

COMPLETE STREETS

“Complete Streets” is an initiative from Smart Growth America that seeks to create streets and roadways that promote healthy lifestyles for all by being safer, more efficient, and more livable than streets which currently foster speeding vehicles and, conversely, congestion and traffic jams. The National Complete Streets Coalition provides resources, as well as technical support and assistance, to transportation planners and others working to improve community livability and create streets and roadways that are truly designed with all users in mind.



One of the key components of Complete Streets is that they truly consider all users, regardless of ability level, age, or mode of transportation. Complete Streets incorporate tenets of inclusion and universal design to combat the barriers of incomplete streets and to ensure that built environments, technology, and traffic flow promote the best possible pedestrian and transit experience for all users. Barriers caused by incomplete streets include:

- unpaved, broken, and/or disconnected surfaces
- lack of curb cuts, ramps, and other appropriate assistive implements for elevation change
- one-dimensional traffic signals (for example, a visual signal with no audible component)
- wide intersections and roads and increased speed limits that promote less crossing time for pedestrians and more, faster motor traffic, endangering pedestrians, cyclists, and other motorists
- public transit “islands” that are not connected to sidewalks or other accessible paths and routes

Complete Streets take into account the above and other barriers and address them in planning and policy work. Additionally, Complete Streets advocates may target existing policies and developments and advocate for amending them to create more accessible environments. Absent these barriers, community streets, roadways, and pedestrian infrastructure are vastly improved, providing tangible benefits not only to people with disabilities, but to all users. For example, curb cuts can benefit individuals who use assistive walking devices, as well as parents pushing strollers, or individuals without cars who utilize push carts to carry purchased items home. Shorter crosswalks and extended crossing times benefit all individuals who have decreased mobility, including people with disability, poor physical fitness, large loads of items, or adults corralling several children. While these examples may seem simple, when applied to real-world instances the benefits are tangible and lead to increased individual and community health and engagement.

Complete Streets represent an excellent opportunity to engage in inclusive, community-wide health promotion. The Coalition’s website, linked below, features resources on how to create and adopt a Complete Streets policy. Additionally, it hosts an interactive map highlighting all communities with existing policies, as well as the degree to which those plans have been put into action. Individuals, coalitions and organizations, and/or local governments that want to increase usability of community streets and roadways and, transitively, community members’ health, physical activity, and community engagement, may wish to attempt to create and enact a plan within their communities, or seek out the opportunity to work on the community’s existing Complete Streets policy.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [National Complete Streets Coalition](#)
- [Complete Streets: Disabilities](#)
- [Complete Streets: Policy Atlas](#)
- [Complete Streets: Fundamentals](#)

