles and scooters.



5. Transit extends the range of travel for people when they walk, roll or bicycle, provides greater efficiencies and operational benefits than cars and trucks, and is accessible to those rolling or unable to, bike, or drive.
6. Bicycling and using micromobility options extends the range of higher-speed non-motorized travel, while serving commuting, delivery, social, and other purposes.
7. Micromobility is a relatively new mode on city streets and includes various human-scaled vehicles – like bicycles and scooters, which are typically shared and can be electric or human-powered. Under various laws and ordinances these devices are treated similarly to bicycles, and therefore are given the same level of priority as bicycles in this framework.
8. Safety of the most vulnerable street users – those walking, rolling, and biking -- must be the highest priority, because they are the most at risk, as demonstrated through the Vision Zero reports and action plan.
9. The priority modes – those walking, rolling, biking, and taking transit -- have an important set of benefits that car and truck travel lacks, including health, the environment, land use patterns, economic development, and congestion reduction.
10. Transportation investments influence travel choices, such that greater investment in high-quality pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities facilitate less reliance upon cars and trucks.
11. The policy will enhance the safety, convenience, comfort, and efficiency of travel for people of all ages and abilities.
12. The City's highest priority modes have historically encountered underinvestment and rebalancing our transportation networks necessitates addressing the needs of those users.
13. Car-centric priorities and investments incentivize greater car usage, accelerate congestion, elevate parking demand, and increase pollution.

When interpreting the modal hierarchy, it is important to note:

1. Placing multiple modes on the same tier does not indicate an “either/or” approach. Each mode on a tier is equally valued.
2. The range of needs and required elements that demand space along our City streets means that in some cases not everything can be accommodated within the constrained right of way. As the City implements projects it will prioritize the allocation of space for walking, rolling, biking, and transit.
3. The movement of goods is an important component of any urban environment. Freight vehicles are critical to the city's economy and there are designated corridors where the street designs ensure proper accommodation for these trucks. Large freight vehicles are often accommodated operationally through special permits, coordination with the hosts of special events, and other tools. The Street Design Guide has more detail of the specifications for streets that carry more large freight traffic.
4. There has been a significant increase in smaller vehicles delivering freight and individual pick ups and drop offs becoming more frequent, putting it on the same tier as car and truck traffic.

5. Green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) practices are essential to managing stormwater in a way that is efficient and effective while facilitating the movement of people and goods. Not all GSI tools are above ground but they are a necessarily component of the right of way. Depending on the scope of the project, GSI may or may not be incorporated. Chapter 54 of the City's ordinances provides detailed guidance on when GSI is required for various types of projects.

3. Implementation

City transportation-related decisions will follow the Complete Streets Policy. This includes all types and phases of projects, including programming, planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance. Implementation of Complete Streets will encompass all elements within the public right of way, including landscaping, transit shelters, lighting, signs, traffic lights, bikeways, parking, parking meters, bicycle parking, striping, green stormwater infrastructure, furniture, and more. The process by which the Complete Streets Policy is applied will be scaled appropriately for each individual project or initiative, including private developments that influence the public right of way. The Complete Streets project checklist is used to document project-level decisions and implementation of the policy and should accompany project layout documentation through the Council process.

Individual routine maintenance activities (including but not limited to sweeping, mowing, pothole repair, winter maintenance for sidewalks and bikeways, sign replacement, etc.) must reflect the Complete Streets Policy's modal priority framework but will not be required to go through a Complete Streets checklist. However, the overall planning for such activities will reflect the City's modal priority framework that prioritizes people as they walk, bicycle, and take transit.

The City will continue to engage partner agencies, schools, businesses, neighborhood associations, and developers in a cooperative manner throughout implementation of all infrastructure projects and plans. Application of the policy shall apply to all public and private projects and initiatives that interact with and impact the public right of way. Any extraordinary or unusual site conditions will be taken into account during the design stage, allowing the creation of a complete street including streets with environmental or operational constraints. At times, the range of needs and planned elements that demand space along City streets may exceed the available right of way, in which case it may make meeting ideal design guidelines articulated in the Street Design Guide challenging; more than one alternative may be developed to illustrate the opportunities and limitations of the designs. In the case more than one design is brought forth, all designs will follow the Complete Streets Policy. The checklist will document the compromises or tradeoffs that have been considered as part of project development. Public Works will share the Complete Streets checklist for each project with the public, including advisory committees, and identify the compromises, trade-offs and project-level decisions considered as part of project development.

Partner Agencies

Within the city boundary 91% of the streets are managed by the City with the remaining 9% managed by other entities with different policies and priorities. The City will continue to work with partners at Hennepin County, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, and the University of Minnesota to incorporate elements of this policy to streets within its borders. While final responsibility and determination for design decisions for a particular street is held by the underlying jurisdictional owner, the design process is collaborative between the overlapping jurisdictions. We work with our partners to reach design and operational decisions that reflect our values and goals while recognizing their underlying authority, values, and goals; this policy will continue to inform our approach to those conversations.

Programming

The City's long-range Capital Improvement Program will be informed by the 20 Year Streets Funding Plan criteria and process. This includes prioritizing projects that will significantly improve the pedestrian, bicycle, and transit networks.

Planning

The planning phase consists primarily of coordination amongst City staff and external agencies. The Complete Streets checklist provides City staff with a tool to document activities and decision-making from planning through final design.

The City incorporates a context-based approach that will be informed by the modal priority framework. Designs will be based upon project-specific objectives and context sensitive design solutions supported by the modal priority, street type and place types, documented modal needs, multimodal metrics, issues, opportunities, functionality, environmental or social factors, right of way impacts, and input from stakeholders and the community. Each project is developed with an understanding of mitigating factors and operational constraints presented by the surrounding area. Additional resources can be found in the Street Design Guide.

This work will include review of relevant adopted City plans and seek to provide a transportation system that offers people numerous modal options through networks of interconnected routes within and through the city and continue to seek opportunities to address and/or eliminate gaps, barriers, or connectivity in the transportation networks.

During the planning phase City staff will work with other City departments, external agencies, City advisory committees, and elected officials as necessary to identify an equitable engagement and outreach approach in a manner that is scaled appropriately and defines specific goals. The City will continue to explore new and innovative public engagement approaches that promote greater engagement from stakeholders. A special focus will be on the engagements needs of underrepresented communities who may not respond to traditional engagement methods.

Design

The design of the public right of way will follow recognized design standards, best practices and guidelines to achieve the vision of Complete Streets, including the Street Design Guide, NACTO Urban Street Design Guide, AASHTO, ITE, Municipal State Aid Route Standards, and, MnDOT Local State-Aid Route Standards. The City will continue to explore flexible and innovative designs and continue to evaluate the latest design standards and innovative concepts, seeking guidance from established best practices. Where standards established by other units of government, such as MnDOT Local State-Aid Route Standards, conflict with the City's Complete Streets Policy, the City will seek design exceptions and variances from jurisdictional partners as applicable. The City will continue to examine existing standards and work to influence established standards to be more in alignment with the City's Complete Streets vision. Level of service is not a measure of success on our streets but may be evaluated as required by project partners or funding sources.

Design of the public right of way will be informed and guided by the City's street types, which are assigned to all streets in Minneapolis except freeways. The City supports opportunities to incorporate sustainable alternatives and placemaking elements within the public right of way, which may include urban landscaping, green spaces, public art, or stormwater management elements. When designing a street, the City will consider and evaluate metrics for all modes within the right of way while prioritizing walking, rolling, biking and taking transit.

Construction

Sidewalks and bicycle lanes are often impacted by construction, utility activities and development. There are obstructions, both planned and unplanned, that put non-motorized users into general traffic lanes. Depending on

the confidence of the user, this experience ranges from acceptable but inconvenient, to unacceptable, to unsafe. To preserve a network where people of all ages and abilities can safely use our streets, we prioritize people walking, rolling, biking, and rolling.

Impacts to pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users will be limited to the extent possible during construction. Safe, convenient, and connected detours will be established for people as they walk, take transit, and bicycle when those networks are temporarily interrupted by construction work. Construction will impact trees and green space as little as possible, to preserve and protect these important elements. The City will work with its partners to continue to explore innovative construction methods to increase the safety, convenience, and utility of pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities.

Operation

The operation of the public right of way is a significant opportunity to implement the City's modal priority framework that prioritizes people as they walk, bicycle, and take transit. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the operation of the public right of way should support safe, comfortable, and convenient travel for people that choose to walk, bicycle, take transit, or drive a vehicle.

From time to time a street may be closed temporarily to car and truck traffic, to accommodate community events or activities, such as Open Streets, which support the implementation the City's Complete Streets vision. The City will work with residents to accommodate events that build community and improve the pedestrian and bicycle user-experience (e.g., National Night Out, paint-the-pavement projects, etc.).

Traffic analysis and measurement tools will continue to be utilized by staff to assess potential impacts to the street network. The City acknowledges that there may be some increase in travel delay in order to advance its goals through the Complete Streets Policy, Vision Zero commitment, and other guiding policies and plans.

Maintenance

The modal priorities of the Complete Streets Policy will be used when planning, prioritizing, and budgeting maintenance activities. These activities include, but are not limited to snow and ice control, sweeping and cleaning, pavement repair, pavement marking and signing, etc. Minneapolis has a goal of year-round walking and bicycling as accessible and convenient options for its residents and visitors. Public Works' goal is to obtain more data to identify and understand issues, and consider actions to optimize winter access across all modes, including a higher rate of compliance with the sidewalk shoveling ordinance citywide. Through the Transportation Action Plan the City is specifically committed to explore various methods of sidewalk and bikeway maintenance.