



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) to learn about the diverse groups working together to enact complete streets policies across the country!

Complete Streets

Improve Mobility for Older Americans

An 82-year-old woman was fined more than \$100 for crossing against a don't-walk signal. Mayvis Coyne began carrying her groceries across a Los Angeles road while the WALK signal was still on, but could not cross the wide road before the light changed. One elderly neighbor resorts to calling a cab simply to cross the poorly designed street.¹



While the street pictured on the left does have crosswalks and signals the distance is intimidating to an older person and makes it hard for the senior to even see the walk signal. The street on the right provides a refuge median to make it much more inviting to slower pedestrians.



Right: www.pedbikeinages.org/Don Burden
Left: www.pedbikeinages.org/Don Burden

Incomplete streets a problem for older Americans

Central to the creation of livable communities is the ability for everyone, regardless of age or ability, to travel safely. Yet, many of our nation's roads do little to meet the needs of the growing population of older Americans. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by 2025, nearly one in five Americans will be over the age of 65, totaling 62 million Americans. Many older adults will continue to drive for most of their trips, but some will face physical and cognitive challenges that must be addressed to enable their continued mobility and independence.

A transportation system that prioritizes fast automobile travel has created roads that are difficult to navigate or unsafe to travel by foot, bike, or public transportation. Crossings are long, intersections are expansive, sidewalks are absent, and transit stops offer no place to sit. These roads are especially trying for older adults, even when behind the wheel. Almost 40% of Americans over the age of 50 say their neighborhoods lack adequate sidewalks, 55% report inadequate bike lanes or paths, and 48% have no comfortable place to wait for the bus.² These incomplete streets have deadly results: In 2008, older pedestrians were overrepresented in fatalities; while comprising 13% of the population, they accounted for 18% of the fatalities.³

These incomplete streets limit safe mobility and can breed isolation. As people age, some will stop or limit their driving. More than 50% of older Americans who do not drive stay home on a given day because they lack transportation options. Older Americans make just 6% of their trips on foot or bike – far less than in some European countries, where adults over the age of 65 use these active modes for about half of all trips.⁴ Non-driving seniors make 65% fewer trips to visit family, friends or go to church; many report they do not like to ask for rides.⁵

The Benefits of Complete Streets 3



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 Improve Mobility for Older Americans



Complete streets make it much easier for seniors to stay active, particularly when they require assistance in the form of a cane, walker, or wheelchair.



Right: www.pedbikeimages.org/Dan Burden
Left: www.pedbikeimages.org/Dan Burden

Complete streets help create livable communities

Complete streets policies offer the opportunity to improve travel options of people of all ages. Planning, designing, and building roads with all users in mind will provide older adults a variety of options for getting around, whether walking, taking public transportation, or sharing rides with family and friends.

A majority of people aged 50 or older support complete street policies.⁶ More than half (54%) of older adults who reported an inhospitable walking, bicycling, and transit environment outside their homes would walk, bicycle, and take transit more if those problems were fixed.⁷ Eight of ten of older Americans surveyed consider that “for many seniors, public transportation is a better alternative to driving alone, particularly at night.”⁸ Complete streets also create safe space for older adults to walk or bike as exercise, helping them achieve a healthier lifestyle.

A community with a complete streets policy considers the needs of older residents every time a transportation investment decision is made. Following a complete streets process will balance the sometimes-competing needs of older drivers and older pedestrians by slowing vehicles down where necessary, creating an easily navigated multimodal network of streets, and improving visibility. Proven methods to create complete streets for aging pedestrians include retiming signals to account for slower walking speed, constructing median refuges or sidewalk bulb-outs to shorten crossing distances, and installing curb ramps, sidewalk seating, and bus shelters with seating. Improved lighting, signage, and pavement markings are among the measures that benefit drivers of any age, particularly older drivers.

¹ “Senior Cross Over Walking Ticket.” Daily News of Los Angeles. April 10, 2006.

² Lynott, Jana, et al. (2009). Planning Complete Streets for an Aging America. AARP Public Policy Institute.

³ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s National Center for Statistics and Analysis. Traffic Safety Facts: 2008 Overview.

⁴ Pucher, John and Lewis Dijkstra. (2003). “Promoting Safe Walking and Cycling to Improve Public Health: Lessons from the Netherlands and Germany.” American Journal of Public Health, September 2003, Vol. 93, No. 9.

⁵ Surface Transportation Policy Project. (2004). Aging Americans: Stranded Without Options.

⁶ Lynott, Jana. (2009).

⁷ Lynott, Jana. (2009).

⁸ American Public Transportation Association. (2005). The Attitudes of Older Americans Toward Mobility and Transportation.

www.completestreets.org

