Transportation Choices:

Complete Streets

Adopting a Complete Streets Program signals a change in the way a community will meet its citizens’ transportation needs. Complete Streets Communities like Pascagoula, Mississippi direct their transportation planners and engineers to design and operate the entire right-of-way to enable safe access for users of all ages and abilities. Elements of a Complete Streets Policy include the following:

- Using the of Right of Way Efficiently
- Improving Travel Safety
- Promoting Better Health
- Strengthening Community Ties

Using the Right of Way Efficiently

A public street’s right-of-way often spans a much wider area than the paved surface dedicated to automobile traffic. A complete streets design effectively employs all of the right-of-way to move people to their destinations and can be customized to a community’s needs. Areas adjoining the street, or even the existing road bed, can be redesigned to accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Reserving part of the road for bus and other transit stops can move people more efficiently, thus speeding the pace of travel for transit riders and drivers alike. Features like curb ramps and medians in the public right-of-way improve the safety and desirability of a route for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Incorporating Safety Measures

Complete Streets are designed to make drivers more aware of their surroundings and to provide individuals using the street a safer environment. Research by the Federal Highway Administration found that streets designed with sidewalks, raised medians, better bus stop placements, traffic-calming measures, and treatments for disabled travelers improve the safety of all pedestrians\(^1\). Medians, for example, enable pedestrians to cross busy roads in two stages, reduce left-turning motorist crashes to zero, and improve bicycle safety. A safer street is a livelier and more successful complete street.

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Promoting Better Health
Complete Streets promote better health by creating a safe and pleasant environment for increased physical activity. A report prepared by the National Conference of State Legislators found that incorporating sidewalks and bike lanes into community design is the most effective method to encourage bicycling and walking. As Mississippi struggles with the highest rate of obesity and obesity-related diseases in the nation, Let’s Go Walking Mississippi encourages residents to use this simple program to get in shape. Studies show that people who live in walkable neighborhoods are less likely to be overweight or obese than people living in low-walkable neighborhoods and residents are 65% more likely to walk in a neighborhood that provides sidewalks.

Strengthening Community Ties
Complete Streets benefit communities by increasing the social engagement of residents and improving economic development through convenient transportation. The addition of sidewalks for example, can help revitalize commercial areas by increasing foot traffic. Increased transportation options also provide all residents the opportunity to stay connected with the community. More activity on the street throughout the day and evening lead to more interaction between neighbors. This promotes trust and better security. Promoting livability of a community is one of the many benefits of the Complete Street Program. Complete Streets connect neighborhoods and attract new residents based on factors such as walkability, reduced transportation costs, a strong sense of community, and feelings of safety and security.

Tools

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<th><strong>Actions</strong></th>
<th><strong>Policies • Tools • Techniques</strong></th>
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| Create Walkable Neighborhoods | Adopt policies that promote Complete Streets  
Integrate green infrastructure in street design  
Set the stage for more active communities  
Promote economic development within pedestrian friendly areas |
| Provide a Variety of Transportation Choices | Provide for multiple users on public streets  
Design streets to meet long-term transportation goals  
Establish desired Level of Service (LOS) for multiple transportation options rather than automobiles alone |

*For a complete list of tools and resources, please see the “Tools & Resources Index” section of the Smart Growth and Sustainability Toolbox.

1 The Federal Highway Administration: http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/.

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