

# OKI Regional Complete Streets Policy

Adopted by the OKI Board of Directors

November 10, 2022



## **Complete Streets Vision**

A well designed and carefully crafted complete streets policy will make the transportation network in the OKI Region measurably better connected, safer and more accessible for all users of the public right-of-way. Regardless of their mode of transportation, age, economic status, health or abilities, the lives of the two million people who live in this region will be greatly improved. This effort to make the system more complete will take advantage of opportunities presented through OKI's capital funding programs and by encouraging communities to incorporate complete streets concepts into their own programs.

## **Complete Streets Defined**

This policy defines complete streets by this outcome: All current and projected users of the public right-of-way should be able to safely and conveniently reach their destinations along and across a street or road, regardless of their chosen mode of transportation. "All users" include: pedestrians, cyclists, transit and school bus riders, people with disabilities, motorists, freight haulers, service personnel and emergency responders. "All users" includes ages from school-aged children to the elderly.

Complete street design varies based on land use, corridor characteristics and expected user types. Complete streets provide transportation choices for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, motor vehicle drivers, freight carriers and others within the context of the surrounding area. Complete streets provide safe, connected, comfortable, and accessible transportation networks that provide people with the freedom to travel to the places they want to go and allow for the transportation of goods and services.

Some streets and roads may require changes to the right-of-way to better accommodate non-motorized users. However, many low volume streets and roads may require only minor changes, such as signage or restriping, or no changes at all, especially if speed limits are low and enforced. (See Context Sensitive, below)

The purpose of this policy is to encourage improvements to the transportation network so that more streets and roads in the OKI Region meet this definition, and to encourage future designs which accommodate all users. Adherence to these policies will increasingly yield a safer and a more accessible transportation network for all modes and users.

This policy applies only to the federal aided system of roads and projects involving OKI federal transportation funds.

## **Education and Enforcement**

This policy focuses primarily on how streets are designed and built. However, it is also important that the issues of education and enforcement are addressed regarding complete streets. Complete streets can make the transportation network safer for drivers, cyclists

and pedestrians if each knows the rules of the road and obeys those rules. As more cyclists and pedestrians share the right-of-way with automobiles, all parties need to learn the proper use of treatments like bike lanes, shared lane markings, sidepaths, etc. and how to interact safely. Project sponsors should consider whether a specific project requires special efforts in education or enforcement.

Consistent enforcement of traffic laws for cyclists, drivers and pedestrians is critical to ensure posted speeds are obeyed, proper signals are used when turning and traffic lights and signs are respected. Bicycles are legal vehicles on all roads and streets, except for limited-access highways, and are subject to vehicular traffic rights and responsibilities.

Pedestrians and transit riders also must take responsibility for walking along and across roadways in a safe and legal manner, such as, using sidewalks or shoulders when available. If no such facility is available, pedestrians should walk on the left, facing traffic, as near to the outside edge of the roadway as is safe and practical. Pedestrians must use caution when crossing all streets.

### **Complete Streets Benefits**

By providing appropriate features such as accessible sidewalks, designated bike facilities and accessible transit stops, complete streets encourage walking, transit use and biking with their attendant health benefits. By shifting a share of automobile traffic to walking, biking and transit, complete streets help reduce the demand for fuel, ease congestion, reduce wear on roadways, improve air quality and make streets more attractive for neighborhood businesses and customers. Well-designed complete streets improve safety by reducing collisions between automobiles, pedestrians and cyclists. Complete streets are a logical extension of the Americans with Disabilities Act and improve access for people with disabilities and older citizens, allowing them to participate more fully in community life. (See section entitled Context Sensitive)

### **Emphasis on Connectivity**

The purpose of a transportation network is to connect users of the network to their desired destinations and make it possible for all individuals to be mobile, engaged members of the community. A well-connected network provides safe and convenient transitions from one mode of transportation to another, from one jurisdiction to another and from one type of infrastructure to another. This can be accomplished by connecting sidewalks to bus stops, providing park and ride locations, providing bike-on-bus opportunities, permitting the use of scooters, making convenient connections from separated bike trails to the street grid and by making sure that all these connections are accessible to people with disabilities.

Every effort should be made to provide a continuous, uninterrupted network accessible to all users and modes. A well-connected network considers the needs of both current and projected users.

## **Context Sensitive**

There is no one design standard that achieves the complete streets outcome. Designs for projects will be context-sensitive, considering adjacent land uses and local needs, and incorporating the most up-to-date, widely accepted design standards for the setting, traffic volume and speed, and current and projected demand. Each project must be considered both separately and as part of a connected network to determine the level and type of treatment necessary for the street to be complete. The need for complete streets treatments is greatest along urban and suburban corridors that connect populous residential settings with popular and important destinations, such as, medical, shopping, employment, educational and recreational destinations.

In settings where there are multiple destinations which currently attract pedestrians, cyclists, people with disabilities and transit riders, any or all the following should be considered: reduced speeds, narrowed travel lanes, bike lanes, adequate shoulders, shared lane markers, sidepaths, accessible sidewalks, marked crosswalks, median refuges, accessible pedestrian controls and accessible and comfortable transit stops. It is also important that these features are included if there is a strong likelihood of future demand. If adjacent land use is changing to include more urbanized uses such as schools, medical facilities and shopping destinations, road design needs to anticipate future demand.

Certain factors, such as the existence of a fixed transit route or proximity to a school, clearly demonstrate the need for safe non-automobile travel. Well-worn foot paths in grassy/muddy areas along a road are also de facto evidence of the need for pedestrian facilities including sidewalks and crosswalks. Since part of every transit trip is made on foot or by using a mobility device, all transit stops should be accessible to pedestrians and people with disabilities. Schools have a natural concentrations of non-drivers, their school bus service is usually limited by a minimum distance from the school and that bus service is usually not provided for before school or after school activities. This necessitates policies for walkers, people with disabilities and cyclists to be accommodated within a minimum distance of two miles from a school facility.

OKI encourages school boards and jurisdictions to be proactive by considering complete streets principles when selecting school sites. If new schools are in areas that are accessible to walkers and bicyclists, school systems can better manage transportation costs and jurisdictions can avoid new congestion problems. Students can also enjoy the health benefits of walking or biking. The same can be true when shopping, medical, postal, governmental and other public facilities are built in locations that are accessible to pedestrians, cyclists, the elderly and people with disabilities. The most effective time to address these issues is early in the site selection and facility design process, therefore Complete Streets discussions should begin immediately when new facilities are being conceptualized.

It is important to note that many low-speed, low-volume residential streets can be considered complete with no additional treatment because pedestrians, people of all abilities, cars and cyclists can already interact safely. Likewise, many low-volume roads with limited current or projected demand from these groups may require no additional treatment to be considered complete. In general, specific treatments are less necessary where average daily traffic volumes are less than 1,000 vehicles a day and legal speeds are 25 mph or less. Where traffic is light, but speeds are higher, motorists must have adequate sight distance and the opportunity to change lanes to pass a bicycle or pedestrian for a road to be complete without additional design elements.

### **Application of this Policy**

This policy applies to all roadway projects that request OKI-controlled Surface Transportation Block Group Program (STBG), Transportation Alternative (TA), Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ) and Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) federal funds. Projects that are within the federal aid urbanized area or within defined urbanized clusters will require different approaches than those in rural areas. Some projects, especially those in rural areas, may require no additional complete streets treatments if it is determined during the application review phase that no current or projected need justifies such treatment. Consistent with current federal law, the primary purpose of all projects funded under this policy will be to enhance transportation choices in the region; no projects will be funded that are purely recreational in nature. Please note that this is a regional policy that does not, and cannot, address a wide variety of possible street treatments and amenities that may be desirable.

OKI encourages local and state jurisdictions and organizations to review and revise their local ordinances/policies to reflect complete street design guidelines and to apply these guidelines to local projects as appropriate. In addition, OKI encourages private developers to apply complete streets principles to their projects. We also encourage neighboring regions to utilize these principles to ensure connectivity across jurisdictions and regions.

The policy applies to all roadway projects and will be incorporated into the complete streets element of the OKI Project Prioritization Process. The Process will allow for exceptions (as described in the following section). Projects not incorporating complete street designs may be subject to a penalty.

### **Exceptions to this Policy**

All OKI-funded roadway projects will consider complete streets principles and treatments at the time of the initial application for funding. If the project sponsor determines that additional complete streets treatments are not warranted, they may be granted an exception for one or more of the following reasons:

1. **Where bicyclists and pedestrians are prohibited by law from using the roadway.**

Bicycles and pedestrians are legally permitted to travel on or along all streets and roads in the region except for limited access highways.

2. **Where the cost of establishing bikeways or walkways would be excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use.** In accordance with federal guidelines, excessively disproportionate is defined as exceeding twenty percent of the cost of the total transportation project (including right of way acquisition costs). This exception must consider probable use through the life of the project, typically 20 years or more.
3. **Where the project consists of maintenance, repair or resurfacing of an existing cross-section only.** However, resurfacing projects often offer a low-cost opportunity to adjust lane width or add a bike lane simply by changing the pavement markings on a road, and therefore resurfacing projects should, at the discretion of the project sponsor, be considered an opportunity to make a street or road more complete. Projects that include adding lanes, shoulders or involve replacement of the full pavement structure are not considered maintenance or repair and do not qualify for this exception.
4. **Where the project consists primarily of the installation of traffic control or safety devices** and little or no additional right-of-way is to be acquired. However whenever new traffic control detection devices are installed, they must be capable of detecting bicycles where bicycles are expected to be present. All new pedestrian crossing devices must also meet the most current accessibility standards for controls, signals and placement.
5. **Where the Average Daily Traffic count (ADT) is projected to be less than 1,000 vehicles** per day over the life of the project and there is sufficient opportunity for a vehicle to change lanes to pass a cyclist or pedestrian.
6. **Where scarcity of population or other factors indicate an absence of need for current and future conditions.** This exception must consider probable use through the life of the project, a minimum of 20 years.
7. **Where roadway standards or bicycle and pedestrian standards cannot be met.** There are situations where bicycle and pedestrian facility standards cannot be met due to roadway topographic constraints or if a project sponsor believes it is impractical to make the street safe for shared use. For example, roads with a combination of extremely high traffic volume (18,000+ cars a day), constrained and fixed right-of- way, and posted speeds of 45 mph or more may need special consideration. Non-standard treatments for bicycle and pedestrian accommodations should be reviewed for possible inclusion into roadway projects like these to avoid not having any bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, or an alternate route in the same corridor should be identified and marked.

This type of exception is highly problematic because high traffic volume is often an indication that a road is the most direct connection between multiple origins and destinations, and pedestrians, cyclists and transit users should not be denied access to those destinations. For this exception to be granted, the project sponsor should identify alternate routes that are in the same traffic corridor and that allow pedestrians, cyclists and people with disabilities access to significant destinations and, as necessary, make improvements to those alternate routes (for example: signage, bike boulevard treatments, shared used spurs, shared-lane markings, etc.).

Cyclists, pedestrians, transit riders and people with disabilities must also be able to cross these high-volume roads safely so that these roads do not become barriers to non-motorized use. High-volume, wide roads often have the unintended impact of dividing a community. To accommodate crossing of very wide, multi-lane roads, signal timing may need to be adjusted to accommodate users who walk more slowly, countdown timers, and/or mid-point safety islands may need to be installed, and highly visible signage and crosswalk markings may need to be added. Accommodations for cyclists crossing these roads should also to be considered, including bicycle detection devices at traffic signals and mid-point safety islands where multi-use paths cross busy roadways.

All exceptions to complete streets treatments shall be documented with supporting information which indicates the basis for the claim.

## **Policy Implementation**

Roadway improvement project applications for OKI federal funds will address how the project will make the transportation network more complete.

Project applications which do not include efforts to make a street or road more complete must identify a specific exception(s) and document the rationale for that request or be subject to a penalty. The OKI staff will provide guidance on how to comply with this policy during the annual call for projects workshop typically held in March.

The Project Prioritization Process has been modified to reflect this policy and points will be awarded for the addition or improvement of complete streets elements to a project. As part of the evaluation of project applications, OKI staff will determine whether appropriate complete streets elements are included, or whether a legitimate exception can be made. Final project selection will be approved by the OKI Board of Directors.

Context-appropriate facilities will be designed to the best currently available standards and guidelines. See the Policy Guidance and Resources section below. Complete streets elements will be included in the certified cost estimate for each project. OKI will coordinate educational opportunities for current design standards and appropriate complete streets

alternatives.

This policy will not dictate specific designs. The policy seeks to ensure the following outcome: All current and projected users must be able to safely and conveniently reach their destinations along and across a street or road, regardless of their chosen mode of transportation.

This policy will be periodically reviewed and revised periodically. At minimum this will be in parallel with the OKI Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update.



## **Acknowledgement**

OKI wishes to acknowledge and thank the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission (MVRPC) for sharing their Complete Streets Policy (adopted 2011). This OKI policy was developed in part based on the work of MVRPC.

## **General Policy Guidance and Resources**

- AASHTO Design Publications listed at: <https://bookstore.transportation.org>
- American Planning Association Publication: “Complete Streets: Best Policy and Implementation Practices” ([www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org))
- Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: [https://accessmanagement.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ITE\\_WalkableUrbanRP-036A-E.pdf](https://accessmanagement.info/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/ITE_WalkableUrbanRP-036A-E.pdf)
- National Complete Streets Coalition (<https://www.completestreets.org>)
- ODOT Multi-modal Design Guidance: <https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/working/engineering/roadway/manuals-standards/multimodal>
- KYTC Complete Streets Program: <https://transportation.ky.gov/BikeWalk/Pages/Complete-Streets.aspx>
- TRB Highway Capacity Manual (7<sup>th</sup> Edition January 2022)
- Federal Highway Administration Complete Streets <https://highways.dot.gov/complete-streets>
- The National Association of City Transportation Officials <https://nacto.org/program/design-guidance/>

## **Accessibility**

- FHWA Office of Civil Rights <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/civilrights/programs/ada/>
- Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines <https://www.access-board.gov/prowag/>
- Toolkit for the Assessment of Bus Stop Accessibility and Safety [PDF]: <https://www.nadtc.org/wp-content/uploads/NADTC-Toolkit-for-the-Assessment-of-Bus-Stop-Accessibility.pdf>

## **Safe Routes to School**

- National Center for Safe Routes to School (<http://www.saferoutesinfo.org/>)