

# City of Newburyport Complete Streets Policy

## **The Importance of Complete Streets**

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**WHEREAS**, the citizens of Newburyport support the “Complete Streets” design principles; and

**WHEREAS**, the City of Newburyport’s 2017 Master Plan calls for City officials to promote walkability, pedestrian safety, increased bicycle use and alternative modes of transportation throughout the City in, order to increase public safety, sustainability, efficiency and mobility, while decreasing overall traffic congestion; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council seeks to ensure that all transportation projects undertaken in Newburyport provide full consideration of multiple travel modes (automobile, truck, bicycle, pedestrian, transit, etc.) in their planning, design, and construction phases, as appropriate; and

**WHEREAS**, the City Council recognizes that in support of this objective it will be beneficial to provide guidance to City Boards, Committees and Departments as to project planning, design standards, implementation and monitoring;

**NOW THEREFORE**, the City Council adopts this Complete Streets Policy for guidance in the planning, design, review and construction of all future transportation projects within the City:

## **“Complete Streets” Defined**

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“Complete Streets” means streets that are designed and operated to provide safe and accessible options for all users and travel modes, so that pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and public transportation users of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a street or street network.

Designing streets with these principles contributes toward the safety, health, economic viability and quality of life in a community by improving the pedestrian and vehicular environments. Providing safer, more accessible and comfortable means of travel between home, school, work, recreation and retail destinations helps promote more livable communities.

As designers, planners, public officials and advocates, we have a responsibility to promote and improve public health, reduce traffic congestion, make places safer and more livable, and reduce environmental impacts.

## **Our Vision & Intent for Complete Streets**

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Our vision as a community is to always design and build the best infrastructure that will enable safe access for all users, with a particular focus on more vulnerable (i.e. non-vehicular) users. The primary concentration under this Policy will take into account the walker, the bicyclist and the public transit commuter while at the same time balancing a safe approach to deal with the automobile driver. The automobile and its driver have dominated our City for many years and we as a community have just

started in recent years to focus on a user-shared approach to make our City safer and easier to navigate for everyone of all ages and all abilities.

Newburyport's Complete Streets Policy will ensure that it becomes easier to cross the street, walk to shops, bicycle to work and prioritize transit to, from and within the City. Under this Complete Streets Policy the City will develop and implement specific design tools and techniques that make it convenient and safe for children to walk or bike to school or a park, for seniors to continue to have an active lifestyle and for everyone, of all ages, to feel comfortable traversing around our great City. We will also include in our policy, and consider during implementation, the needs of commercial vehicles, public service vehicles and emergency vehicles to facilitate their safe movement through Newburyport.

### **Our Commitment to Complete Streets**

The City of Newburyport is committed to designing, constructing, maintaining and operating our City streets and properties to provide for a comprehensive and integrated street network of facilities for people of all ages and abilities with a commitment to the principles of Complete Streets design.

New and renovated transportation facilities and infrastructure shall accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, transit vehicles and riders, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities, wherever feasible, subject to the exceptions contained herein.

### **Implementation of this Policy**

City-wide implementation of Newburyport's Complete Streets Policy will be overseen jointly by the Department of Public Services (DPS) and the Office of Planning & Development (OPD). In general, the DPS will be the lead on public infrastructure projects, while the Office of Planning & Development will monitor and review private development projects, in coordination with local permitting boards such as the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals. Both departments will comment on public and private projects as necessary, with the appropriate department acting as the lead.

The OPD shall work to incorporate Complete Streets principles into the City's Master Plan, area plans, strategic plans, transportation plans, the Newburyport Zoning Ordinance, Subdivision Rules and Regulations and Site Plan Review Regulations, as well as any related regulations, standards and specifications documents, design manuals and programs as appropriate. Implementation of projects supported by adopted plans shall be a priority under this policy.

The DPS and OPD shall work cooperatively to identify current and potential future sources of funding for implementation of transportation and infrastructure projects involving complete streets elements.

The Traffic Safety Advisory Committee (TSAC) shall hold a public meeting at least once a year to discuss the prioritization of potential transportation and infrastructure projects involving complete streets elements, with input from the general public.

The Complete Streets tools, techniques, methodology and principles shall be incorporated into all phases of publicly and privately funded projects on public roadways and properties. This includes transportation infrastructure and street design projects requiring funding or approval by the City, as well as projects funded by the state government, federal government and/or private entities. The

Complete Streets Policy shall also be incorporated into our major roadway repairs and upgrades and any expansion projects.

The Department of Public Services (DPS) and Office of Planning & Development (OPD) shall maintain a comprehensive inventory of pedestrian and bicycle facility infrastructure that will help to prioritize specific projects and eliminate gaps in the sidewalk and bikeway network.

City officials shall approach every transportation improvement and project phase as an opportunity to create safer, more accessible streets for all users. These phases include, but are not limited to: planning, programming, design, right-of-way acquisition, construction engineering, construction, reconstruction, operation and maintenance.

Wherever feasible, Complete Streets design principles shall be incorporated into all new publicly and privately funded projects, and incrementally on existing streets through a series of small improvements and activities over time.

### **Exceptions to the Complete Streets Policy**

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Complete Streets principles will be applied in all street construction, retrofit, and reconstruction projects except in the unusual or extraordinary circumstances listed below. Even under the conditions outlined below, a project's impact will be evaluated for the effect it would have on the usefulness of the street for all users, now and in the future, and the ability to implement other adopted plans in the future.

Exceptions to this Complete Streets Policy may be granted in writing by the DPS Director or DPS Deputy Director for any of the following listed reasons, with a written justification for the appropriate exception after consultation with the TSAC, which shall include representation by a member of the Commission on Disabilities (or their appointed designee):

1. **Restricted Use of Public Way and/or Property:** Where pedestrians and bicyclists are prohibited by law from using the facility. In this case, alternative facilities and accommodations shall be provided within the same transportation corridor, and the ability to reasonably and conveniently cross the facility will be part of the facility design and construction.
2. **Physical Constraints:** Where existing right-of-way does not allow for the accommodation of all users. In this case alternatives shall be explored such as obtaining additional right-of-way, use of revised travel lane configurations, paved shoulders, signage, traffic calming, education or enforcement to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, transit vehicles and riders and persons with disabilities.
3. **Disproportionate Costs:** Where the cost of establishing walkways or bikeways or other accommodations would be disproportionate to the anticipated need or probable use of public facilities, particularly if alternative facilities are available within a reasonable walking and/or bicycling distance.
4. **Public Safety:** Where application of Complete Streets principles is unnecessary or inappropriate because it would be contrary to public safety and increase risk of injury or death.

5. **Impacts to the Environment & Abutters:** Where the construction is not practically feasible or cost effective because of unreasonable adverse impacts on the environment or on neighboring land uses, including impact from right-of-way acquisition.
6. **Existing or Comparable Facilities:** Where there is comparable and sufficient circulation provided by a part of the City's Rail Trail network and as such improvement in this Section of the right of way is not warranted at this time.

Exceptions to this Complete Streets Policy may also be granted by the DPS Director or DPS Deputy Director for any of the following listed reasons, without advance consultation with TSAC, with a written justification for the appropriate exception:

- A. **Ordinary Maintenance:** Ordinary maintenance activities designed to keep street and other transportation assets in serviceable condition or when interim measures are implemented on temporary detour or haul routes.
- B. **Repairs and/or Upgrades to Utilities & Infrastructure:** Ordinary public works or utility maintenance activities, including, but not limited to: water, sewer and storm sewer main repairs; installation of new or removal of existing water or sewer service lines, installation or repair of fire hydrants, installation or repair of private utility fixtures.

### **Our Design Process for Complete Streets**

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When designing a street improvement project, the DPS and OPD shall collaborate with all stakeholders to ensure that, wherever feasible, all users and transportation modes are adequately accommodated. These stakeholders may include, but are not limited to neighborhood groups, individual residents, the Police Department, Fire Department, TSAC, Newburyport Commission on Disabilities, and when required any federal or state agency with jurisdiction or direct interest on the proposed project.

The City shall follow accepted or adopted Complete Streets design standards, and use the best and latest design guidance and technical resources available, when preparing plans for street improvement projects. Design guidance and technical resources that will be used by the City include, but are not limited to the following;

1. MassDOT Project Design and Development Guidebook;
2. MassDOT Separated Bike Lane Planning and Design Guide;
3. The Architectural Access Board (AAB) 521 CMR Rules and Regulations; and
4. The City of Newburyport Safe Routes to School Program (currently still in development).
5. American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)
  - a. Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities (4th Edition, 2012)
  - b. Guide for the Planning, Design and Operations of Pedestrian Facilities (2004)
6. American Planning Association (APA)
  - a. Complete Streets: Best Policy and Implementation Practices (2010)
7. American Planning Association (APA) & American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE)
  - a. U.S. Traffic Calming Manual (2009)
8. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
  - a. Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)
  - b. PEDSAFE: Pedestrian Safety Guide and Countermeasures Selection System

9. Institution of Transportation Engineers (ITE)
  - a. Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach (2010)
  - b. Neighborhood Street Design Guidelines (2010)
10. National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)
  - a. Urban Bikeway Design Guide (2nd Edition, 2012)
  - b. Urban Street Design Guide (2013)
11. U.S. Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (the Access Board)  
(Federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Standards)
  - a. Accessible Rights-of-Way: A Design Guide
12. Active Transportation Alliance
  - a. Complete Streets Complete Networks: A Manual for the Design of Active Transportation

### **Our Network Approach to Complete Streets**

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City officials shall rank and prioritize transportation infrastructure projects that will connect important destinations and/or address streets (intersections, segments or networks) with known safety and/or connectivity problems, for example;

- From a school to a park
- From a park to a rail trail
- from a rail trail to the downtown
- from the downtown, or other densely developed areas, to the riverfront
- Streets in the worst condition or otherwise in need of immediate reconstruction

Looking at our long-term goals and objectives will help us prioritize projects and may further help us close the loop on smaller inexpensive connections that may more successfully connect two smaller facilities to make a network of different Complete Streets, or components thereof, into one.

### **Context Sensitivity**

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Implementation of this Policy shall reflect the context and character of the surrounding built and natural environments, and enhance the appearance of such.

### **Coordination of Jurisdictional Relationships**

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When appropriate Newburyport will collaborate with MassDOT, DCR and other state entities, as well as the MBTA and MVRTA to incorporate our Complete Streets Policy into state-controlled roadways within the City. We will welcome their comments on all projects that may affect their operational requirements.

### **Performance Measures & Standards**

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Complete Streets initiatives should be continuously evaluated for success and opportunities for improvement. Accordingly, the DPS and OPD shall:

- i. develop performance measures to periodically assess the rate, success and effectiveness of implementing this Complete Streets Policy; and

- ii. determine the frequency of assessment and utilize appropriate metrics for analyzing the success of this policy.

These metrics may include, but are not limited to the following:

- a) total number and/or length of new bicycle lane/trails built
- b) linear feet of new pedestrian accommodations built, including sidewalks
- c) number of retrofitted pedestrian facilities or amenities
- d) number of accommodations built serving those with disabilities
- e) number of intersection improvements made to improve Level of Service (LOS) and safety for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists
- f) number of transit accessibility accommodations built
- g) rate and/or decrease of vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian crash rates (where tracked and measured).
- h) rate of children walking or bicycling to school (when applicable)
- i) number of trips by mode
- j) use (by mode) of projects incorporating Complete Streets design standards
- k) compliments and complaints received from the general public
- l) number of exemptions from this Policy approved by the DPS.