

## Complete Streets and Context Sensitive Solutions

Web conference presented by  
[www.ContextSensitiveSolutions.org](http://www.ContextSensitiveSolutions.org)

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### Presenters:

**Gabe Rousseau**, Ph.D., Bicycle and Pedestrian Program Manager, FHWA Office of Natural and Human Environment  
**Barbara McCann**, Executive Director of the National Complete Streets Coalition and principal of McCann Consulting  
**Michael Ronkin**, Owner, Designing Streets for Pedestrians and Bicyclists LLC.

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONS & ANSWERS (from the web conference "chat pod"):

**Question:** Can you elaborate on the relationship between safety and Complete Streets?

**Answer:** The best measure of safety is a reduction in crashes, fatalities and injuries. Most studies show that Complete Street improvements help with all three. See our safety fact sheet at [www.completestreets.org](http://www.completestreets.org).

**Question:** Is there a way to "complete" high-volume/speed suburban arterials without severely disrupting traffic flow. In many cases, those streets are the most traveled roads and best routes.

**Answer:** Complete streets on suburban arterials can be a challenge. The best approach requires an increase in connectivity so there are alternate routes. But some improvements for pedestrians actually move car traffic faster, by shortening crossing distances!

**Question:** How could the complete streets model be promoted in smaller communities when there are other pressing issues facing these communities such as lack of economic development, decrease in population or lack of growth?

**Answer:** If done properly, Complete Streets policies can enhance livability and make communities more attractive to economic growth. When Valencia Street in San Francisco's Mission District slimmed its traffic lanes to slow down cars and accommodate other users, merchants reported the street changes enhanced the area. Nearly 40 percent of merchants reported increased sales, and 60 percent reported more area residents shopping locally due to reduced travel time and convenience. See our fact sheet on economic revitalization at [www.completestreets.org](http://www.completestreets.org).

**Question:** It is often challenging to get a state DOT to implement their own policies. Do you have any suggestions on how to apply pressure to get policies implemented?

**Answer:** Implementation will come when the department changes its performance measures and project criteria to reward projects that help complete streets. Check out the brand new FDOT Roadway Design Bulletin 09-03 that is specifically about the issue: <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rddesign/updates/files/RDB09-03.pdf>.

**Question:** Do slower speeds and increased congestion always benefit pedestrian safety?

**Answer:** Slower speeds tend to have safety benefits for all users but certainly do for walking and bicycling. I don't think complete streets promote congestion. Complete streets can improve traffic flow by providing more options and increasing connectivity.

**Question:** How is Complete Streets different from routine accommodations?

**Answer:** Routine accommodations was an idea to accommodate cyclists in roadways. Complete Streets is more comprehensive and is meant to provide safe and efficient travel for cyclists, but also the elderly, children, and all other users.

**Question:** How do you define safe access?

**Answer:** Transportation has been focusing on mobility for a long time, but access is also important. Safe access is ensuring that everyone has access to the transportation system. The term is meant to define a system where mobility works with safety, and a comprehensive approach is taken when designing the transportation system. An example would be designing good transit, but also designing a street that's easy to cross to get to the transit.

**Question:** Do Complete Streets policies force the creation of bike lanes, and can that be problematic on narrow roads?

**Answer:** A common misconception is that Complete Streets is simply an additive process, where bike lanes or other infrastructure are simply added to an existing road. The reality is that Complete Streets call for a wide range of measures that can reduce auto speeds, and improve safety for cyclists and pedestrians in other ways.

**Question:** When designing from the outside in-How do you accommodate utilities?

**Answer:** High-voltage lines can be difficult and expensive to bury, so complete streets need to leave space for utility poles. But, when burying utilities, they can often fit under the sidewalk or in the buffer/furniture zone.

**Question:** Could you please discuss the relationship of utilities in the streets and its impact? How about relationship with street trees/streetscape?

**Answer:** Some policies specifically include the need to have street trees, and many places with policies include utility providers in initial scoping meetings about projects, so their needs can be addressed.

**Question:** If the cost of bicycle and pedestrian facilities is too great to build, what are other measures you can take to ensure safety for the users of the road, even if they are very few in number?

**Answer:** The need should not be defined by the number of the users using the facility; it should be defined by the safety of the people who actually are using the bicycle or pedestrian facility. Studies of rural areas, where pedestrian and cycling traffic is thought to be very limited, demonstrate that a significant amount of users are there, and their safety is in peril, so they have to be accommodated.

**Question:** as a neighborhood advocate, how would you recommend that we approach brining a pedestrian crosswalk mid-block of a highway cutting thru two residential neighborhoods connecting a park to these pedestrians?

**Answer:** If your CS policy specifically addresses both transit and crossings, then it becomes a design issue. We are seeing more and more midblock crossings. Offset midblock crosswalks with ped refuge islands can be a great solution to bus stops, especially when they are on both sides of an arterial. Phoenix has several good examples.

**Question:** Is 20% still considered a reasonable guide for a maximum portion of total project cost for complete streets?

**Answer:** 20% still considered a reasonable guide but it depends on context: in a rural environment, 10% could be too much; in an intense urban environment; it could take 40% of a project's budget

**Question:** How does complete street address ADA guidelines? In some improvement projects due to environmental concerns sidewalks/ bike lane is not accommodated.

**Answer:** We are working with the US Access Board on this and on getting new standards in place.

**Question:** How can Complete Streets be incorporated into historic sites?

**Answer:** Transportation within historic sites has changed dramatically over time, so it depends on what you consider historic. Photographs of historic sites demonstrate that curb lines and modes of transportation was quite different in those historic sites. Complete Streets may actually be getting back to the historic nature of those areas, compared to what they have become within the last ten or twenty years.

**Question:** Do you have any recommendations about beginning Complete Streets programs in small rural towns?

**Answer:** In many places the first step is to pass a city council resolution. They can direct the department of transportation to begin the process. There are examples of such resolutions on [www.completestreets.org](http://www.completestreets.org).

**Question:** For communities in northern climates, how can Complete Streets advocates respond to resistance from snow removal managers?

**Answer:** FHWA released a memo on such recently. It can be found here.

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/preservation/082708.cfm>. It should also be said that the most complete streets in the world are in northern Europe where snow is more than abundant.

**RESOURCES:**

The Context Sensitive Solutions Complete Streets Webpage:

[http://www.contextsensitivesolutions.org/content/topics/what\\_is\\_css/changing-society-communities/complete-streets/](http://www.contextsensitivesolutions.org/content/topics/what_is_css/changing-society-communities/complete-streets/)

Complete Streets and Context Sensitive Solutions webinar recording:

<https://admin.na3.acrobat.com/a55098539/p44837315/>