



Complete Streets are designed and operated so they work for all users— pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders of all ages and abilities. Communities that adopt complete streets policies are asking transportation planners and engineers to consistently design and alter the right-of-way with all users in mind. Contact the National Complete Streets Coalition ([www.completestreets.org](http://www.completestreets.org)) to learn about the diverse groups working together to enact complete streets policies across the country!

# Complete Streets And High Gas Prices

Nearly half of all trips in metropolitan areas are three miles or less, and 28% are one mile or less – distances easily covered by foot or bicycle. Yet, 65% of trips under one mile are made by automobile, in large part because incomplete streets make it dangerous or unpleasant to walk, bicycle, or take public transportation.<sup>1</sup>



Both of the transportation environments above were built to accommodate motorists, providing unsafe conditions for bicyclists and pedestrians.

## Incomplete streets cost families money and encourage oil consumption

Transportation is the second largest expense for American households, costing more than food, clothing, and health care. Even prior to the recent run-up in gasoline prices, Americans spent an average of 18 cents of every dollar on transportation, with the poorest fifth of families spending more than double that figure. Much of this household transportation expense is pumped directly into the gas tank. The United States uses 20 million barrels of oil per day and over 40% of American oil consumption goes to passenger cars.<sup>2,3</sup>

This high cost is unavoidable for those who live in sprawling areas that lack sidewalks, bike lanes, or convenient public transit. Surveys have found that a lack of sidewalks and safe places to bike are a primary reason people give when asked why they don't walk or bicycle more.<sup>4</sup> A recent survey of Florida residents found only 25% felt it was safe to walk along or to cross the closest U.S. or State road.<sup>5</sup> Transit use is soaring across the country as people seek alternatives to high gas prices. But too many of these new users may be discouraged by long waits at inadequate bus stops or by dangerous street crossings. Incomplete streets leave many commuters with no choice, and rising gas prices are hurting the most in places where people have no alternative to driving.

Much of the transportation infrastructure in the United States is not ready to accommodate an increase in people walking, bicycling, or catching the bus. A majority of short trips continue to be made by automobile because incomplete streets make it dangerous or unpleasant to walk, bicycle, or access transit. A national survey found that bike lanes were available for less than five percent of bicycle trips, and more than one-quarter of pedestrian trips were taking place on roads with neither sidewalks nor shoulders.<sup>6</sup>

Right: photo courtesy of Dan Burden / [www.pedbikeinrges.org](http://www.pedbikeinrges.org)  
Left: photo courtesy of Texas Transportation Institute, 2004

(over)



### Complete Streets Steering Committee Organizations

AARP  
Alliance for Biking and Walking  
America Bikes  
America Walks  
American Council of the Blind  
American Planning Association  
American Public  
Transportation Association  
American Society of  
Landscape Architects  
Association of Pedestrian and  
Bicycle Professionals  
City of Boulder  
HNTB  
Institute of Transportation Engineers  
League of American Bicyclists  
McCann Consulting  
National Association of Area Agencies  
on Aging  
National Center for Bicycling  
and Walking  
Safe Routes to School National  
Partnership  
Smart Growth America  
SvR Design Company

### National Complete Streets Coalition

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# Complete Streets And High Gas Prices



The bus stops pictured above and left provide a safe, comfortable environment for transit users without impeding pedestrian traffic.

## Complete streets are essential to spending less on gasoline

The potential to shift trips to less oil-dependent modes and to save money by doing so is undeniable: Nearly fifty percent of all trips in metropolitan areas are three miles or less and 28% are one mile or less – distances easily covered by foot or bicycle.<sup>7</sup> According to multiple analyses, if each day Americans substituted driving with walking or cycling for the distance recommended for daily exercise, the United States could reduce oil consumption by between 35 and 38%.<sup>8</sup>

Walking and bicycling of course require no gasoline and transit's use of fuel is much more efficient than automobiles. Increasing bicycling from 1% to 1.5% of all trips in the U.S. would save 462 million gallons of gasoline each year.<sup>9</sup> Using transit has already helped the United States save 1.5 billion gallons of fuel each year since the early 1990s, which is nearly 36 million barrels of oil.<sup>10</sup> That translates into family savings. In fact, a two-person adult household that uses public transportation saves an average of \$6,251 annually compared to a household with two cars and no public transportation accessibility.<sup>11</sup>

Places that are giving people options are reducing oil dependency. In California, which has a complete streets policy, public transit use saved more than 486 million gallons of oil in 2006, which is similar to taking more than 800,000 cars off the road.<sup>12</sup> If every Californian substituted walking for driving just two miles, four days a week, Californians would save an additional 144 million gallons of gasoline in a year.<sup>13</sup>

Boulder, Colorado is working to create a complete street network, with over 350 miles of dedicated bike facilities, sidewalks, paved shoulders and a comprehensive transit network. Between 1990 and 2003, fewer people in the city drove alone, more people bicycled, and transit trips grew by a staggering 500 percent. Less oil is being consumed, and the reduction in car trips has cut annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by half a million pounds.<sup>14</sup>

Walking, biking, and taking public transportation save money and reduce our dependence on oil.

Footnotes on following page or online at [www.completestreets.org/factsheets](http://www.completestreets.org/factsheets)

Right photo courtesy of Dan Burden / [www.pedbikeimages.org](http://www.pedbikeimages.org)  
Left photo courtesy of ITE Pedestrian Bicycle Council / [www.pedbikeimages.org](http://www.pedbikeimages.org)





## Complete Streets And High Gas Prices

<sup>1</sup> 2001 National Personal Transportation Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Davies, Michael S. "Energy Economics" Online. Available: [http://greenecon.net/energy\\_economics/](http://greenecon.net/energy_economics/)

<sup>3</sup> Natural Resources Defense Council. Reducing U.S. Oil Dependence: A Real Energy Security Policy. Available Online: <http://www.nrdc.org/air/energy/fensec.asp>

<sup>4</sup> Wilbur Smith Associates Bellevue, Washington. Public Attitude Survey of Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning May 2007

<sup>5</sup> Center for Urban Transportation Research (2005) Statewide Survey on Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities. Report prepared for Florida Department of Transportation.

<sup>6</sup> Bureau of Transportation Statistics survey

<sup>7</sup> 2001 NHTS

<sup>8</sup> Higgins, Pat. Exercise Based Transportation Reduces Oil Dependence, Carbon Emissions and Obesity Environmental Conservation 2005

<sup>9</sup> Gotschi, Thomas and Kevin Mills. Active Transportation for America. Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Transit Administration, "1996 Report: An Update," available at [www.fta.dot.gov/library/policy/96/](http://www.fta.dot.gov/library/policy/96/).

<sup>11</sup> Lipman, Barbara. A Heavy Load: The Combined Housing and Transportation Burdens of Working Families. Center for Housing Policy. October 2006.

<sup>12</sup> New Report Finds California Public Transit Saves Consumers More than \$1.2 Billion at the Gas Pump. CalPirg. [www.calpirg.org/news-releases/transit-news/transit-news/new-report-finds-california-public-transit-saves-consumers-more-than-1\\_2-billion-at-the-gas-pump](http://www.calpirg.org/news-releases/transit-news/transit-news/new-report-finds-california-public-transit-saves-consumers-more-than-1_2-billion-at-the-gas-pump). March 6, 2008.

<sup>13</sup> Phillips, Kathryn. Unhooking California: Eleven Things Californians Can Do NOW to Save Gasoline (and Money). Center for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Technologies. March 25, 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Modal Shift in the Boulder Valley 1990 – 2003. National Research Center Inc. for the City of Boulder, May 2004.