

CITY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA  
**COUNCIL POLICY**

**NEW**

SUBJECT: COMPLETE STREETS POLICY  
POLICY NO.: 900-23  
EFFECTIVE DATE: [Month Day], 2024

BACKGROUND:

The City of San Diego General Plan sets forth goals and policies for enhancing the quality of life in communities through a sustainable citywide development pattern connected by a balanced, *multimodal* mobility system. In accordance with the City’s Strategic Plan, the City is working to better serve community members through the advancement of mobility infrastructure and options that are efficient, safe, and sustainable. The City adopted an update to the Climate Action Plan (CAP) in 2022, setting an ambitious citywide goal of net zero emissions by 2035. The CAP includes targets and strategies to encourage walking, biking, and taking transit, and to transition combustion vehicles to zero emissions vehicles. The City has also committed to *Vision Zero* and the goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and severe injuries since 2015. Additionally, in 2022, the City adopted amendments to Council Policy 800-14, Prioritizing Capital Improvement Projects (CIP), which sets the guidelines for prioritizing and funding capital projects. It includes factors to embed equity considerations into infrastructure assets, that increase safety and enhance mobility options Citywide, including Complete Streets elements.

PURPOSE:

This Council Policy for Complete Streets is intended to further the attainment of a balanced, *multimodal* mobility system with increased mobility options and safe, equitable infrastructure. This policy establishes a framework for the planning, design, and implementation of *multimodal* facilities that provide safety, comfort, and access to destinations for all users such as pedestrians, persons with disabilities, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists. By adopting a formal policy for the implementation of Complete Streets, the City will be better positioned to provide a more comprehensive and equitable mobility system, improve road safety for all, reduce rates of injury and death from collisions, improve climate resiliency, prioritize investments for greater mobility, reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality, and encourage walking, *rolling*, and bicycling for improved health. This policy is intended to provide guidance to improve mobility governance and implementation in the City aligned with the City’s General Plan and CAP.

POLICY:

The City is committed to creating a comprehensive, integrated, sustainable circulation system to provide greater mobility options to its community members. This policy is intended to guide improvements to the *public right-of-way* so they are designed, operated, and maintained as a well-connected network of *multimodal* facilities and services that balance access, mobility, and safety for all foreseeable users regardless of location, physical ability, age, or income.

The following guiding principles and practices will help City decisionmakers develop a mobility circulation system that supports Complete Streets during all project phases, from planning, design, and construction, through operations and maintenance.

- **Serve all users and modes.** The City should plan, design, operate, and maintain all *multimodal* facilities in the *public right-of-way* to enhance safety, comfort, and convenient access and travel for all foreseeable users regardless of location, physical ability, age, or income.<sup>1</sup>
- **Address accessibility for Structurally Excluded Communities.** The City should identify mobility improvements that best serve these communities to improve access to health, education, economic capital, social position, safety, and other meaningful opportunities.
- **Promote accessibility for all ages and abilities.** The City recognizes that persons of all ages and abilities may require reasonable modifications or accommodations. The City should meet or exceed all federal, state, and local requirements, including compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations, and all other applicable accessibility standards and regulations.
- **Prioritize Complete Streets to further implement Vision Zero goals.** Modifications to the *public right-of-way* should incorporate a *mobility loading priority* which prioritizes potentially vulnerable users. Also, Complete Streets design elements should be used to reduce vehicular speeds where needed to support safety.
- **Produce equitable outcomes.** The City should also apply *universal design* and accessible design features within the *public right-of-way* to produce equitable outcomes.
- **Support emergency responsiveness and goods movement.** City streets should accommodate emergency response and goods movement. Where emergency response may be impacted due to traffic calming or *multimodal* features, there will be special consideration of design features that facilitate the implementation of Complete Streets and while also ensuring access by emergency response vehicles.
- **Create connected multimodal networks.** The City should consider pedestrian, bicycle, and transit networks, as well as other alternative *modes* as part of all planning efforts and construction projects to achieve a comprehensive mobility network. Project designs should address modal gaps or deficiencies and assess any tradeoffs to create a balance that is physically feasible and best meets the needs of all users.

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<sup>1</sup> All references to safety in this Council Policy are intended to convey mobility facilities are safe when used as intended and by persons exercising due care.

- **Integrate environmental considerations for resiliency and stormwater.** The *public right-of-way* should be designed in a manner that functionally addresses issues related to climate change and environmental systems such as those related to extreme heat, surface runoff, and water quality.

DEFINITIONS:

For the purposes of this policy, the following terms are defined:

*Complete Streets:* Streets designed and operated to enable mobility for all users. Users include people of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they are traveling as pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, or motorists.

*Context Sensitive Design:* Design that is flexible and seeks to balance the need to move people efficiently with outcomes specific to each neighborhood's unique context, including topography, street alignments, sight distances, and historical resources.

*Green Streets:* Streets designed to provide source control, limit transport of pollutants by infiltration and retention of stormwater. Features of Green Streets include use of plants and trees that consider long-term water use and efficiency, permeable pavements, bioswales, and other stormwater facilities.

*Mobility Loading Priority:* A mobility prioritization for streets, that prioritizes safety for users in the following order: (1) People walking/rolling; (2) People who ride a bike and use micromobility; (3) Transit riders; and (4) People using shared, commercial, and personal vehicles (both for personal trips and for the delivery of goods).

*Mode:* Means of travel used during a trip, including, but not limited to walking, biking, transit, or driving.

*Multimodal:* Having or involving multiple travel options (modes) within a corridor or facility; also, connections between modes.

*Multi-use Path:* Also referred to as a shared-use path, provides a completely separated right-of-way designated for the exclusive use of active transportation users, such as pedestrians and bicyclists, with minimal crossings by motorists.

*Public Right-of-way:* Public easements or public property that are or may be used for streets, alleys, or other public purpose.

*Quick-build:* A construction approach in which public right-of-way space is redesigned using low intensity techniques, low-cost measures, and readily available and modifiable materials.

*Rolling*: A means of travel using wheelchairs or other assistive devices (e.g., hand cycles) or using other wheeled devices, including but not limited to, non-motorized scooters, skateboards, rollerblades, and roller skates. Rolling does not include the use of conventional or electric bicycles.

*Streetaries*: Outdoor spaces created in public right-of-way space formerly dedicated to parking spaces that serve as an extension of a restaurant or other establishment that sells food and drink.

*Street Resurfacing*: A pavement restoration or maintenance treatment that is intended to prolong the life of a street.

*Structurally Excluded Community*: A Structurally Excluded Community has the same meaning as that term is defined in Council Policy 800-14, as may be amended from time to time.

*Universal Design*: A way of designing buildings, products and environments that are inherently accessible to all, including people with disabilities, older people, and others often excluded by traditional design.

*Vision Zero*: A strategy to eliminate all fatalities and severe injuries associated with all mobility choices.

**SCOPE:**

This policy applies to project planning, design, and construction in the *public right-of-way*. This policy will apply to mobility projects in the following ways:

**New construction and retrofit projects should include Complete Streets elements.** This policy applies to any construction, reconstruction, retrofit, alteration, or repair of City-owned *multimodal* facilities in the *public right-of-way* including, but not limited to, sidewalks, bikeways, streets, intersections, bridges, shared-use or *multi-use paths*, and all connections in between that facilitate mobility. Large maintenance projects, such as full width *street resurfacing*, should consider Complete Streets elements subject to timeline and other considerations.

**City projects should consider Complete Streets elements as part of project planning and design.** The City should approach mobility infrastructure projects within the *public right-of-way* at all project planning and design phases as opportunities to incorporate features of *multimodal* infrastructure that will enhance sustainability and mobility.

**New private development projects should incorporate Complete Streets elements in frontage improvements.** Those developments with frontage and streetscape improvements should reflect a Complete Streets design and provide opportunities to support regional and local mobility improvements through new internal streets, site designs and on-site amenities that encourage alternative mobility options and implement transportation demand management strategies.

**Complete Streets include context sensitive approaches in design criteria.** The City should follow its own adopted design standards as well as make use of current best practices and guidelines to implement Complete Streets in projects. Use of design criteria should not be purely prescriptive but also incorporate a *context sensitive design* approach for projects through early incorporation of the land use, *mobility loading priorities*, environmental considerations, and innovative concepts. Sensitive consideration should be given to designs that may result in adverse impacts or the elimination of existing green space, green infrastructure, and/or environmental resources.

**Interjurisdictional mobility projects should be coordinated with adjacent jurisdictions and agencies.** Collaboration will maximize opportunities for Complete Streets elements, connectivity, and cooperation.

This policy does not apply to:

Streets or spaces where specific users are prohibited by law or would threaten public safety (i.e., bicyclists on freeways, pedestrians on bus lanes, automobiles on pedestrian malls). In such cases, the City should accommodate travel for those specified users elsewhere to ensure network connectivity.

Emergencies or emergency repairs (e.g., water main break) that require immediate, rapid response.

IMPLEMENTATION:

The following actions are recommended to implement this policy:

1. Governance

- a. Establish an interdepartmental mobility governance group (i.e., Governance group) and workflow to provide strategic guidance and oversight for project coordination to promote Complete Streets and the responsible and efficient use of fiscal resources for activities within the *public right-of-way*.
- b. The Governance group should consist of the Chief Operating Officer, and Directors of relevant mobility-related City departments, including Development Services, Engineering & Capital Projects, City Planning, Sustainability & Mobility, and Transportation; and where necessary, other departments such as Stormwater and Parks and Recreation.
- c. The Governance group should coordinate on a regular basis to address policy and systemic mobility processes and issues as identified to promote equitable outcomes.

- d. The Governance group should meet regularly to review progress, address policy and systemic mobility processes (e.g., checklist or equivalent tool), develop new or adjusted policies, and ensure coordination and collaboration among departments involved in the planning, design, construction, maintenance, and operation of *public right-of-way* and mobility infrastructure.

2. Designing for Multimodal Connectivity to be undertaken by City staff

- a. Update the City's Street Design Manual to align with the principles of this policy. The Street Design Manual is a comprehensive resource with guidelines and standards to inform design of the *public right-of-way*. In doing so, the City should make use of current best practices and guidelines (e.g., National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Street Design Guide, Urban Bikeway Design Guide, Designing for All Ages & Abilities Contextual Guidance, and Transit Street Design Guide) to implement Complete Streets in projects.
- b. Streets should be designed to prioritize the safety and convenience of all users, consistent with the *mobility loading priority*.
- c. Streets should be designed to encourage and facilitate seamless connections between different *modes* of transportation, promoting a well-connected *multimodal* network that reduces the need for personal vehicle travel whenever possible.
- d. Complete Streets design can incorporate reduced speed limits, traffic signal modifications, or traffic calming measures, such as roundabouts, bulb-outs, medians, islands, protected intersections, speed tables, and speed humps, as the City deems appropriate to create user-friendly environments for all *modes* of transportation while minimizing vehicle emissions.
- e. Priority should be given to enhancing connectivity between residential areas, schools, parks, and commercial areas through safe and direct walking, *rolling*, and cycling routes.
- f. Pedestrian-friendly elements, such as wide and accessible sidewalks, marked crosswalks, refuge islands, and street lighting consistent with Council Policy 200-18, should be evaluated and considered in street design to enhance pedestrian safety and mobility and promote walking as a sustainable *mode* of transportation.
- g. Bicycle facilities should be integrated into the mobility network design to promote safe and convenient cycling as a means of reducing vehicle emissions and promoting active transportation. Bike parking should be central and visible for greater security.
- h. Transit facilities and corridors should be considered in *public right-of-way* infrastructure to enhance accessibility, reliability, and efficiency of transit services. Transit accommodations can include but are not limited to transit signal priority, queue jump lanes, transit-only lanes, concrete stopping areas, and bus islands.

- i. Integration of emerging mobility options, such as shared mobility devices, car-sharing, and neighborhood electric vehicle (NEV) circulators should be considered to provide additional mobility options and reduce the overall number of vehicle trips and mobile-source emissions.
  - j. Street design should require integration of *Green Street* features that both address the effects of climate change, such as extreme heat and high precipitation, but also the functionality of stormwater and water quality through green infrastructure. *Green Street* features may include drought tolerant planting, permeable pavements and bioswales or other stormwater facilities that meet requirements of the Stormwater Standards Manual.
  - k. Shading mechanisms such as increased tree canopy should be considered to cool pavement.
  - l. Minimum planting area and spacing for new trees in accordance with existing guidelines and best management practices should be followed to ensure adequate spacing for healthy tree growth and to minimize future infrastructure conflicts with tree roots.
  - m. Flexible spaces and uses that provide for interim or temporary use of the *public right-of-way*, as well as activation, should be considered through design and with a consideration for *multimodal* connectivity.
3. Plans and Processes to be undertaken by City staff
- a. Comprehensively organize the City's inventory of existing and planned mobility infrastructure in a Mobility Master Plan that prioritizes Complete Streets projects to eliminate gaps in the *multimodal* network and identify short-term and long-term programs, including private development and infrastructure projects.
  - b. Integrate the Complete Streets principles and design guidelines into all City plans, policies, processes, manuals, ordinances, and programs.
  - c. Maintain a City Street Design Manual that includes Complete Streets Design Guidelines and other best practices to guide the planning and implementation of vibrant *multimodal* corridors and active public spaces.
  - d. Incorporate a Complete Streets checklist and/or other tools into project procedures and/or decision-making processes.
  - e. Facilitate flexible spaces through *quick-build* techniques that allow for interim and/or temporary utilization of the *public right-of-way*, such as *streetaries* and temporary accommodations for all *modes* during construction.

- f. Continue to provide a mechanism for public requests to evaluate minor traffic improvements or modifications to support Complete Streets.

4. Funding and Implementation Capacity

- a. Actively seek federal, state, and local sources for public and private funding to implement Complete Streets.
- b. Proactively incorporate and program Complete Streets elements and design solutions into full-width (i.e., slurry) maintenance efforts, capital improvements, and private development-led projects.
- c. Where the cost of establishing new or improved sidewalks, bikeways, shared-use paths or other Complete Street elements would be excessively disproportionate to their probable use and cause undue delays or impacts to other projects and goals, the City should implement *quick-build*, flexible Complete Streets designs and pilot projects using near-term, lower-cost engineering treatments such as paint and other temporary and transitional materials, while still maintaining safety.
- d. Bundle new *multimodal* improvements with *street resurfacing* projects, right-of-way construction, capital project construction, and other local and regional mobility projects to transition the existing right-of-way to facilitate implementation of a more complete corridor. This policy does not authorize the use of sewer enterprise funds or water enterprise funds to upgrade City streets where prohibited by law.

5. Monitoring and Outreach to be undertaken by City staff

- a. Establish performance measures and regularly monitor the effectiveness of Complete Streets projects in improving:
  - i. Equity & Accessibility
  - ii. Climate Action, Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions and Resiliency
  - iii. Health & Safety
  - iv. Economic Development
  - v. Mobility Choices
- b. Performance measures should be monitored and reported out on a regular basis as data is updated and available.



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- c. Update public outreach and education practices for Complete Streets projects to be consistent with Council Policy 000-32 (Neighborhood Input on Infrastructure Needs and Priorities) to better inform the public on new *multimodal* opportunities and designs.
- d. Engage stakeholders, including relevant Boards and stakeholder committees, on comprehensive mobility solutions that can be paired with infrastructure improvements to increase accessibility and mobility options. This includes the preparation of a memorandum on an annual basis with an overview of policy implementation that can be provided to the Mobility Board and/or the Active Transportation and Infrastructure Committee.
- e. Develop and maintain a Complete Streets website for the public with resources and an interactive map illustrating the existing and planned inventory of the *multimodal* facility infrastructure and projects.

This policy does not supersede requirements and policies established through community plans, specific plans, precise plans, and City standard drawings, or other City Council-adopted policy and/or regulatory documents. Rather the Complete Streets Policy is designed to work in concert with existing and future plans to improve implementation citywide in alignment with the goals of the City's Climate Action Plan and *Vision Zero*.

**EXCEPTIONS:**

All mobility projects should be planned, designed, and constructed for all foreseeable users. However, the City also acknowledges that integration of every *mode* and all possible treatments in the design of all *public right-of-way* and routes may not be feasible or appropriate. For some City initiated projects, the Governance group will make an informed decision to grant an exception to this policy. Exceptions to this policy for private development projects must be supported with documentation or data that explains the basis for the exception and the Governance group must be informed of this documentation. Overall, sound engineering judgment and Governance group discretion must be applied when approving project designs to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public. Application of this policy does not apply when prohibited by governing laws and regulations.

**REVIEW OF POLICY:**

This Complete Streets Policy should be reviewed periodically by the Governance group to assess its effectiveness, incorporate lessons learned, and adapt to emerging trends, best practices in street design and mobility planning, and any updates to the City's Climate Action Plan and Mobility Master Plan.