



## Complete Streets FAQs

### **What is Complete Streets?**

Complete Streets means that our streets are planned and designed to be safer and more accessible for drivers, pedestrians, transit riders, and bicyclists—all users, regardless of age or ability. Complete Streets is about flexibility—it is not a prescriptive one-size-fits-all roadway design. It recognizes that needs are different in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Final designs for Complete Streets vary based on context, topography, road function, the speed of traffic, pedestrian and bicycle demand, and other factors.

### **Why is Complete Streets important?**

Complete Streets is important because it helps make our roads safer and more accessible for everyone. In the last decade, more than 500 people were killed and more than 20,000 injured walking or biking on Minnesota roads. Additionally, many Minnesotans do not feel safe walking or biking in their neighborhoods or letting their kids walk to school.

Many of these safety problems are because, too often, Minnesota roads are built primarily for driving as quickly as possible, and the needs of children, seniors, and others are not seriously considered both for travel along a roadway and to cross it. This can result in roads that simply aren't safe for pedestrians, people with disabilities, bicyclists, transit riders, and drivers themselves. It can also result in roads that hurt the economic vitality of main streets and harm the quality of life that draws people and businesses to Minnesota. Everyone is impacted by unsafe roads, which lead to more injuries and fatalities, very real barriers in our transportation system, and disincentives for walking, bicycling, and transit use.

### **What will a state Complete Streets policy do?**

A state Complete Streets policy means that the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) will work with stakeholders to ensure all needs are considered for state road projects and to simplify and remove barriers for road design to allow local cities and towns flexibility to create safer roads for all their users. A state Complete Streets policy will not be a mandate for local governments.

### **Why do we need a state Complete Streets policy?**

A state Complete Streets policy is an essential step because Mn/DOT standards and requirements sometimes limit the ability of local cities and towns to build safe roads for all users. Without the implementation of a state policy, local communities will not be able to fully implement Complete Streets.

### **What does Mn/DOT think about Complete Streets?**

Mn/DOT recently finalized a *Complete Streets Report* to the legislature, which recommends that Mn/DOT work with stakeholders to implement a Mn/DOT policy on Complete Streets.

Mn/DOT Commissioner Tom Sorel has been very supportive of Complete Streets and the agency is moving forward with creating a partnership of state agencies, local government representatives, and other stakeholders to work on implementing Complete Streets. The Minnesota Complete Streets Coalition commends Mn/DOT and Commissioner Sorel for their strong leadership on Complete Streets.

The Complete Streets legislation was developed with significant input from Mn/DOT and they do not have any concerns with the current bill.

### **How much will it cost?**

Complete Streets legislation is a policy bill and will not require any allocation of money. Mn/DOT has agreed that the very small fiscal note (for the reporting requirements) will be within their normal reporting budget.

The implementation of a state Complete Streets policy will help save money. It will immediately give communities more flexibility to design roads that better meet their local context, ensuring that they don't have to overspend on roads that don't fit their community needs. It will also help ensure that we build roads right the first time rather than fixing them after a tragedy occurs, when the costs to correct problems will be much greater. Complete Streets uses projects as they come through the normal funding process as an opportunity to improve safety—it is not about costly retrofits.

There may be some specific projects where there is an incremental cost increase, but these costs will be offset on other projects where flexibility saves money and additionally by the many benefits of Complete Streets. These benefits include significant potential long-term savings for public and personal transportation costs. Just one example is school busing costs, which can be greatly reduced if barriers are addressed that prevent kids from safely walking or biking to their local school.

The Mn/DOT report on Complete Streets found that “the general consensus is that the benefits of Complete Streets offset the incremental costs.” Mn/DOT also recognized that it fits in very well with other efforts they are taking to maximize the value of transportation investments by making sure that we build for the local context and needs.

### **What are the impacts for rural areas?**

Complete Streets recognizes that local context is essential, and ensures that we provide safe access where it is needed and in a way that is reasonable and cost-effective. Complete Streets is very important for small cities and towns, which are often bisected by a state highway. A Complete Streets policy will help ensure that the state highway can still serve as the vital main street that helps small towns thrive. That is one of the reasons why the Minnesota Association of Small Cities supports Complete Streets.