

MARC Complete Streets Policy

Policy update approved by the MARC Board of Directors on February 27, 2024

I. Preamble

The Mid-America Regional Council (MARC) serves as the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the nine counties and 119 cities in the Kansas City region. As the region's MPO, MARC is responsible for transportation planning, and the Total Transportation Policy Committee coordinates the allocation of millions of dollars in federal transportation funds each year. Complete Streets are advanced in this policy so that transportation investments may result in a rising quality of mobility for everyone. An exemption review process exists for unique projects which may require special consideration, however, this policy intends to enable Complete Street treatments to the maximum extent possible.

II. Definitions

Bridges are public structures designed to carry traffic across natural and constructed barriers with spans that are greater than twenty feet.

Complete Streets are streets, highways, bridges and facilities that are planned, designed, operated and maintained for the needs and safety of all users along and across the entire public right of way. This includes people of all ages and abilities who are walking; using powered, street-legal vehicles such as cars, trucks, motorcycles or buses; bicycling; using transit or mobility aids; and freight carriers. Complete Streets integrate contextually appropriate green infrastructure techniques.

Curbside management is the practice of analyzing and adjusting the uses and regulations of space around the structure of the curb so that it can more efficiently and safely serve different kinds of users.

Cyclists refer to users of the street who are using small mobility devices intended to travel faster than common pedestrian speed, but slower than common automobile speed. These devices include, but are not limited to, bicycles, Class I and Class II e-bikes, other types of "cycles" (tricycles, handcycles) and e-scooters. The term "cyclists" shall not refer to any user with a mobility device that can obtain speeds above 20 miles per hour by throttle function alone.

Freight carriers refer to users of the street who operate a variety of vehicles to transport goods. Vehicles used may fall into one or more of the above categories.

Green infrastructure refers to stormwater control facilities that use nature-based solutions to expand the urban tree canopy and/or use native vegetation designed to sustain plants and mimic natural hydrology by storing, filtering, infiltrating, evaporating, or reusing stormwater. Green infrastructure will increase the resiliency of urban stormwater infrastructure by reducing the amount of wet-weather drainage and collection systems and prioritizing safety, comfort and well-being for pedestrian and transit users through reduction of extreme temperature variation and airborne pollutants.

Maintenance refers to activities including mowing, cleaning, sweeping, pothole repair, chip-seal and slurry-seal operations, pavement mill and overlay operations, and other regular upkeep activities.

Major river bridges are public structures designed to carry traffic across the Kansas or Missouri rivers.

Motorists refer to users of the street who operate motorized vehicles capable of high speeds. These

include automobiles, buses, trucks, motorcycles, mopeds, Class III e-bikes and any other mobility device that can obtain speeds above 20 mph by throttle function alone.

Pedestrians refer to users of the street who are walking and/or using assisted mobility devices at commonly accepted walking speed, such as, but not limited to, wheelchairs, motorized wheelchairs, strollers, walkers and canes.

Transit users refer to people who use the public right-of-way to access public transportation vehicles.

III. Background and Regional Vision

In 2010, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) issued an updated Policy Statement on Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodation that calls for all transportation agencies “to improve conditions and opportunities for walking and bicycling and to integrate walking and bicycling into their transportation systems.” The USDOT encourages transportation agencies “to go beyond minimum standards to provide safe and convenient facilities for these modes.” The Policy Statement considers walking and bicycling equal to other transportation modes.

In June 2020, the MARC Board of Directors adopted *Connected KC 2050* as the Kansas City region’s metropolitan transportation plan. The vision of this plan is as follows:

Greater Kansas City is a region of opportunity. Its robust economy, healthy environment and social capacity support the creativity, diversity and resilience of its people, places and communities.

Formed at the confluence of rivers, trails and trains on the border of two states, Greater Kansas City is a place of interconnection, where people of all backgrounds are welcome and where commerce and ideas flow as freely as the rivers and streams that run through and define it. Our people thrive here, in safe, walkable and well-maintained neighborhoods.

We have abundant opportunities for education, and work in fulfilling jobs at businesses that can compete with any in the world. We enjoy, protect and preserve our region’s natural beauty. We care for our neighbors and our communities. We lead by example.

Our region has the strength to not only bounce back from adversity, but bounce forward, confidently, into the future.

Complete Streets benefit communities and help the Kansas City region achieve progress toward *Connected KC 2050*’s five transportation system goals in the following ways:

- **Public Health and Safety** – Complete Streets are designed for the safety of all users of the street, aiming for zero transportation-related injuries and deaths consistent with other MARC plans. Complete streets consider conflicts between modes of transportation, exposure to environmental pollutants, and access to physically active transportation modes.
- **Access to Opportunity** – Complete Streets ensure that destinations are accessible by multiple modes of transportation, providing residents with ways to access employment and education even if automobile ownership is out of reach.
- **Economic Vitality** – People seeking goods and services can access businesses through multiple modes of transportation and may have more money to spend through decreased vehicle and fuel costs. Since non-automobile modes require less parking space, making those modes more viable enables more people to patronize a business at the same time.
- **Healthy Environment** – By making more modes of transportation viable, Complete

Streets reduce pollutant load from motor vehicle traffic. Green infrastructure treatments on Complete Streets create community amenities while protecting people from the effects of urban heat, flooding, and air and water pollution.

- **Transportation Choices** – Complete Streets consider more than what modes are simply legal on a roadway and make mode choices such as walking and bicycling appealing through facilities that both feel safe to users and result in fewer injuries and deaths.

Connected KC 2050 further indicates that “transportation investments should protect air and water quality, reduce urban heat islands and energy consumption, promote climate resilience and preserve cultural and historic resources.” Plans adopted by the MARC Board that support the implementation of integrated Complete Streets and “green street” concepts include the MetroGreen Plan (2001), the Best Management Practices Manual to Protect Water Quality (2003), the Clean Air Action Plan (2004 and 2011), the Eco-Logical Action Plan (2008), and the Greater Kansas City Regional Bikeway Plan (2015), the Regional Green Infrastructure Framework (2017) and the Regional Climate Action Plan (2021). Additionally, MARC’s Regional Forestry Framework (2011) calls for increased canopy coverage through streetscaping, forest protection and other mechanisms.

Ultimately, this policy seeks to effect a safe multimodal transportation network throughout the Kansas City region through MARC’s transportation planning processes.

IV. Policy Statement

MARC seeks to achieve the Kansas City region’s vision of a safe, balanced, resilient regional multimodal transportation system that is coordinated with land use planning, supports equitable access to opportunities and protects the environment. This vision can be furthered by implementing Complete Streets and context-sensitive solutions.

1. *Application* – This Complete Streets Policy applies to the following:
 - a. All MARC planning activities that involve public rights-of-way, including the metropolitan transportation plan.
 - b. Any non-exempt projects included in the Transportation Improvement Program that use federal funds.
 - c. This policy does not supersede any federal, state or local law or regulation.

2. *Requirements*
 - a. Planned and programmed projects shall provide safe accommodations along and across the public right-of-way for all users who have legal access to use the facilities.
 - b. To the extent practical, planned and programmed projects shall utilize green infrastructure techniques.
 - c. Safe accommodations for cyclists and pedestrians must be provided for major river bridges, except where provision of such facilities would exceed 15% of total project costs, and when it is deemed that sufficient existing or planned future bicycle or pedestrian trip generators are not located within one mile of the project. (Please see MARC Major River Crossing Policy for more information).

V. Implementation

To implement this Complete Streets Policy into planning and programming processes at the metropolitan level, MARC will take the following steps:

1. Ensure this policy is reflected in ongoing planning and programming work and current policies. MARC's transportation modal committees will advise MARC staff on conformity to the policy by planned and programmed projects seeking federal funding.
2. Review all project applications seeking federal transportation funding for compliance with the policy statement. **MARC may assess compliance using any of the below principles, subject to the exceptions in Section VI. and considering the context of the project and stage of design:**
 - i. **Pedestrians**
 - That pedestrians are accommodated *along* the right-of-way by paved, unobstructed facilities separated from motor vehicle traffic traveling above 15 miles per hour.
 - That pedestrians are accommodated *across* the right-of-way using dedicated crossings that are highly visible to motorists, which encourage motorists to yield to pedestrians, which are as narrow as practical to reduce crossing distances (or supported with crossing islands), and which are implemented between intersections as necessary to connect to goods, services and other destinations.
 - ii. **Cyclists**
 - That cyclists are accommodated *along* the right-of-way using either low motor vehicle speeds or facilities that provide separation from motor vehicles. See Appendix B for a table of suggested cycling facility treatments relative to motor vehicle speeds.
 - That cyclists are accommodated *across* the right-of-way using intersection treatments, approaches, and extensions which enable through and/or turning movements where dedicated bikeway facilities (including striped bike/mobility lanes, separated bike/mobility lanes, and shared use paths) are present, and which increase cyclist visibility to motorists.
 - iii. **Transit users**
 - That transit users are accommodated *along* the right-of-way using facilities at bus or rail stops that provide some shelter, seating, or both. Regarding travel to stops, see pedestrian principles in section IV.2.i.
 - That transit users are accommodated *across* the right-of-way with intersection crossings using the pedestrian principles in section IV.2.i.
 - iv. **Motorists**
 - That motorists are provided street configurations which reduce conflicts with other users, encourage predictable movement, and are designed with target speeds to match the surrounding land use.
 - v. **Freight**
 - That freight carriers are allowed loading/unloading space that minimally exposes workers to vehicle traffic. Solutions for this mode may occur outside of the public right-of-way, or through a curbside management effort. See Exceptions item 4 and Encouragement item

d.

vi. Green infrastructure

- That canopy coverage is provided along a project corridor by installing native and/or drought tolerant vegetation and tree landscape treatments in existing right-of-way or as made available through reductions in setback, parking requirement, and street width.
 - That stormwater runoff is captured and controlled to sustain plants and mimic natural hydrology using green infrastructure.
3. Monitor all projects receiving federal transportation funding for compliance with this policy.
 4. Engage project sponsors in evaluating projects for the Transportation Improvement Program that receive federal funding outside of MARC's programming processes.
 5. Using the Complete Streets Network Assessment, MARC staff shall consider ways to elevate in planning and programming priority corridors that score poorly relative to corridors in similar contexts, or segments of corridors that the Complete Streets Network Assessment rates poorly compared to adjacent segments.
 6. Re-evaluate this policy regularly — at least before adopting each new or updated metropolitan transportation plan.

VI. Exceptions

Maintenance, projects that are not “streets”, such as transit capital equipment, bike share capital equipment, diesel engine retrofits, clean vehicle conversions, alternative fuel vehicle purchases/fleet replacements, compressed natural gas fueling stations, other Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program eligible projects, off-street bicycle/pedestrian trails, Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) programs and initiatives and others, are exempt from the Complete Streets Policy.

The Total Transportation Policy Committee may grant exceptions to this policy. Staff and the modal and programming committees will review requests for exceptions and make recommendations to the Total Transportation Policy Committee. Exceptions may be granted in the following cases:

1. Where using specific modes of travel is prohibited by law, such as bicyclists and pedestrians on some sections of Interstate highways or trucks on boulevards.
2. Where accommodations for non-motorized travel conflict with the purpose of high-speed motor vehicle facilities, particularly limited-access highways. In these cases, MARC staff may inquire about the provision of separate facilities, especially if the corridor's general alignment appears on a local or regional planning product.
3. In cases where the provision of facilities for pedestrians and cyclists of higher comfort and/or greater separation from motorized traffic would be inappropriate due to factors such as rural character or high cost (exceeding 20% of total project costs per federal guidance), sponsors of planned and programmed projects may provide facilities of lower comfort and/or lesser separation from motorists and freight shippers.
4. Where accommodations for a mode are best provided using solutions outside of the project right-of-way. Such instances shall be clearly explained.
5. Where emergency service providers have indicated that providing for all modes will conflict with operations. Such instances shall be clearly explained.
6. Where a transit route does not exist or is not planned, a project does not need to accommodate transit users with corresponding facilities (boarding pads, shelters, etc.).

VII. Performance Measures

MARC has developed the *Complete Streets Network Assessment*, which scores roadway segments according to infrastructure-based criteria. The Complete Streets Network Assessment may be used in the following ways:

- To identify multimodal infrastructure gaps in corridors, or lengths of corridors that lack safe and comfortable multimodal facilities.
- To show the improvement in multimodal facilities as streets are rebuilt or resurfaced.

MARC staff will work to improve the Complete Streets Network Assessment in coverage, data quality, and fidelity to the Complete Streets paradigm.

Stakeholders may also look to MARC's performance measures reports to view the Kansas City region's progress in roadway safety, use of alternative modes, and other important categories.

VIII. Encouragement

Many matters related to the successful implementation of Complete Streets are outside of the effective scope of this policy. MARC encourages local communities to adopt the Complete Streets paradigm in all aspects of their transportation and land use planning work.

- a. Local communities are encouraged to adopt Complete Streets policies. In drafting these policies they are encouraged to consider third party scoring and criteria such as those from the National Complete Streets Coalition.
- b. Local communities are encouraged to consider development that features a greater variety of housing types and mixed uses so that development is more feasibly served by public transit, walking, and cycling.
- c. Local communities are encouraged to consider zoning and development codes that make goods, services, and civic uses more readily accessible to pedestrians from the public right-of-way.
- d. To reduce conflicts and make streets more complete for freight, off-street loading and curbside management solutions are encouraged.
- e. Complete Streets policies for cities may reference third-party design guides that provide best practices. Adoption of these design guides may make it easier to provide for the comfort and safety of all modes of transportation, and to comply with MARC's Complete Streets Policy. Design guides are listed in Appendix A.
- f. Due to the long service lives of bridges, project sponsors are encouraged to follow Complete Streets principles for all bridges, not just those crossing the Kansas or Missouri rivers.
- g. Emergency services are not listed as a modal user by the definition of Complete Streets, but input and cooperation from emergency services should always be sought during the planning of Complete Streets projects.
- h. Project sponsors are encouraged to assess nearby watershed management opportunities to manage transportation runoff offsite while creating additional community amenities. They are further encouraged to review green infrastructure plans with public works, planning and parks departments for feasibility and alignment with neighborhood, land use and watershed plans.
- i. Complete Streets and Complete Streets policies are encouraged as a means of congestion management. Improvement to the viability of other modes of transportation is encouraged in MARC's Congestion Management Toolbox.

Appendix A: Complete Streets Resources

Complete Streets Support

- 10 Elements of a Complete Streets Policy (National Complete Streets Coalition/Smart Growth America)
- Complete Streets Handbook (MARC)

Transportation Design Guides

- A Guide for Achieving Flexibility in Highway Design (AASHTO)
- A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets, 7th Edition (Green Book) (AASHTO)
- Achieving Multimodal Networks: Applying Design Flexibility and Reducing Conflicts (FHWA)
- Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach: An ITE Recommended Practice (ITE)
- Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities (AASHTO)
- Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities (AASHTO)
- Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (FHWA)
- Public Rights-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG) (United States Access Board)
- Separated Bike Lane Planning and Design Guide (FHWA)
- Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks (FHWA)
- Transit Street Design Guide (NACTO)
- Urban Bikeway Design Guide (NACTO)
- Urban Street Design Guide (NACTO)
 - Designing for All Ages & Abilities: Contextual Guidance for High-Comfort Bicycle Facilities
 - Don't Give Up at the Intersection: Designing All Ages and Abilities Bicycle Crossings

Green Infrastructure

- APWA Section 5600: Storm Drainage Systems and Facilities (Kansas City Metropolitan Chapter of the American Public Works Association) **(update anticipated May 2025)**
- Kansas City, Missouri Green Stormwater Infrastructure Manual (GSI Manual)
- Manual of Best Management Practices for Stormwater Quality
- Urban Street Stormwater Design Guide (NACTO)

Appendix B: Suggested Cycling Facility Treatments Relative to Motor Vehicle Speed

Motor vehicle posted speed limit	Facility type
≤25 miles per hour	Shared streets (urban/suburban settings)
≤30 miles per hour	Striped bike/mobility lanes (including buffered)
≥30 miles per hour	Separated bike/mobility lanes
Any	Shared use path