

WHEREAS, Austin City Council adopted Resolution No. 21031212-080 directing the City Manager to create and implement a comprehensive Complete Streets policy; and

WHEREAS, City staff has developed a context-sensitive policy reflecting national best practices, with sections on Vision and Intent, Complete Streets Principles, Applicability and Jurisdiction, Implementation, Exceptions, Code Amendments; and providing guidance for Implementation action steps, including metrics for evaluation;

WHEREAS, the intent of this policy is to implement the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and to enhance Austin's quality of life by advancing mobility, public health and safety, livability, sustainability, equity, affordability, economic activity, climate resilience, green infrastructure, and excellence in urban design and community character; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

Re it Resolved by the City Council of the City of Austin:

The City Council adopts the following policy, for the City Manager to implement immediately.

VISION AND INTENT

Complete Streets are necessary to advance multiple long-term community goals defined by the vision and policies of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan.

This Complete Streets policy provides a tool to enhance Austin's quality of life and implement Imagine Austin by advancing mobility, public health and safety, livability, sustainability, equity, affordability, economic activity, climate resilience, green infrastructure, excellence in urban design and community character.

Specifically, this Complete Streets Policy is integral to a core Imagine Austin Priority Program: "Invest in a compact and connected Austin." Achieving this goal requires a shift in defining the role of roadways: They serve people first. Therefore, the City of Austin commits to improvements that support safe, efficient, and convenient mobility for all roadway users – pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists – regardless of age or ability. Complete Streets support compact development patterns and expand everyone's mobility choices for safe and convenient travel by different modes between destinations throughout Austin. As appropriate for their context, they are designed to balance safety and convenience for everyone using the road.

To improve community health, Austin seeks to transform its street network from a barrier to an asset for more active lifestyles. Complete Streets encourage active transportation choices associated with improved health outcomes for people at all stages of life. Safety, including reducing injuries and deaths for pedestrians and bicyclists on Austin roadways, is a fundamental consideration of this Complete Streets policy. The City recognizes the multiple public health benefits of reducing the air and climate pollution caused by vehicles.

The City of Austin recognizes that the design of streets and the right of way provides a unique opportunity to thoughtfully integrate and advance multiple objectives for our community while delivering maximum benefits from both public and private investments.

A. COMPLETE STREETS PRINCIPLES

- 1. Complete Streets serve all users and modes.** This City of Austin policy represents a commitment to design, operate and maintain the community's streets and right of way so as to promote safe, comfortable and convenient access and travel for people of all ages and abilities. All roadways within the city shall provide basic safe access for all allowed categories of users – people traveling as pedestrians and by bicycle, transit riders, motorists and others. City streets and/or street networks shall accommodate emergency responders and freight needs as well, in a manner consistent with this policy. The City recognizes that children, seniors, and persons with disabilities may require special accommodations.
- 2. Complete Streets require connected travel networks.** The City of Austin shall prioritize opportunities to create a complete transportation network that provides connected facilities to serve all users and modes of travel. Streets shall be connected to create complete street networks that provide travelers with multiple choices of travel routes and that help to reduce congestion on major roadways. All roadways need not be optimized for all modes; however, each mode requires a network of safe and convenient travel routes throughout the city.
- 3. Complete Streets enhance community character.** As part of Austin's public realm, streets shall be held to a high standard for urban design. Multi-modal accommodations and all City projects in the right of way shall be approached as opportunities to enhance the beauty of Austin and its public realm through the thoughtful creation of place. Wherever feasible, streetscapes shall protect and include street trees, native plants, landscape architecture, public art, wayfinding signage and/or other elements that enhance the attractiveness of Austin and foster healthy economic development.
- 4. Complete Streets require best-practice design criteria and context-sensitive approaches.** The City will align land use and transportation goals, policies and code provisions to create Complete Streets solutions appropriate to individual contexts, to best serve the needs of all applicable roadway users. Context sensitive design allows roadway design decisions to be more flexible and sensitive to community values, and to better balance economic, social and environmental objectives. The City will take a flexible, innovative, and balanced approach to creating context-sensitive Complete Streets that meet or exceed national best-practice design standards. This includes a consideration of issues such as street width, design speeds, connectivity, and parking. Design criteria shall not be purely prescriptive but shall be based on the thoughtful application of engineering, architectural and urban design principles.

- 5. Complete Streets protect Austin’s sustainability and environment.** In the design, operation, and maintenance of its transportation system, the City shall seek opportunities to integrate best-practice “Green Street” principles and goals, adapted for the Austin climate. This shall include stormwater management, urban tree canopy, climate protection and resiliency, urban heat island mitigation, accessible and integrated parks and natural areas, and other sustainability goals. Projects in the public right of way shall advance sustainable management and conservation practices for water, energy, materials and other resources. By reducing automobile dependence, Complete Streets will help Austin advance toward its goal of carbon neutrality.
- 6. Complete Streets are the work of all City departments.** The City shall approach every project, program, and practice that affects the transportation network or occurs in the right of way as an opportunity to improve travel conditions for all categories of users. City departments, inclusive of utilities, shall work in coordination and collaborate with other entities to maximize opportunities for Complete Streets, street connectivity, and cooperation.
- 7. Complete Streets include all elements of the transportation system and all projects and phases.** The City shall apply this policy in a context-sensitive manner to all private and public roadways. It applies to both new streets and retrofit projects. It shall be applied to all City capital improvement projects, including the construction, reconstruction, retrofit, resurfacing, alteration and major repair of streets.
- 8. Complete Streets require appropriate performance measures.** The City will track and report performance measures for the transportation system that measure how well the City is conforming to this policy. Indicators shall reflect safe and efficient mobility for all users – pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists, and freight. Green Streets metrics will be reported as well. For multimodal mobility, performance indicators shall be utilized and weighted in a manner that reflects context and community values.

B. APPLICABILITY AND JURISDICTION

This policy is applicable to all development and redevelopment in the public domain within the City of Austin and its extra-territorial jurisdiction. It applies to the work of all City Departments and entities and to all private development that affects streets, the transportation system and the right of way, including private roadways and park roads.

Where new streets and subdivisions are constructed, this policy shall be fully and consistently applied.

In existing developed areas of the City, Complete Streets improvements shall be achieved as individual projects advance and as sites and corridors are developed and improved.

For activity centers and corridors identified in the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, and areas with high levels of pedestrian activity, the City shall seek and prioritize funding sources for strategic Complete Streets improvements.

The City of Austin requires all agencies over which it has permitting authority to comply with this policy. These include, but are not limited to, water agencies, electric utilities, gas and petroleum utilities, communications utilities, and service contractors. Provisions that support this Complete Streets policy shall be added to new franchise agreements affecting the City right of way.

For all transportation projects designed by other agencies requiring funding or approval by the City, the City shall: (1) evaluate the effect of the proposed project on safe, comfortable, and convenient travel by all users and modes, and (2) identify and recommend required measures to mitigate any adverse impacts on such travel and to incorporate context sensitive design.

The City of Austin encourages entities not under its jurisdiction to satisfy this policy, including school districts, counties, and State of Texas agencies with facilities in the City of Austin and its extra-territorial jurisdiction. Partner agencies are encouraged to adopt this Complete Streets Policy or an equivalent.

For regional transportation projects, the City will promote compliance with this Complete Streets Policy by its partners, including Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO), Capital Metropolitan Transit Authority (Capital Metro), Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), and Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority (CTRMA), neighboring cities, counties and other agencies as applicable.

C. IMPLEMENTATION

The City of Austin shall make Complete Streets practices a routine part of everyday operations and procedures. The Complete Streets principles of this policy shall inform all transportation planning, design, maintenance, and funding decisions. They shall be referenced in the early scoping phase of all City capital improvement projects that include or affect roadway elements.

As needed to ensure robust implementation of this policy, the City shall develop or update City design policies, guides and manuals across disciplines. It also shall reference the most up-to-date national standards, design guides, and best practices supportive of Complete Streets.

For additional guidance on Implementation, please see “Exhibit A” attached to this policy.

A more detailed set of Complete Streets Policy Implementation Guidelines shall be developed and provided to all relevant departments within 90 days of policy adoption. These Guidelines shall be adopted as a separate document as an administrative rule.

The City will actively seek sources of appropriate funding to implement this policy.

D. EXCEPTIONS

Exceptions for a specific project may be requested and considered for approval when:

- Use of the roadway is prohibited by law for a specified category of users (e.g. pedestrians on an interstate freeway, vehicles on a pedestrian or transit mall);
- The costs of providing accommodation are excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use;
- The application of Complete Streets principles would be contrary to public safety;
- An absence of current and future need to serve a category of users is documented (e.g. in a rural or low-density area). In determining future need, applicants and City review staff shall consult relevant City and regional long-range plans for land use and transportation, including the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan.

Requests for exceptions should be submitted for review at the earliest project phase (e.g. during initial project planning and budgeting). Requests submitted must include a narrative, site photographs, and supporting data.

The City shall track all exceptions and alternative compliance granted through the standard development review process, related to the provision of Complete Streets facilities.

Requests for Exceptions to this policy for individual public and private projects shall be provided to a multidisciplinary City staff team of subject-matter experts for review. That body shall issue an opinion as to whether the Exception should be granted; if consensus is reached, it may grant or deny the Exception. If not, its findings shall be forwarded to the Director of Public Works, Director of Austin Transportation Department, and Director of Planning and Development Review for their joint consideration.

For all project elements constructed in the City right of way, final determination and approval of Exceptions shall reside with the Director of Public Works. Exceptions granted shall include the applicant's documentation and indicate the basis for the decision.

Where exceptions are granted, parallel accommodations for the category of users excluded shall be sought by City staff on alternate routes within the transportation system.

E. CODE AMENDMENTS

All City of Austin criteria manuals referenced in the City Code that affect the design of roadways and facilities sited in the right of way, which affect the implementation of this policy, shall be reviewed and updated to make them consistent with its goals and support its implementation. These include the Transportation Criteria Manual, Utility Criteria Manual, Environmental Criteria Manual and Drainage Criteria Manual.

The City of Austin Land Development Code (LDC) shall be updated to incorporate the principles of this Complete Streets Policy, including complete street networks that provide for greater connectivity. The City's Subdivision Regulations shall be updated in coordination with the Transportation Criteria Manual; to facilitate near-term compliance with this policy, an interim advisory on the design of new streets and subdivisions shall be issued as an administrative rule.

[Query for City Legal]

This resolution shall be returned to Austin City Council to be adopted as an ordinance for full regulatory effect.

DRAFT

EXHIBIT A

IMPLEMENTATION – ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

1. Application to City Projects

- a. City roadway projects initiated *prior* to adoption of this Complete Streets Policy and referenced in Austin City Council Resolution No. 020418-40 shall continue to adhere to its provisions. Where budgets are constrained, priority shall be given to providing at least one pedestrian facility and at least one bicycle facility (or a multi-use facility), as appropriate for the roadway's design speed and volume. In keeping with this Complete Streets policy, appropriate budget also shall be allocated to address the needs of transit users; integrate Green Street practices; and where feasible, provide street trees, landscape elements, and/or other amenities that invite walking and create a sense of place.
- b. City projects initiated *subsequent* to the adoption of this policy shall fully integrate all of its goals and principles from the earliest project scoping and budgeting phases. Projects shall be initially defined such that the overall project budget is sufficient to assure conformance with this policy.

2. **Capital Improvement Projects.** Consideration of facilities to extend and connect the pedestrian, bicycle, and/or transit travel network shall be incorporated into the planning, scoping, budgeting, funding, design, approval and implementation process for all City facilities, roadways, and right-of-way infrastructure. As needed, the Capital Planning Office shall provide coordination and support. Departments shall consult the Long-range Capital Improvement Program Strategic Plan, the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and other relevant City master plans for guidance.

In planning and designing City projects that include or impact roadways, City Departments shall consult the Austin Transportation and Public Works Departments and be guided by the Bicycle Master Plan, Urban Trails Master Plan, the Sidewalk Master Plan. A Pedestrian Master Plan also shall be developed for guidance. All projects shall strive to advance multiple goals, including a high-quality public realm, placemaking, Green Streets, and economic development.

The integration of Complete Streets elements, including green stormwater infrastructure, into overall roadway design shall be approached as a cost-saving opportunity for the project.

Projects shall anticipate opportunities to incrementally achieve fully complete streets and networks over time, and in future phases of work.

Where the costs of acquiring right-of-way to provide separate accommodations for each mode of travel are cost-prohibitive, multi-use facilities within the existing right of way that accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists may be considered, if appropriate for the roadway and its context.

3. **Project Budgets.** It is the responsibility of each City project to budget appropriately for implementation of this policy, in a context-sensitive manner. This includes budgeting for right of way and/or easement acquisition. Where funding sources for City projects are narrowly constrained (e.g. restricted to utility, affordable housing, or other purposes), the city will actively seek additional funding sources for the inclusion of Complete Street elements. As needed, projects shall seek additional funding from another source to achieve Complete Streets standards.

For park roads and facilities, park land may be used for bicycle/pedestrian trails and other elements of the transportation system that serve and/or support people's access to parks and to recreational and outdoor activities.

4. **Dedicated Funding.** The City shall actively seek sources of dedicated funding for Complete Streets projects that are needed to complete priority transportation networks for each mode.

In addition, the City shall seek a dedicated funding source to assist with the acquisition of right of way and/or easements, recognizing that such acquisitions may be necessary to add or expand Complete Streets elements (e.g. sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and/or planting strips and street trees). Additional funding sources also shall be sought for bicycle and pedestrian facilities needed on parkland.

5. **Complete Streets Program.** The City will implement this policy through a Complete Streets Action Plan and Program based in Austin Transportation Department. The Program will be developed implemented in consultation with the Public Works Department and other departments and partners. It will be appropriate staffed to provide multi-modal transportation planning, interdepartmental coordination and communications, in coordination with the Bicycle Program and a Pedestrian Program. Program staff will facilitate development of a Pedestrian Master Plan.

The Complete Streets Program will be structured as an element of Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan implementation and be inclusive of all relevant City Departments. The Program shall facilitate citywide staff training, public education, document development and/or updates, departmental Complete Street efforts, and other actions as necessary to fully implement this Complete Streets policy.

An interim report on the development and progress of this program shall be delivered to Austin City Council within 12 months of policy adoption.

6. **Street Design Standards.** The City of Austin shall develop a set of Street Design Standards that incorporate the goals and principles of this policy, applicable to both private and public projects. These design standards shall inform relevant code and manual updates and City right-of-way management and practices.

The Street Design Standards shall incorporate Great Streets design standards.

The design of roadway water quality controls and storm drain infrastructure, which are already required by ordinance for new roadways and major roadway reconstructions, shall be incorporated into the Street Design Standards.

7. **Green Streets Guidelines.** A multi-disciplinary City staff team shall develop Green Streets Guidelines to support this policy. The Guidelines shall reflect national best practices and metrics, as well as green infrastructure goals referenced in Imagine Austin. They shall address roadway-design related stormwater infrastructure and management, for both water quality and runoff volume; the linking of trails and greenbelts with roadway networks; and other relevant sustainability, environmental and ecosystem goals. The Guidelines shall be overseen by the Imagine Austin Green Infrastructure Priority Program Team and administered as an integral element of the Complete Streets Program.
8. **Development Review.** The goals and provisions of this policy shall be fully incorporated into the City of Austin development review process, to ensure compliance by private developments. City development review staff across departments shall receive appropriate training. The Planning and Development Review Department also shall provide appropriate information and education to the development community and applicants.
9. **Staff Training.** The City will provide information and training on this Complete Streets policy and its principles, and best practices for implementation, to relevant City staff across departments within 150 days of policy adoption. Continuing education inclusive of all aspects of this policy shall be provided on an annual basis. The training materials shall be offered to regional and City partner agencies.
10. **Outreach and Education.** The City and partner organizations will provide ongoing public information and education about Complete Streets to Austin residents, community groups and leaders, and transportation, planning, engineering and real estate professionals. The City will meet at least annually with representatives of Capital Metropolitan Transit Authority, Travis County, and TxDOT to review best practices in Complete Streets Implementation and evaluate cross-agency efforts.
11. **Metrics for Evaluation.** Performance metrics reflecting the progress of Complete Streets implementation for all travel modes will be tracked and reported in coordination with metrics established for Imagine Austin implementation. Metrics will include miles of new and improved sidewalks and bicycle facilities, number of accessible transit stops, percentage of trips made by biking and walking, number and health of street trees, blocks of Great Streets improvements, roadway deaths and injuries, improvements increasing the walkability of neighborhood business districts, percentage of roadway area that is pedestrian-supportive, and other relevant measures. Green Streets metrics will be developed and reported (e.g. percentage of sidewalks shaded by tree canopy. Analyses also will be conducted and reported for relevant transportation planning issues such as connectivity, roadway travel speeds, and multi-modal levels of service. These metrics and analyses will be included as a section in the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan Annual Report.

12. **Code Amendments.** City staff will conduct a diagnosis to identify: 1) what, if any, provisions in current code or criteria are in conflict with implementation of this Complete Streets policy, or otherwise present impediments, and 2) what code and criteria amendments are needed, if any, to address impediments or to otherwise advance the implementation of the Complete Streets policy. City utilities will provide guidance on ensuring that Complete Streets Policy implementation does not impact technical criteria for utilities to a degree that creates public safety hazards or reductions in levels of service unacceptable to utility customers.

Upon adoption of a major revision to the Land Development Code by Austin City Council, necessary updates on this policy shall be issued to create consistency with all Land Development Code provisions and language related to roadways, right of way, street classifications, character districts, and other applicable elements.

13. **Roles and Responsibilities.** Austin Transportation Department, as the administrator of the Complete Streets Program, shall have lead responsibility for implementation of this policy.

Final authority for the construction of elements in the City right of way, as well as reporting responsibility for exceptions granted to this policy, resides with the Public Works Department.

Per City Code, the Director of Public Works is responsible for the functionality of streets as defined by their utility, durability, condition and serviceability and has final authority over related decisions. The City Traffic Engineer is responsible for the design and functionality of streets and the roadway network as it relates to providing safe, efficient, and comfortable travel for roadway users. The Public Works Department and Austin Transportation Department shall jointly and collaboratively address these goals for the community's roadways, coordinating with other departments and partner agencies as needed.

14. **Exceptions Reporting.** The Planning and Development Review Director shall report each Exception granted through the development review process (e.g. Alternative Compliance mechanisms established by City code) and shall oversee the timely public posting of reports on Exceptions granted on the City of Austin website.

The Public Works Director shall report each Exception granted through the mechanism established in this policy, including for City projects, and shall oversee the timely public posting of such reports on the City of Austin website.

Quarterly, summary reports of both sets of Exceptions granted shall be provided to the multidisciplinary City staff team that reviews Exceptions. Annually, a summary report documenting Exceptions requested and granted shall be provided to the Urban Transportation Commission and Austin City Council.