

Athens-Clarke County

Complete Streets Policy

I. OVERVIEW

An ideal complete streets policy:

1. Includes a vision for how and why the community wants to "complete" street designs.
2. Specifies that 'all users' of streets includes pedestrians, bicyclists and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as operators of trucks, buses and automobiles.
3. Applies to both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations, for the entire right-of-way included in the project.
4. Makes any exceptions specific and sets a clear procedure that requires high-level approval of exceptions.
5. Encourages street connectivity and aims to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes.
6. Directs the use of the latest and best design criteria and guidelines while recognizing the need for flexibility in balancing user needs.
7. Directs that complete streets solutions will complement the context of the community.
8. Includes specific next steps for implementation of the policy.

II. POLICY PURPOSE

This Complete Streets Policy is written to use an interdisciplinary approach to incorporate the needs of all users into the design and construction of roadway projects.

The Complete Streets concept is an initiative to design and build roads that adequately accommodates all users of a corridor, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and motorists, to the extent appropriate for the land use or the context of the street. Other characteristics of Complete Streets are features that create a multimodal-friendly environment, such as narrowing or removing traffic lanes ("lane diets" and "road diets"), adding median refuges, providing road re-striping to include bicycle lanes, reconfiguring parking, installing curb extensions ("bulb-outs"), and adding accessible pedestrian signals and countdown pedestrian signals.

The purpose of this policy is to guide existing decision-making and design processes to ensure that all users are routinely considered during the planning, design, construction, funding and operation of Athens-Clarke County's transportation network.

III. BACKGROUND

The benefits of Complete Streets are many and varied:

1. Complete Streets improve safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, children, older citizens, non-drivers and the mobility challenged.
2. Provide bicycling and walking connections to trip generators such as employment, education, residential, recreation, retail centers and public facilities.
3. Promote healthy lifestyles.
4. Create more livable communities.
5. Reduce traffic congestion and reliance on carbon fuels thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

IV. APPLICABILITY & REQUIREMENTS

The Complete Streets Policy shall apply to all new construction and reconstruction projects of local roadways, excluding resurfacing activities that do not alter the current/existing geometric designs of a roadway, using Federal, State, or Local funds.

Requirements associated with Complete Streets projects include:

1. Roadway projects shall accommodate all users of the transportation system, including pedestrians, bicyclists, users of mass transit, people with disabilities, the elderly, motorists, freight providers, emergency responders, and adjacent land users.
2. Roadway projects shall make use of the latest and best design standards, policies, and guidelines.
3. Roadway projects shall identify anticipated phases and key milestones of project development.
4. A public participation process that ensures all users have a voice in the design process.

V. GOALS

The goals of this Complete Streets Policy are:

1. To ensure that the safety and convenience of all users of the transportation system are accommodated, including pedestrians, bicyclists, users of mass transit, people with disabilities, the elderly, motorists, freight providers, emergency responders, and adjacent land users.
2. To incorporate the principles in this policy into all aspects of the transportation project development process, including project identification, scoping procedures and design approvals, as well as design manuals and performance measures.
3. To create a comprehensive, integrated, and connected transportation network.
4. To ensure the use of the latest and best design standards, policies and guidelines.
5. To recognize the need for flexibility to accommodate different types of streets and users.

6. Roadway projects shall include a project description that provides information about the right-of-way, public support for the improvement, and the potential environmental impacts of improvements.
7. Roadway projects shall follow an open and transparent public engagement process during the planning, design and development of complete street projects.

VI. PLANNING & DESIGN GUIDELINES

1. Create a comprehensive, integrated, and connected multi-modal network by providing bicycling and walking connections to trip generators such as employment, education, residential, recreational and public facilities, as well as retail and transit centers.
2. Provide safe and accessible accommodations for existing and future pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities.
3. Incorporate pedestrian, bicycle and transit accommodations such as accessible sidewalks curb ramps, crosswalks, countdown pedestrian signals, signs, median refuges, curb extensions, pedestrian scale lighting, bike lanes, shoulders and bus shelters to be included in each project unless supporting documentation against inclusion is provided and found to be justifiable.
4. Additionally, in rural areas, paved shoulders or a multi-use path shall be included in all new construction and reconstruction projects on roadways used by more than 1,000 vehicles per day.
5. Paved shoulders provide safety and operational advantages for all road users. Shoulder rumble strips are not recommended when used by bicyclists, unless there is a minimum clear path of four feet in which a bicycle may safely operate. If there is evidence of heavy pedestrian usage then sidewalks shall be considered in the project.
6. Address the need for bicyclists and pedestrians to cross corridors as well as travel along them. Therefore, the design of intersections, interchanges and bridges shall accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians in a manner that is safe, accessible and convenient.
7. Design bicycle and pedestrian facilities to the best currently available standards and practices including the AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, AASHTO's Guide for the Planning, Design and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities, the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices and others as related.
8. Research, develop and support new technologies in improving safety and mobility.
9. Make provisions for pedestrians and bicyclists when closing roads, bridges or sidewalks for construction projects.
10. Improvements should also consider connections for Safe Routes to Schools, Safe Routes to Transit, and areas or population groups with limited transportation options.
11. Measure effectiveness of complete streets elements at regular intervals, as determined in each project's scope, in order to monitor the performance of each within the context of the subject project.

VII. EXEMPTIONS

1. Ordinary maintenance activities designed to keep assets in serviceable condition.
2. The project involves a roadway that bicyclists and pedestrians are prohibited by law from using.
3. There are extreme topographic or natural resource constraints;
4. When other available means or factors indicate an absence of need presently and in the 20-or-more year horizon.
5. Scarcity of population, travel and attractors, both existing and future, indicate an absence of need for such accommodations.
6. Detrimental environmental or social impacts outweigh the need for these accommodations.
7. Cost of accommodations is excessively disproportionate to cost of project, more than twenty percent (20%) of total cost.
8. The safety or timing of a project is compromised by the inclusion of Complete Streets. An exemption other than those listed above must be documented with supporting data and must be approved by the Transportation and Public Works Director.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Commission of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia proposes this Resolution relating to Athens-Clarke County's Complete Streets policy, attached hereto, stating guiding principles and practices so that transportation improvements are planned, designed and constructed to encourage walking, bicycling and transit use while promoting safe operations for all users; and

WHEREAS, Athens-Clarke County's Complete Streets guiding principle is to design, operate and maintain Athens-Clarke County's streets to promote safe and convenient access and travel for all users -- pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and people of all ages and abilities, as well as freight and motor vehicle drivers; and

WHEREAS, the full integration of all modes of travel in the design of streets and roadways will reduce traffic congestion, improve mobility, and provide more reliable commute times; and

WHEREAS, Athens-Clarke County will implement policies and procedures related to the construction, reconstruction or modification of transportation facilities to support the creation of Complete Streets, wherever it is practical to do so, while recognizing that all streets are different and in each case user needs must be balanced;

WHEREAS, Athens-Clarke County has the opportunity to create and improve transportation facilities for all users by implementing Complete Streets principles and standards into appropriate Athens-Clarke County right-of-way projects.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Commission of Athens-Clarke County, Georgia hereby resolves as follows:

Section 1. Athens-Clarke County will plan for, design and construct all new public transportation improvement projects to provide appropriate accommodation for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and persons of all abilities, while promoting safe operation for all users, as provided for in the Complete Streets Policy.

Section 2. Because freight is important to the basic economy of Athens-Clarke County and has unique right-of-way needs to support that role, freight will be the major priority on streets classified as Arterials. Complete Street improvements that are consistent with freight mobility but also support other modes may be considered on these streets.

Section 3. Except in unusual or extraordinary circumstances, Complete Streets principles will **not** apply:

- to repairs made in accordance with routine Athens-Clarke County maintenance programs;

- to ordinary maintenance activities designed to keep assets in serviceable condition (e.g., mowing, cleaning, sweeping, spot repair and surface treatments such as chip seal, or interim measures on detour or haul routes);

Section 4. Complete Streets may be achieved through single projects or incrementally through a series of smaller improvements or maintenance activities over time. It is the Mayor and Commission's intent that all sources of transportation funding be drawn upon to implement Complete Streets. The Mayor and Commission believe that maximum financial flexibility is important to implement Complete Streets principles.

SO RESOLVED, this 4th day of December, 2012.

APPROVE: _____
MAYOR

ATTEST: _____
CLERK OF COMMISSION