

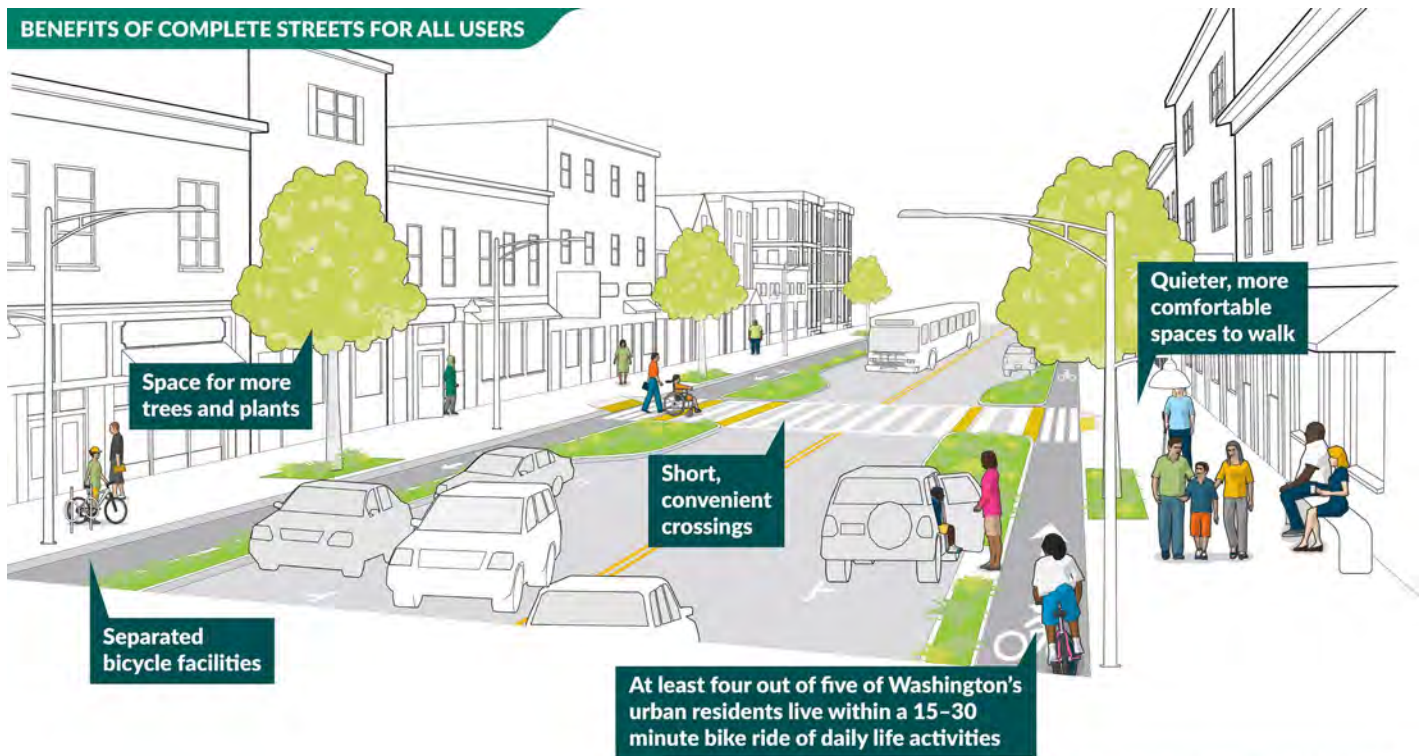
Local Planning and Complete Streets

“Complete Streets means planning, designing, building, operating and maintaining the transportation system that enables comfortable and convenient access to destinations for all people, and includes specific requirements for the pedestrian, bicyclist and transit rider experience.”

Updates to comprehensive and other local plans are opportunities to identify effective strategies that will improve safety and connectivity for all people on and across state highways. People walking, bicycling, rolling, riding transit and driving need safe, comfortable access throughout the transportation system, including both local streets and along and across state highways. WSDOT is committed to supporting local planning efforts and working together to help communities make state highways in communities complete streets.

By 2024, more than 190 municipalities¹ in Washington State had adopted Complete Streets policies. Since 2022, WSDOT has been following a legislative requirement to develop state transportation projects over \$500,000 as complete streets.

This document provides an overview of how Complete Streets can be incorporated in comprehensive and other local plans to facilitate WSDOT and local governments working together to meet common goals. While the focus is on the Complete Streets requirements for state highways, there are many benefits to including Complete Streets on local roads as well.²



¹ <http://www.tib.wa.gov/grants/grants.cfm>

² MRSC Complete Streets web page: <https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/facilities/rights-of-way/complete-streets>

WHAT IS A COMPLETE STREETS APPROACH?

Taking a Complete Streets approach means planning, designing, building, operating and maintaining the transportation system to enable comfortable and convenient access to destinations for all people, and including specific requirements for the pedestrian, bicyclist and transit rider experience.³ At WSDOT, we describe streets that provide this type of access as complete streets. WSDOT is required to follow RCW 47.04.035⁴, which directs WSDOT to consider the needs of people walking, biking and rolling as well as those driving and accessing transit as part of state transportation projects that cost \$500,000 or more. There is an exemption for emergency repairs, but WSDOT work meant to preserve, alter and expand the transportation system can be required to address Complete Streets needs. At WSDOT, a complete street developed with a Complete Streets approach includes, but is not limited to:

- Connected sidewalks that meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements,
- Dedicated bicycle facilities,
- Appropriate and efficient ways to cross state routes,
- Methods to separate drivers from active transportation users in both space and time, which are appropriate to the speed and context of the roadway.

WHY SHOULD LOCAL JURISDICTIONS CONSIDER COMPLETE STREETS POLICIES AND PLANS?

Complete streets provide many benefits that support safer access along and across roadways to everyone using them, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and motorists. Building complete streets can reduce speeding and prevent crashes that result in serious injuries and death. Complete streets support increased access to opportunity, physical activity, and economic development for people using roads and businesses along them. Nearly 30% of Washingtonians do not drive⁵, and everyone is a pedestrian at some point in their trip. Streets that work for all travelers benefit everyone.

While there is no state requirement for local governments to use a Complete Streets approach, it may be beneficial for local active transportation infrastructure to be consistent with WSDOT standards, especially when:

- Existing and planned local infrastructure is located within a state highway right-of-way,
- Existing and planned local infrastructure crosses a state highway,
- A local jurisdiction would like to be competitive for WSDOT grant programs,
- A local jurisdiction would like to ease maintenance operations – similar infrastructure that connects is easier to maintain,
- A local jurisdiction would like to hire consultants to develop plans – similar and consistent requirements require less oversight and achieve consistent results,
- WSDOT projects are expected to occur in the area in the future.

Developing a Complete Streets policy modeled on WSDOT's or another leading jurisdiction⁶ can also improve everyone's travel experiences on local roads by creating a more cohesive and consistent roadway. Predictable roadways are more comfortable for everyone, no matter how they travel.

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires multimodal level of service standards for all locally-owned arterials; locally and regionally operated transit routes that serve urban growth areas; state-owned or -operated transit routes that serve urban areas, if the state department of transportation has prepared such standards; and active transportation facilities to serve as a gauge to judge performance of the system and success in helping to achieve the goals of the GMA consistent with environmental justice. These standards should be regionally coordinated. Planning for state highways in your community in a way that is consistent with WSDOT's Complete Streets approach helps fulfill mandated multimodal level of service standards (MMLOS).

³ <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/what-are-complete-streets/>

⁴ Revised Code of Washington—RCW 47.04.035. 2022. Street access—Principles of complete streets—Requirements. Retrieved from <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=47.04.035> on April 24, 2024

⁵ Joint Transportation Committee Study on Nondrivers: <https://leg.wa.gov/JTC/Pages/Nondrivers.aspx>

⁶ <https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/facilities/rights-of-way/complete-streets>

HOW SHOULD LOCAL JURISDICTIONS COLLABORATE WITH WSDOT ON COMPLETE STREETS POLICIES?

Reach out to your local [WSDOT Complete Streets region lead](#).⁷

If your local plan includes a conceptual design for the cross-section (vehicle lanes, bicycle lanes, sidewalks, shared use paths, buffers, etc.) and intersection controls (roundabouts, signals, or other) that meet WSDOT Complete Streets requirements, this will facilitate WSDOT's ability to construct these improvements when there is a project on the state highway. State transportation projects are expected to meet the following goals:

- Work with the community to develop a preferred design, using WSDOT's Design Guide.
- Consider options to provide facilities across and along the state route for walking, biking and rolling by reallocating space within the existing paved area.
- Manage driving speeds to be appropriate to the context and reduce the severity of crashes.
- Construct walking, biking and rolling facilities that provide a Level of Traffic Stress of 2 or better.⁸
- Enable direct, comfortable trips for people walking, biking, rolling and accessing transit.
- Provide separation between people driving and those walking, biking and rolling that's appropriate to the context and speed of vehicle traffic.

People working on state transportation projects are expected to use a Safe System Approach. For WSDOT, a project's Complete Streets baseline needs are not dependent on user counts or documented crash records.

Close coordination with transit agencies is also recommended.

Start the dialogue with WSDOT by identifying:

- What is needed and whether there are any existing plans to address these needs
- How to address context; current and future land use and transportation patterns
- State highway corridor improvements that will either enhance safety for everyone on the road, support active transportation and transit trips, or provide clarity on land use expectations as well as the development of transportation efficiencies resulting from corridor-wide connections like crossings.



Set the stage for change by clearly identifying areas of need, options for improvement and implementation partnerships including:

- With WSDOT when WSDOT projects move forward
- With developers when development occurs along the corridor with WSDOT to collaborate on grant opportunities

⁷ <https://wsdot.wa.gov/construction-planning/complete-streets>

⁸ For an overview of LTS, see https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-07/LTS%20Level%20of%20Traffic%20Stress%20Flyer_0.pdf For specific design guidance, see the WSDOT Design Manual division 1500.

WASHINGTON STATE GOVERNMENT RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING COMPLETE STREETS POLICIES:

The Transportation Improvement Board has a list of agencies with “known Complete Streets ordinances” and direct links to those ordinances: <http://www.tib.wa.gov/grants/grants.cfm>.

WSDOT Complete Streets Website: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/construction-planning/complete-streets>. Which includes links to:

- WSDOT Design Manual: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/engineering-standards/all-manuals-and-standards/manuals/design-manual>
- WSDOT Level of Traffic Stress Design Bulletin: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-06/DesignBulletin2022-01.pdf>

OTHER RESOURCES:

The Municipal Research and Services Center also has a list of examples: <https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/transportation/integrating-transportation-modes/complete-streets>

Smart Growth America [maintains a list](#) of all local Complete Streets policies, including Washington State.

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