



# COMPLETE STREETS

*“Littleton is committed to economic development consistent with community character, and Complete Streets supports our focus on quality of life issues. This planning framework has the potential for improving public health in town, while bettering our streets and our transportation infrastructure.”*

*Keith Bergman*

*Town Administrator, Littleton, MA*



Source: Smart Growth America

## MAPC HELPS COMMUNITIES CREATE STREETS THAT WORK FOR EVERYONE.

Improving our roadways can increase safety, improve a community’s health and well-being, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and advance economic development.

That’s why so many Massachusetts cities and towns are considering their streets as something more than simply thoroughfares for vehicles. These municipalities have joined a growing national movement for “complete” streets: roadways that are safe, comfortable, and accessible for everyone, regardless of age, ability, income, or how they choose to travel.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) has technical assistance funding to assist our communities with the development and implementation of bicycle and pedestrian network plans, as well as the creation and adoption of Complete Streets policies.

## To date MAPC has helped:

- Create comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian plans for 16 municipalities, focusing on solutions that are low cost and that can be quickly achieved
- Draft state legislation that incentivizes implementation of pedestrian and bicycle-friendly infrastructure
- Draft and shepherd adoption of local complete streets policies, including the highest rated complete streets policy in the country for 2013
- Engage youth to identify how public ways can be improved to increase active transportation and community safety

### TO DISCUSS HOW MAPC CAN HELP YOUR COMMUNITY

visit [www.MAPC.org/transportation](http://www.MAPC.org/transportation) or contact Chris Kuschel, Regional Planner | [ckuschel@mapc.org](mailto:ckuschel@mapc.org) | 617.933.0731



[www.MAPC.org](http://www.MAPC.org)



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66% of Americans want more transportation options

so they have the freedom to choose how to get where they need to go.”

National Complete Streets Coalition



## WHAT ARE COMPLETE STREETS?

Many Massachusetts cities and towns are considering their streets as something more than simply thoroughfares for vehicles. These municipalities have joined a growing national movement for “complete” streets: roadways that are safe, comfortable, and accessible for everyone, regardless of age, ability, income, or how they choose to travel.

*Complete streets are a set of principles rather than a “design prescription.” In other words, complete streets are intended to be context sensitive – a complete street in a city will differ from one in a suburb. A complete street in a community’s downtown will differ from one in its residential area. The movement, therefore, applies to all of the community types in the MAPC region.*

- Complete streets emphasize the needs of children (e.g., allowing them to walk or bicycle to school safely), older adults (e.g., signal timing at intersections for safe-street crossing), and people with disabilities (e.g., fully accessible curb ramps at intersections).
- Complete streets ensure people of varying incomes can get to their destinations regardless of travel mode. In the MAPC region, approximately 16% of households do not own a private vehicle. Complete streets can open up transportation access to these households.
- Complete streets acknowledge that walking, biking, and taking transit are important forms of travel and should be taken into account along with the needs of vehicles when planning, designing, constructing, and maintaining roadways.

## COMPLETE STREETS SUPPORT HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

The complete streets movement originated as a means to increase everyday physical activity and accommodate the many ways people choose to or are able to travel. Complete streets provide opportunities for increased physical activity



Source: Smart Growth America

by incorporating features that promote regular walking, cycling and transit use into the roadway network. A report prepared by the National Conference of State Legislators<sup>1</sup> found that the most effective policy avenue for encouraging bicycling and walking is incorporating sidewalks and bike lanes, key elements of complete streets, into community design. The continuous network of safe sidewalks and bikeways recommended by a Complete Streets policy is important for encouraging active travel.

In addition to potentially improving public health, complete streets provide numerous other benefits:

- Increasing safety – Complete streets can help reduce crashes between vehicles and pedestrians or cyclists through a variety of safety improvements. Many improvements are low cost, such as implementing high visibility crosswalks at intersections. In addition, because of its context-sensitive approach, complete streets use measures that promote speeds appropriate to the location of a roadway. Complete streets can reduce the severity, and hence associated injuries and fatalities of crashes, especially between motorists and non-motorists.
- Economic development – Numerous case studies have shown that retail districts that undergo a complete streets “makeover” are often revitalized, bolstering local business, spurring private investment, and increasing municipal revenues. While higher speed throughways are at times necessary for efficient transportation systems, complete streets serve an important function by creating public ways that support and strengthen local neighborhood, town, and city centers.



- Other benefits – Additional benefits include lower individual transportation costs (fewer vehicle trips, reduced fuel consumption, reduced need for additional household vehicles), cleaner air, congestion management (through reduced vehicle trips), and increasing equity and accessibility (enhancing mobility without regard to income level, ability, or age).

*Complete Streets Roll On graphic above represents communities MAPC has worked with that have implemented Complete Streets.*

## WHAT IS A LOCAL COMPLETE STREETS POLICY?

Complete streets policies formalize a community’s desire to have streets that are safe for users of all ages and abilities. Policies direct decision-makers and stakeholders to consistently incorporate complete streets principles through both routine maintenance projects and large-scale projects. Policies are a key piece of creating long-term, sustainable change, in that they set the foundation for changes to regulations and processes, and ultimately changes for the built environment – our buildings, roads, public spaces, and more.

## LOCAL POLICIES IN THE MAPC REGION

MAPC works with cities and towns across the region to draft, adopt, and implement municipal complete streets policies. The Town of Littleton’s Complete Streets Policy, developed in partnership with MAPC, won recognition by Smart Growth America’s National Complete Streets Coalition\* for being the best policy in the country for 2013.

*\* Smart Growth America is a national non-profit focused on making great communities:  
<http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets>*



*Railroad Avenue, Gloucester, MA. Left, future (rendering)  
Above, existing*  
Source: MAPC staff photo

## INCENTIVIZING COMPLETE STREETS – STATE LEGISLATION

The Complete Streets Certification Program attempts to incentivize complete streets implementation. Communities that qualify for certification under this program (by adopting policies and procedures as below) will be eligible to receive a modest amount of additional local transportation funding. This funding will create an incentive for cities and towns across Massachusetts to routinely include contextually appropriate complete streets design elements in locally funded road projects.

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By providing additional accommodations for active transportation, the Complete Streets Certification Program will help the state reach the goal set by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) to triple the number of walking, cycling, and public transportation trips, and will simultaneously address public health goals related to increased activity.

There are several components to certification:

- Adopt a complete streets ordinance, bylaw, or policy in a manner approved by MassDOT and that includes at least one public hearing.
- Coordinate with MassDOT to confirm the accuracy of a baseline pedestrian and bicycle accommodations inventory in order to prioritize projects.
- Identify procedures to follow when conducting municipal road repairs, upgrades, or expansion projects on public rights-of-way to incorporate complete streets elements.
- Confirm the existence of a review process for all private development proposals to ensure complete streets components are incorporated into new construction.
- Set a municipal goal for an increased mode share for walking, cycling, and public transportation, where applicable, to be met within five years. Develop a program to reach that goal, and submit an annual progress report to MassDOT.

This opt-in, incentive program was included in the Transportation Bond Bill passed by the Legislature this year, and was authorized for up to \$10 million per year for five years (\$50 million total). The Patrick administration recently announced they would partially fund the program in the first year at a rate of \$3-5 million. While the legislation listed the above requirements for certification, final guidelines/regulations are in the process of being developed.

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*Left, Beale Street, Quincy, MA. Future (rendering)*

*Right, existing*

Source: MAPC staff photo



## CREATING ON-THE-GROUND CHANGE

Adopting a policy and the availability of state funding are important first steps for creating a roadway network that works for everyone. Creating an environment where inclusion of complete streets principles becomes routine will require a sustained effort.

MAPC has assisted municipalities in the region in several of these areas: reviewing and recommending changes to existing subdivision regulations and site plan review procedures; creating sidewalk prioritization and bicycle plans; reviewing street pavement plans for near-term opportunities; reviewing existing procedures and protocols for Departments of Public Works; helping with the formation of the working group committees; and concept design for complete street makeovers. It is these implementation steps that truly transform the transportation systems to accommodate all users in a safe and convenient manner.

*Typically, implementation of a complete streets policy includes assembling a working group that will:*

- Advise on complete streets during maintenance and operations projects
- Review and recommend updates to existing regulations
- Track metrics
- Work toward creating a comprehensive and connected network of facilities

*At MAPC, the complete streets initiative is a collaborative effort, including Transportation, Public Health, and Government Affairs staff.*



*Left, Manning Road, Hudson, MA. Recently installed bicycle lanes and sidewalks.*  
Source: MAPC staff photo