

Implementation Guidelines

Items in red and/or highlighted need additional research

Additional backup will be provided to City Council, including a Fiscal Note.

Section 1. Policy Goals

Transportation Network and Design Standards

In accordance with the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, best-practice transportation design standards will be implemented to advance a compact and connected city.

As part of its Complete Streets Program the City and Austin Transportation Department shall utilize a multi-modal Level of Service standard.

In designing city streets and the transportation system, the City shall follow the most recent edition of design guidelines recognized by Austin City Council:

- *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach*, Institute of Transportation Engineers and Congress for the New Urbanism
- *Urban Street Design Guide* and *Urban Bikeway Design Guide*, National Association of City Transportation Officials

In less urban contexts, and on low-volume local streets, the City recognizes that dedicated facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists may not be necessary for safe travel and may not be justified by a cost-benefit analysis.

The City of Austin Transportation Criteria Manual and Subdivision Regulations shall be updated to be consistent with these design guidelines.

As best practices evolve, the Austin Transportation Department Director will provide briefings on updated design guidelines to the City Manager and Austin City Council.

In applying Design Standards, the City will strive to achieve the following goals:

Multi-modal Transportation System. The City of Austin will design, operate and maintain a transportation system that provides a connected network of streets and facilities that accommodate all modes of travel.

Multi-modal Connectivity. The City will actively seek opportunities to repurpose or enhance right-of-way areas to enhance connectivity for pedestrians,

bicyclists and transit users in addition to motorists. Connectivity may be enhanced through alleys, pedestrian paseos, and dedicated facilities for pedestrians and cyclists. Protected bicycle facilities and urban trails provide special opportunities to enhance non-motorized uses and connections.

Destinations. The City will focus resources on enhancing pedestrian, bicycle, and disabled persons' access and safe travel routes to schools, retail destinations, services, parks, civic uses, and business districts.

Block size. The City will encourage new subdivisions, and large new developments and redevelopment projects to provide interconnected street networks with small blocks and non-motorized connections. **This principle shall be reflected in the Land Development Code.**

Regional connectivity. The City will work with agencies and neighboring communities to incorporate Complete Streets principles into regional transportation networks.

Urban Design and Streetscapes

The City shall design streets with a strong sense of place. A goal of this Complete Streets policy is to enhance the beauty, livability, unique character and attractiveness of Austin through the creation of a handsome and inviting public realm. Toward this end, streetscape elements and all City infrastructure in the right of way shall be held to a high standard for urban design.

As part of the public realm, all Austin streets shall be approached as open space – with natural amenities that include view corridors and green space – to be equitably shared by all.

In Downtown, projects in the right-of-way shall be guided by urban design standards developed by the Design Commission [document name?] and, where applicable, the Great Streets Master Plan. For designated Great Streets projects, established Great Streets Design Standards shall apply.

In all business districts, along mixed-use corridors and in activity centers, all City projects and right-of-way improvements shall prioritize the creation of a public realm that is safe, attractive, and inviting for pedestrians.

Streetscape and right-of-way projects planned by City departments and utilities shall be coordinated and combined wherever possible, from the earliest planning stages, to provide “completeness” in streetscape design, achieve cost savings, and deliver multiple benefits from public investment.

Each City project in the right of way shall contribute to a safe, inviting, and functional travel experience for all users. Urban design elements include

quality architecture, improved sidewalks, planting strips with native plants and street trees, lighting, wayfinding systems and other signage, street furniture, public art, lamppost banners, and unique decorative/historic elements that reflect and enhance neighborhood character.

City buildings and facilities also shall provide bicycle parking and, where feasible, shower and changing areas for cyclists.

Context Sensitivity

In planning, designing and implementing Complete Streets projects, the City of Austin will take a context-sensitive approach. This collaborative and multi-disciplinary process will invite stakeholder input on neighborhood and district contexts and deliver solutions appropriate to each setting and roadway.

Context sensitive solutions for City streets shall reflect community objectives and values reflected in the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan as they relate to livability, mobility, sense of place, urban design, environmental protection, activity centers, and neighborhood and district character. The City will coordinate street improvements with businesses along retail and commercial corridors to develop or enhance economic activity within vibrant and livable districts.

The City recognizes that different design solutions and degrees of multimodal accommodation and investment are appropriate to urban, suburban, and exurban/rural settings. Streetscape and roadway designs shall reflect individual roadway settings (residential, mixed-use, commercial, industrial, special) and transportation roles (Downtown, throughway/ boulevard, neighborhood, business district).

In all contexts, the City of Austin will maximize opportunities to accommodate and support all users and modes – including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and motorists – as funding and feasibility allows. Reflecting the specific street context and the built and natural environment, the needs of various users will be balanced in a flexible manner.

Green Streets and Sustainability

Austin’s streets and trails will be approached as a green network, enhancing the City’s long-term ecological functioning.

The City will adopt sustainable “Green Infrastructure” and “Green Street” principles and practices for the building of all new streets and for retrofits of existing streets where feasible. As other agencies build and/or maintain roadways, the City will actively encourage Green Street practices.

Context sensitive and sustainable stormwater management techniques that also beautify the public realm, such as rain gardens and vegetated bioswales and buffers, will be integrated into City street projects. In the design of projects, features that advance the goal of improved water quality shall be integrated with other Complete Streets principles and environmental goals.

To reduce the Urban Heat Island Effect, enhance Austin’s climate resiliency, and provide shade for pedestrians in order to enhance walkability, native shade trees will be planted and prioritized as a standard element of new and retrofitted streetscapes in key corridors and districts.

The City shall **require or recommend** the integration of existing natural features, such as topography, drainage, existing trees and native plants into the design of streets and right of way.

Roadways, bridges, surface parking lots and parking structures shall be approached as opportunities to develop innovative practices that improve the sustainability of Austin and its transportation system; reduce negative impacts to the environment and public health, including air and water quality; reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve climate resiliency; and improve Austin’s quality of life.

The City’s commitment to Green Streets includes roadway construction and reconstruction materials and practices, and related infrastructure construction projects. The “greening” of roadway components shall be a priority. The City will encourage the use of recycled materials, pervious materials where appropriate, approaches that extend the life cycle and carbon footprint of materials and projects, and low-energy technologies for transportation system components.

To provide opportunities for Austinites to experience “nature in the city,” the City will develop urban trails and roadways with trees and other plant and natural materials. In areas with natural open space, wildlife habitat and crossings shall be considered. Where feasible, linear parks, conservation areas, wildlife movement corridors and greenways with trails may be created or preserved along highways, roadways, and rail lines. Where new roadways are developed in natural areas, the City shall **require** minimal disturbance in the right-of-way and preservation of visual character and sustainable ecosystems.

As technologies evolve, alternative energy systems and other emerging features that advance Central Texas sustainability also may be incorporated along streets and other roadways and within parking lots and structures.

Section 2. Code and Legal Compliance

All projects shall be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. **The needs of persons with disabilities shall be incorporated into the design of all pedestrian and multi-use facilities and all roadway corridor designs.**

The City of Austin Land Development Code and its subchapters require specific elements consistent with Complete Streets policies, for specific contexts. As applicable, all new and redevelopment projects shall comply fully with the relevant street design and right-of-way requirements of the following City regulations (and their updates): **[correct all document names]**

- Transportation Criteria Manual
- Subdivision Regulations
- Subchapter E – Commercial Design Standards / Vertical Mixed Use
- Transit Oriented Development Station Area Plans
- Bicycle and Urban Trail Master Plan
- Small-area plans
- **Other?**

In cases where applicants request exceptions on individual development projects, **development review staff shall use their discretion to require full implementation of the City's Complete Streets policy.**

Alternative Equivalent Compliance. Due to unique site constraints and project conditions, flexible and creative design and engineering solutions to achieve Complete Street goals may be proposed for individual projects.

To ensure optimal Complete Street outcomes, requests for alternative equivalent compliance for streetscape elements shall be subject to a multidisciplinary review process:

- 1) Site plan reviewers shall provide an initial multidisciplinary, cross-departmental review, to include reviews for street tree, green streets, stormwater, vehicle travel lane, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit issues.
- 2) The **[Appropriate Board/Commission]** shall be briefed and invited to provide a recommendation.
- 3) The City Traffic Engineer and Urban Design Division Manager shall provide a subsequent review and recommendation.
- 4) A final determination shall be made by **[Appropriate Director]**.

Use of Right-of-Way. Streetscape infrastructure (e.g. street trees and permanent planters) shall be provided on private property and shall not be permitted in the right of way where they would interfere with future transportation accommodations (e.g. bicycle facilities for a corridor). **In cases where applicants request partial or full use of the right of way to fulfill City urban design requirements, the request must be reviewed and approved by the City Traffic Engineer or his designee.**

Section 3. Implementation Framework

Austin Transportation Department shall be responsible for implementation of this plan, with multidisciplinary support from other relevant City departments.

Other agencies responsible for roadway construction, maintenance and roadway within the City of Austin's jurisdiction, and the regional transportation network, also shall be engaged in implementation of Complete Streets as defined by this policy.

Steering Committee, Reporting and Metrics.

The City will maintain an interdepartmental Complete Streets Steering Committee to oversee the implementation of this policy, supported by a technical advisory group.

To provide coordination with Imagine Austin implementation, the Compact and Connected Priority Program Team will provide interdepartmental support and reviews. The Green Infrastructure Priority Program Team will be consulted on relevant issues.

Austin Transportation Department will report annually on Complete Streets implementation to the City Manager. Through 2017, this report will be delivered to the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan implementation team on a schedule that allows inclusion of key achievements and Complete Street needs in the Imagine Austin Annual Report and the five-year IACP update.

To avoid duplication of staff efforts, performance metrics reflecting the progress of Complete Streets implementation will be integrated with the tracking of metrics for Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan implementation.

In addition, the City will track and report on relevant metrics to include:

- Measures for improving traffic safety, such as the percentage of streets with lower posted/design speeds of streets, local area traffic management, pedestrian signals and other measures
- Streetscape improvements (e.g. street trees planted)
- The development of Complete Streets in locations that serve Imagine Austin Activity Centers, and are co-located with long-range City capital investments and economic development initiatives.

Bi-annually, the **Urban Transportation Commission? Council subcommittee?** shall conduct a conformance review for implementation of the Complete Streets Policy.

Manuals and Guidelines

Complete Street Design Guidelines shall be developed and implemented, consistent with this policy.

A comprehensive **Right of Way Improvements Manual** for the City of Austin shall be developed and provided or **updated**, consistent with the policy.

The Public Works Department will maintain a comprehensive inventory of all City **sidewalk, bicycle, and transit** infrastructure related to this Complete Streets policy and make this data available for the tracking of metrics and the Annual Report.

Master Plans

Implementation of the City of Austin Bicycle and Urban Trails Master Plan and Sidewalk Master Plan will be integrated with the implementation of this policy, and updated as needed to reflect its principles. As needed, those Master Plans will be updated and to fully reflect the intent of this policy the Complete Streets Design Guidelines.

The City will develop and implement a **Pedestrian Master Plan** to support implementation of this policy. Funding sources will be identified for this project.

The City will develop and implement a **Green Streets Master Plan?** to support implementation of this policy.

Other relevant City Master Plans will be reviewed against the Complete Streets Policy, and updated as needed.

Training and Education

Training related to this Complete Streets policy for affected City staff across departments will be provided within six months of policy adoption. Continuing education on Complete Streets best practices will be offered annually. Participants shall include all staff responsible for related policy, planning, and/or development review. In coordination with initial training, development review practices at the City of Austin shall be updated to support implementation of this policy.

The City will seek community partners to provide public information and education about Complete Streets principles, benefits, and this policy.

The City of Austin website, and major Complete Streets projects, will include an educational component to assist all users of the transportation system in understanding how to safely utilize Complete Streets project elements.

Section 4. City Investments

Capital Improvement Projects. For all Capital Improvement Projects, early project planning and development will include a review of opportunities to implement this Complete Streets policy. This includes review of the land use and transportation context of the project, identification of gaps or deficiencies in the network for all user groups (pedestrian, bicycle, transit, motorists) that could be addressed by the project, and an assessment of the tradeoffs to balance the needs of all users. For these reviews and assessments, Austin Transportation Department shall provide transportation planning staff support to other City Departments.

The Capital Improvement Project **prioritization matrix (?)** will be updated to encourage implementation of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit-related improvements. The City will prioritize projects that serve to eliminate gaps in the sidewalk and bikeways networks.

For all projects that include elements within the public right of way, the Capital Planning Office will provide support for early planning and coordination across departments to promote the most responsible and efficient use of fiscal resources. This will include consideration of funding sources.

Funding and Costs. The City will actively seek out and leverage resources from multiple agencies to achieve Complete Streets. Funding opportunities and partners that will be considered include federal agencies; Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization; county governments; Texas Department of Transportation, Texas Department of State Health Services, and other State Agencies; Capital Metro; school districts; and universities, including Texas Transportation Institute and Center for Transportation Research.

The Public Works Infrastructure Management Group shall review costs for recent City projects to achieve Complete Streets objectives. Based in this data, Public Works shall issue an advisory memorandum on current cost averages for constructing complete streets accommodations and on options for achieving Complete Streets goals within the “20% Budget Rule.” Where high-cost accommodations (e.g. wider sidewalks, buffered bicycle lanes, cycle tracks) are desired, additional funding sources may be required.

Funding sources and financing mechanisms for Complete Streets and streetscape projects that may be considered and developed include, but are not limited to:

- General Obligation Voter Approved Bonds

- Public Improvement Districts, and similar mechanisms
- Tax Increment Financing Districts

Funding for resolution of utility conflicts. Conflicts with existing utility infrastructure in the right of way typically increase the costs and complexity of Complete Streets projects in developed areas of the city. The City shall seek to establish a citywide funding source for the costs of moving or altering utility infrastructure, where such changes are necessary to implement this policy.

Right Of Way Infrastructure Coordination. Directors of City Departments will lead interdepartmental coordination as necessary to harmoniously accommodate infrastructure in the right of way for transportation, street tree, utility, public safety and other community needs.

The City will advance practices for right-of-way management that allow it to implement this Complete Streets policy while also providing sufficient space for water, sewer, electricity, street lighting, traffic signals and other utilities, both above and beneath the street surface. The City will encourage public and private design and engineering professionals to propose innovative and creative solutions, which can result in better quality projects, cost savings, or better outcomes across multiple sets of objectives for the public realm. In balancing needs, the policies and priorities established by the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan will provide overarching guidance.

Complete Streets require a high level of coordination. The Long-range Capital Improvement Projects Strategic Plan will be utilized as a tool to consider the impacts and opportunities for all City Departments and partners at the earliest stages of project planning.

Where a final determination of priorities or resolution of conflicts is required for a right-of way project, it shall be made jointly by the City Traffic Engineer and Public Works Director.

The **Director of Public Works and City Traffic Engineer** jointly shall provide ultimate approval of deviations to Complete Streets street design standards and criteria in the right of way.

APPENDIX: DEFINITIONS

Complete Street: A roadway and its associated right of way designed to promote safe, comfortable and convenient access and travel for people of all ages and abilities and for all modes of travel and categories of users.

Users: All people who use streets, for all purposes and travel modes. Children, seniors, and persons with disabilities or other special needs are users who require accommodation within Complete Streets.

Street: Any roadway and its associated right of way, public or private, and all elements of the transportation network.

Multi-modal: Inclusive of the travel needs of people using all travel modes, including walking, bicycling, transit and driving.

Complete Streets Infrastructure: Design features that contribute to a safe, convenient, or comfortable travel experience for users. Complete Streets Infrastructure includes: vehicle travel lanes; sidewalks; shared-use paths; bicycle lanes and dedicated bicycle facilities; paved shoulders; street trees, landscaping and planting strips; curbs and accessible curb ramps; crosswalks; pedestrian and traffic signals; signage, including pedestrian-oriented signs; pedestrian-scale lighting; street furniture and benches; vehicle and bicycle parking facilities; transit stations, stops and facilities; transit priority signalization; traffic calming devices; and other infrastructure that supports complete and multimodal access.

Green Street: