

BACKGROUND:

COMPLETE STREETS: COSTS

Complete Streets: Costs

“When we talk about Complete Streets, we aren’t necessarily talking about expensive widening projects or major redesigns of our roadways. These concepts can often be applied to existing streets by simply re-thinking how we approach traffic flow and how we accommodate all modes of transportation.” –Phil Broyles, Director of Public Works, Springfield, Missouri¹

Despite a common misconception that Complete Streets cost more to build than incomplete streets, they can often cost the same or less than those that are traditionally planned.² In part, this is because communities that adopt Complete Streets policies are making long-term investments in the overall health of their community. There are many approaches to implementing Complete Streets improvements on already existing streets, and many projects integrate the strategies below to successfully develop Complete Streets in their community.

Integrating with City Planning and Operations

Integrating Complete Street policies into the planning process can reduce the overall amount of money that municipalities spend on road infrastructure because all elements of the road are considered—and constructed—at the same time. Major retrofitting of an existing road to incorporate pedestrian, cycling or transit amenities is often much more expensive than having incorporated those upgrades into the original project design.³ For existing roads, Complete Streets can also be incorporated into required infrastructure projects such as utility upgrades, or the installation of traffic lights, to optimize resources and leverage opportunities to improve streets that already have construction planned.

Funding Complete Streets in Waterloo, Ontario

The City of Waterloo’s new Transportation Master Plan, officially adopted in April 2012, incorporates Complete Streets into the planning process.⁴ The redesign and re-construction of Davenport Road based on the Plan changed a four-lane road into a road with boulevard islands five metres wide, bike lanes on each side, safer crossings for pedestrians and two lanes for vehicles with turn lanes at intersections to maintain capacity. Overall capital expenses for the project were distributed in order to stretch existing resources, and this redesign will hopefully negate the need for major retrofits in the future. A key part of Waterloo’s Complete Streets implementation plan is restructuring city budgetary and funding models.⁵ The City acknowledges that their vision cannot occur overnight. It is a 20 year strategy that requires tough decision making, restructuring of some resources, reallocation of funding priorities and redistribution of funding already budgeted. The City of Waterloo also received some funding from the Build Canada Fund.



Ottawa, Ontario
(Ontario Growth Secretariat)



Hamilton, Ontario
(Ontario Growth Secretariat)

¹Complete Streets. *Costs of Complete Streets: What we are learning from state and local governments*. Accessed on March 20, 2012 at

<http://completestreets.org/webdocs/factsheets/cs-costs-2.pdf>

²Transport Canada (2010). Complete Streets: Making Canada's roads safer for all. *Case studies in Sustainable Transportation. Case study 712*. Accessed on March 21, 2012 at

<http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/programs/environment-utsp-casestudy-cs72e-completestreets-812.htm>

³Ibid

⁴City of Waterloo (2011). *Transportation Master Plan: For a City that is “truly accessible to all”*.

⁵Ibid

Working with Developers

Adopting Complete Streets municipality-wide often requires that developers be on board. Implementing Complete Streets in new developments presents an opportunity to have the developer contribute financially. The Town of Mont-Hilaire, Quebec created a residential development around a new commuter train station that linked the town to downtown Montreal.⁶ Complete Streets were incorporated into the overall strategy of transit-oriented development and included traffic circles, medians with trees, and wide sidewalks. The costs of developing the infrastructure was shared between the Town, the Quebec Ministry of Transportation, the commuter rail provider, and the private developer.

Seeking Provincial and/or Federal Grants

Grants from different levels of government can help fund new Complete Streets projects and some projects are able to seek grants from multiple sources. Kitchener, Ontario's King Street streetscape reconstruction project resulted in a street with wider sidewalks, flexible parking (through bollards - freestanding, removable posts that delineate on-street parking spaces – which are used to close off the street to traffic or to convert on-street parking spaces into areas for outdoor cafes, patios and restaurant seating), improved lighting, additional street trees and new planters that filter stormwater. Funding for the project came from both the provincial and federal governments, and an environmental NGO.⁷ Specifically, Kitchener received funding from the Province of Ontario's Municipal Infrastructure Investment Initiative, the Federal government's Community Adjustment Fund, and Tree Canada.

Communities can also receive grants by leveraging a certain benefit of a Complete Street project. In Calgary, revitalization of the 17th Avenue SE Corridor involves developing median transit lanes, maintaining four car lanes, incorporating on-street bike lanes, and maintaining a boulevard and sidewalks. This cross section promotes transit service, and is expected to double ridership by 2035.⁸ As such, The City identified the Alberta Government Green Transit Incentives Program (GREEN TRIP) as a funding source.

Adjusting Taxes

A mixture of funding mechanisms, including introducing a targeted tax, has contributed to the development of the 13th Avenue SW Greenway in Calgary. The project includes constructing wider boulevards that consist of a multi-use path separated from the road by a row of trees. A large funding source for this project is the Beltline Development Levy, a new tax for development at a rate of \$260 per metre of development facing onto the street (Calgary Herald, 2010).⁹ As well, the city's Water Services department funded a portion of the project, as the first stage of construction was commenced in conjunction with the replacement of a water main in the roadway.¹⁰

Implementing Cost Effective Solutions

Communities may also identify many Complete Streets measures that can be implemented at little to no extra cost. There may even be opportunities where Complete Streets can actually help avoid costly road projects. Due to an increase in walking and cycling traffic across the Burrard Street Bridge, the City of Vancouver transformed a car-only lane into a separated bike-only lane. As a result, the number of pedestrians and vehicles moving across the bridge remained constant, while there was a 26% increase in cyclists in the summer months – an additional 70,000 trips.¹¹ The success of this redesign means the City will not have to spend an extra \$30 million to retrofit the bridge for better pedestrian and bicyclist accommodation.



Burrard Street Bridge, Vancouver
(City of Vancouver)

⁶Transport Canada (2010). Complete Streets: Making Canada's roads safer for all. *Case studies in Sustainable Transportation. Case study 712*. Accessed on March 21, 2012 at <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/programs/environment-utsp-casestudy-cs72e-completestreets-812.htm>

⁷King Street Streetscape Construction. City of Kitchener website. Accessed on March 18, 2012 at

http://www.kitchener.ca/en/insidecityhall/King_Street_Streetscape_Construction.asp

⁸City of Calgary Transportation (2011). *2011 Interim Complete Streets Guide*.

⁹Markusoff, Jason (2010). *Emerald necklace buffs Beltline*. Calgary Herald, January 8, 2010.

¹⁰City of Calgary Transportation (2011). *2011 Interim Complete Streets Guide*.

¹¹City of Vancouver (2010). *Burrard Bridge Reconfiguration and Structural Rehabilitation*. Standing Committee on Planning and Environment.