

Michiana Area Council of Governments

Complete Streets Policy

July 2019



Background

The Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) has recognized the importance of multimodal streets to improve the accessibility, safety, and equity for all users of the transportation system. In 2016, MACOG adopted its Active Transportation Plan, with the vision of creating a region that boasts an interconnected, safe, and accessible active transportation network.

A Complete Streets Policy will build upon this by promoting a transportation system that is designed to be multimodal and safely and comfortably accommodate users of all ages and abilities, including, but not limited to, pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, transit and school bus riders, people with disabilities, horse-drawn carriages, freight and commercial providers, emergency responders, and adjacent land users.

Complete Streets benefit residents, business owners, developers, and communities as a whole. Complete Streets create an attractive, comfortable, and walkable environment that safely connects users to their destinations. Complete Streets improve public health by encouraging and enabling a healthy lifestyle and reducing harmful emissions by offering active and sustainable transportation alternatives to motor vehicle trips.

Definitions

Complete Streets shall mean streets and their associated components that are planned, designed, operated, and maintained with consideration of the needs of users of all ages and abilities.

All Users shall mean individuals of all ages and abilities, including but not limited to, pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, transit and school bus riders, people with disabilities, horse-drawn carriages, freight and commercial providers, emergency responders, and adjacent land users.

MACOG attributable funds shall mean federal funds allocated for transportation projects in the South Bend and Elkhart-Goshen Urbanized Area.

Vision and Purpose

MACOG strives to support a higher quality of life and promote a healthy lifestyle for residents of the region by planning for a transportation network that is connected, equitable, safe, and accessible to all users, while maintaining an ease of travel across all modes and jurisdictional lines. Such a network will require coordination across disciplines and across jurisdictional lines.

Through a Complete Streets Policy, MACOG requires all projects receiving MACOG attributable funds to comply with this policy.

Additionally, MACOG will promote and support the adoption of local Complete Streets Policies throughout the region that can apply to projects which do not receive MACOG attributable funds.

MACOG recognizes the importance of equity when implementing Complete Streets. In order to prioritize vulnerable users, MACOG will utilize the Environmental Justice process as a way to identify areas that have above average concentrations of demographic groups that may have potential disadvantages including racial minority, ethnic minority, households in poverty, persons with Limited English Proficiency, elderly, carless households, and persons with disabilities.

The Goals of this Policy are:

1. To create a transportation network that is safe, accessible, and equitable for all users and promotes healthy and vibrant communities.
2. To demonstrate the benefits of Complete Streets to all residents and visitors to our region.
3. To recognize that flexibility is important to accommodate types of streets, users, and the context of communities.

Applicability

The transportation network includes, but is not limited to, streets, sidewalks, shared-use paths, lighting, street crossings such as crosswalks and median refuges, signage, accommodations for bicyclists and transit, landscaping, street furniture, and drainage facilities.

This Complete Streets policy shall apply to all projects at all phases including but not limited to, new construction, reconstruction and retrofit,

rehabilitation, repair, and maintenance that will use MACOG attributable funds unless otherwise exempted. Accommodations for all existing modes of transportation shall be provided during construction and maintenance work.

Projects receiving MACOG attributable funds are required to follow this Complete Streets policy by accounting for the needs of all users.

Exemptions

This Complete Streets policy shall apply to all projects at all phases receiving MACOG attributable funds. All exemption requests must be documented with supporting data and evidence for the basis of an exemption. Any exemption to this policy must be reviewed and approved by MACOG Staff. Approved exemptions will be documented, publicly available, and reported to the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee and Policy Board.

Exemptions may be provided only if one or more of the following conditions are met:

- Where bicyclists, pedestrians, or another particular use is prohibited by law from using a roadway. Accommodations should be made to ensure that all users can still cross these areas so they do not become barriers;
- Where the street or road is already adequately designed to accommodate all users and is, therefore, a complete street without further enhancements;
- Where cost would be excessively disproportionate to probable use or need considering economic conditions, cost, and economic benefit;
- Where the project consists of limited routine maintenance or repair and does not alter existing geometric designs of a roadway. Examples of this include mowing, sweeping, and spot repair or maintenance that simply keeps assets in serviceable condition;
- Where a project consists primarily of the installation of traffic control safety devices. All new pedestrian crossing devices must meet the most current accessibility standards for controls, signals, and placement;
- Where lack of population or other factors indicate an absence of need under both current and future conditions;
- Where roadway standards or bicycle and pedestrian standards cannot be met due to constraints excessively difficult to mitigate. The feasibility of

- alternative routes of similar or better quality to accommodate all users and connect to the transportation network shall be studied;
- Where all improvements would be very likely removed in the near-future due to projects in the same area; and
 - Where transit service is non-existent and not planned, therefore there is no need for direct public transit accommodations.

Review Process

MACOG staff will review new project funding requests according to MACOG's Call for Projects process. MACOG staff will be available to discuss how projects align with the Complete Streets Policy and provide technical assistance to project sponsors both before and during the Call for Projects process.

Project sponsors applying for MACOG attributable funds through the annual MACOG Call for Projects will be required to provide justification that their project adheres to the Complete Streets Policy by providing reasonable accommodations to all users.

After funding has been committed to a project, MACOG staff will review the project throughout the design phase to provide assistance and ensure policy requirements are met. Project sponsors should ensure that MACOG staff are provided with stage one through three design plans.

Due to the flexibility of this Policy and the different designs of a Complete Street, MACOG staff will work with project sponsors throughout project development to determine appropriate Complete Street accommodations that both parties are agreeable to. If a project does not comply with this Policy, an exemption was not approved, and no agreement can be reached between MACOG and the sponsor for modifications, project sponsors may appeal the decision to the Appeals Committee. The appeals process is outlined below.

Appeals Process

The Appeals Committee will be comprised of a total of seven (7) people that are able to offer a fair and impartial review. The voting membership consists of three (3) members of the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee, and two (2) members of Policy Board. This committee is supported by two

(2) non-voting MACOG staff members. The Appeals Committee shall be formed each year upon the request of an appeal.

The Appeals Committee will meet as needed. Project sponsors will be able to view and comment on the recommendation from MACOG prior to submission to the committee and shall be invited to the appeals meeting. Project sponsors who disagree with the decision of the Appeals Committee may then appeal to MACOG's Policy Board. A lesser level of accommodation may be suggested in lieu of an exemption.

Design

Projects receiving MACOG attributable funds shall use the most appropriate design standards and guidelines available. Accommodations for one user shall not prevent the safe use for another mode. Project sponsors should ensure that MACOG staff are provided with stage one through three design plans to ensure the project is using the most appropriate design standards and guidelines. MACOG will evaluate the possibility of providing road design guidance which could incorporate design standards and guidelines from:

- National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)
- American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO);
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG);
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA);
- Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE);
- Indiana Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD); and
- Indiana Design Manual

MACOG will serve as a resource, offering project design training/workshops to transportation staff, local staff, and engineering and planning consultants involved in transportation projects when new guidelines become available.

MACOG recognizes that there is no singular design for complete streets, therefore this Complete Streets Policy shall be flexible to allow consideration of other appropriate design standards to accommodate the needs of many users and sensitive to the local context, provided that a comparable level of safety for all future users is achieved.

Implementation

Upon approval and adoption, this Complete Streets Policy will become part of the MACOG planning process and project selection for MACOG attributable funds. This Complete Streets Policy will also guide MACOG staff for the Long Range Transportation Plan and other plans it prepares or to which it contributes.

While control of roadways falls under a variety of agencies such as the Indiana Department of Transportation and units of local government, a Complete Streets network can be achieved through interagency coordination with state government and partner agencies.

Evaluation

The success of this Complete Streets Policy will be measured by MACOG using, but not limited to, the following performance measures:

- New miles of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, including but not limited to on-street bike lanes, signed routes, and separated multi-use paths;
- Number of locally adopted Complete Streets Policies;
- Walk and Bike Scores;
- Number of Walk and Bike Friendly Communities;
- Reduction in the rate of crashes, fatalities, and serious injuries by mode and type; and
- Improvement in County Health Rankings for Elkhart, Marshall, Kosciusko, and St. Joseph Counties related to Health Behaviors and Physical Environment

Working with units of local government, MACOG will consider additional performance measures including but not limited to:

- Sidewalk miles and condition inventory;
- Progress of community ADA Transition Plans
- Project-specific road audits and public surveys
- Streetscape amenities such as street trees, lighting, etc.

MACOG will collect available benchmark data by December 2019. Performance measure data will be collected on a continual basis, and MACOG will include progress in the Annual Review.