

BACKGROUND:

POLICY ADOPTION IN CANADA AND THE U.S.

Complete Streets policy adoption in Canada and the U.S.

"If you design a street for a 10-year old child, a person in a wheelchair or a senior with a walker you will create streets that work for everyone." Rebecca O'Brien, Program Coordinator for the Sustainable Alberta Association¹

Communities across Canada and the United States are encouraging their transportation and land use planners to adopt a "holistic" approach to road design by creating roads for users of all ages and abilities, including pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and motorists.² These improvements can be achieved by adopting and implementing 'Complete Streets'.³

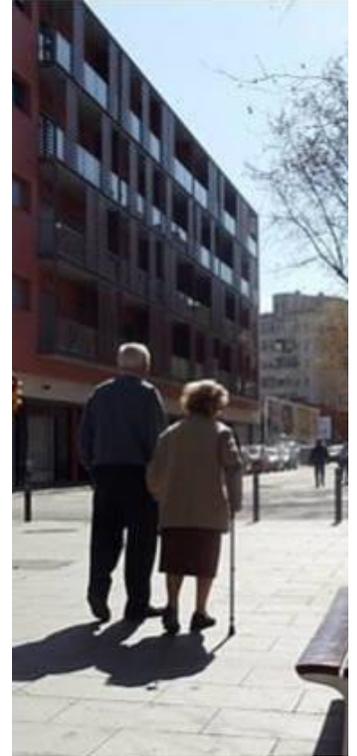
Complete Streets Facts

- Since 2010, the U.S. has experienced a nearly 300 percent increase in the number of Complete Streets policies: from 80 jurisdictions in 2010 to over 300 jurisdictions by February, 2012. Interest for Complete Streets is also growing in Canada.
- In 2010 the U.S. Department of Transportation, the equivalent to Transport Canada, released a policy statement that recommended all transportation departments include cyclists and pedestrians in their federally funded projects.
- The Safe and Complete Streets Act, introduced in the U.S. Legislature in 2011.

Complete Streets: Canadian and American approaches

Overview of the policy adoption processes

In Canada, Complete Streets policies are adopted in large-scale policy documents that guide municipal land-use practices based on guidance from the province that often recommends, but does not require, Complete Streets. In the U.S. resolutions or ordinances are passed (equivalent to Canadian by-laws) to adopt Complete Streets policies into planning documents with some states, including California, requiring adoption by law during the municipal plan review. Canadian provinces are responsible for developing municipal and provincial transportation policies as opposed to in the U.S. where the federal government influences state and municipal transportation planning through federal policy. The federal government encouraged the establishment of the Metropolitan Planning Organizations in large metropolitan areas to ensure good planning and manage federal funding for transportation projects.



Seniors in Barcelona, Spain
(Heather McDonald)

Regions and Large Metropolitan Areas

Since 1960s, the US Federal government has encouraged the creation of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in communities over 500,000 to conduct the "continuing, comprehensive and cooperative planning process".⁴ Specifically, MPOs issue planning regulations, manage federal funding for transportation projects and can support Complete Streets projects depending on current federal and local policy.⁵ In Canada such regional transportation authorities are mandated from the province. These organizations receive provincial funding for operations and capital project funding from the federal government. Two examples include Metrolinx from the Greater Toronto Area and TransLink from Metro Vancouver.

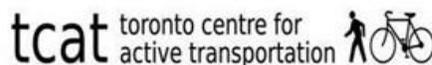
¹ Transport Canada (2010). Complete Streets: Making Canada's roads safer for all. Case studies in Sustainable Transportation. Case study 712. <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/programs/environment-utsp-casestudy-cs72e-completestreets-812.htm>

² Transport Canada (2010). Complete Streets: Making Canada's roads safer for all. Case studies in Sustainable Transportation. Case study 712. <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/programs/environment-utsp-casestudy-cs72e-completestreets-812.htm>

³ Complete Streets website. Complete Streets Atlas: <http://www.completestreets.org/complete-streets-fundamentals/complete-streets-atlas/>

⁴ Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations <http://www.ampo.org/what/index.php>

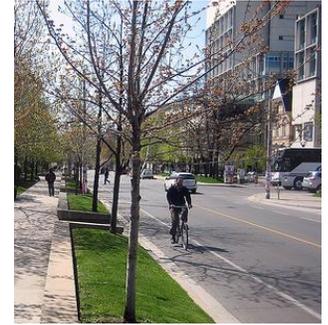
⁵ United States Department of Transportation (2010). Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Regulations and Recommendations. Signed on March 11, 2010 and announced March 15, 2010 http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/policy_accom.htm



Municipal Level

In Canada, Complete Streets policies can be adopted at the municipal level through any number of official policy documents. For example, Ontario communities aim to have Complete Streets supportive language in their Official Plan, the overarching land use document for a community, but use other plans, such as a Transportation Master Plan, district-level plans, site plans and corridor plans to expand on specific transportation planning goals and guidance. The goal is to have an integrated set of mutually-supportive policy documents that are implemented via bylaws and targets.

In the U.S., a city council passes a resolution to formally express the intention to adopt a Complete Streets policy. Ordinances (analogue of municipal bylaws in Canada), on the other hand, have the backing of the law and can be used to develop policies, budgets, and to directing amendments to relevant plans, manuals, and design guidelines.⁶ Similar to Canada, Complete Streets policies can also be adopted in other policy documents, plans, or design manuals but these policies do not necessarily have the backing of law.



St. George Street, Toronto
(Ontario Growth Secretariat)

Provincial / State Level

In both Canada and the U.S., provincial and state governments can provide a framework for municipal governments to adopt a Complete Streets policy but the approach differs from province to province and state to state.

In Canada, provincial policy, requirements, and guidelines can be used to encourage the municipal adoption of Complete Streets. For example, Ontario enacted the Places to Grow Act in 2005 and the Provincial Policy Statement in 2005 that “provides direction on matters of provincial interest related to land use planning and development”. Complete Streets are supported through associated policy documents including the 2006 Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and the 2012 Ontario Ministry of Transportation transit supportive guidelines.^{7,8} These changes, however, are not required by law.

In the U.S. states can also encourage Complete Streets policy adoption through similar methods as Canada or also through law. For example, in California, following the lead of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the State Legislature signed the Complete Streets Act of California in 2009 that requires the city or county to identify how they will provide for all users based on the ‘circulation’ section of their general plan (the equivalent of an Official Plan in Ontario). This Act has led more communities across California to adopt and operationalize Complete Streets policies because it is specifically required by the state.⁹

Federal Level

The Canadian federal government while playing a role in interprovincial or international transportation systems is not responsible for developing transportation policy at provincial or municipal level.¹⁰ Surface transportation such as road networks and public transit systems at a provincial/municipal level are the responsibility of a province.¹¹ However, the federal government can choose to play a role in funding transportation infrastructure and systems at provincial and municipal levels. For instance, the Transportation Infrastructure Programs Directorate “manages contribution agreements for transit projects funded under major capital infrastructure programs” such as the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund and the Building Canada Fund.¹² The funds are used according to local and provincial policy and a partnership with the federal government.

In the U.S. projects related to Complete Streets are supported through some federal policy and can be granted federal funding according to this policy. The passing of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation for Equity Act: a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) bill in 2005 provided jurisdictions with a number of opportunities to fund transportation projects related to Complete Streets across the U.S.¹³ Furthermore, in 2010 the U.S. Department of Transportation, the equivalent to Transport Canada, released a policy statement that recommended all transportation departments include cyclists and pedestrians in their federally funded projects.¹⁴ Talks are ongoing to adopt the Safe and Complete Streets Act, introduced in 2011, to help formalize Complete Streets accommodation across the country.¹⁵

⁶ Seattle City Council website: <http://www.seattle.gov/council/legdb.htm>

⁷ Places to Grow Plan, 2006. Ontario Ministry of Infrastructure. Accessed on March 1, 2012 <https://www.placestogrow.ca/content/ggh/plan-cons-english-all-web.pdf>

⁸ Ontario Ministry of Transportation Transit-Supportive Guidelines 2012. <http://www.mto.gov.on.ca/english/pubs/index.shtml#transit>

⁹ National Complete Streets Coalition & Local Government Commission (2012). It's a safe decision. Complete streets in California. Accessed on February 29, 2012 at <http://www.completestreets.org/webdocs/resources/cs-in-california.pdf>

¹⁰ Transport Canada. Transportation Infrastructure Programs. <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/programs/surface-menu.htm>

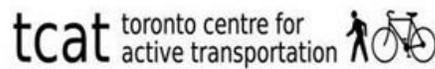
¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Transport Canada. Transit Projects. <http://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/programs/surface-transit-menu-991.htm>

¹³ FHWA Guidance on Bicycle and Pedestrian Provisions of Federal Transportation Legislation, <http://www.dot.gov/affairs/2010/bicycle-ped.html>

¹⁴ United States Department of Transportation. Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation Regulations and Recommendations. Signed on March 11, 2010 and announced March 15, 2010 http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/policy_accom.htm

¹⁵ American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA). Issue Brief: Complete Streets <http://www.asla.org/FederalGovernmentAffairs.aspx?id=22886>



www.completestreets.ca