



# Montgomery County, Pennsylvania Complete Streets Policy

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## 1.0 VISION

Complete Streets are defined by this policy as enabling safe access for all users.

Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, will develop and maintain safe, accessible county-owned roads and facilities that support all users. The Complete Streets policy will guide decision-making during the planning and design of capital improvement projects for roads and other county-owned facilities, as well as the projects and initiatives of the county's partners and other external stakeholders.

## 2.0 PRINCIPLES

### 2.1 Serve all users and modes

The Complete Streets policy will promote safe, accessible, and integrated transportation options that balance the needs of all users and modes, including but not limited to pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists (including motorcyclists), freight carriers, emergency personnel, and agricultural vehicle operators.

### 2.2 Utilize context sensitive approaches

The Complete Streets policy will balance the safety of all users while considering a project's physical setting as well as scenic, aesthetic, and historic concerns, and universal design principles.

### 2.3 Promote sound environmental design

The Complete Streets policy will promote best management practices of stormwater management, environmental design, and place making. It will incorporate environmental mitigation features where practicable when implementing Complete Street designs.

### 2.4 Apply to all phases of a project, particularly during planning and design

Complete Streets designs shall be considered during the planning and design phases of county-led street, highway, and sidewalk projects, to the greatest extent practicable. County representatives shall note important Complete Street design elements in cooperation with local and regional projects during discussions.



## 2.5 Be consistent with comprehensive planning

Complete Streets shall help achieve specific goals articulated in Montgomery County's comprehensive plan, *Montco 2040: A Shared Vision* (or its successor), as well as *Walk Montco: Montgomery County Walkability Study* and *Bike Montco: The Bicycle Plan for Montgomery County*. Complete Streets recommendations will also consider the objectives and goals of current state, regional, and municipal plans, as well as those of other relevant agencies.

## 2.6 Promote collaboration among county departments and with outside partners

This Complete Streets policy will foster collaboration among county departments on relevant projects and goals. It will also provide encouragement for municipalities to incorporate Complete Streets principles into their built environment and transportation networks.

## 2.7 Achieve public policy goals

This Complete Streets policy will be used to improve public health and safety by supporting people who cannot or do not drive to travel independently and safely. It will also advance economic development and promote investment and equitable opportunities in underserved communities. It will ensure public safety by supporting the enforcement of traffic laws to promote the orderly and safe movement of all transportation modes.

# 3.0 IMPLEMENTATION

*Each county department will craft appropriate implementation standards and guidelines for incorporating the Complete Streets policy elements outlined in Sections 3.1 and/or 3.2.*

The Planning Commission will organize regular coordination meetings that bring together representatives of various county departments to collaborate on the enactment of this policy and to review performance measure progress.

## 3.1 Internal Application of This Policy

*"Internal Application" is defined as any situation involving county capital improvement projects - the county-led construction or reconstruction of county-owned assets that are funded through the county capital budget in which project delivery is managed by county staff.*

Complete Streets design guidelines (see Appendix A) will be integrated into decision making whenever changes are proposed for a county-owned roadway, property, or facility, or whenever new infrastructure is proposed.

This Complete Streets policy shall apply to all transportation-related elements of county capital improvement projects in all county departments. As the county constructs and/or renovates buildings and other facilities, transportation access by all anticipated modes shall be considered.

The design of new, rehabilitated, or reconstructed county-owned roads and bridges shall consider the current and future demands for all modes, with particular attention



given to environmental justice communities and populations. County roads and bridges designated as part of the bicycle network in *Bike Montco* (or its successor) shall be built or reconstructed with on-street bicycle amenities, per county plan guidelines. Whenever practicable, repaving of county roads designated as part of the bicycle network shall be considered for on-street bicycle amenities, per county plan guidelines. When no bicycle and/or pedestrian demand is anticipated, facilities shall be constructed so as not to preclude bicyclists or pedestrians should future development generate new demand. Emergency repairs of roads and bridges that require redesign and replacement shall also consider the needs of all modes. The construction of new sidewalks will be given extra consideration in areas of the county designated as “Recommended Areas for Sidewalks” per *Walk Montco*. Sidewalks, bicycle routes, and roadways shall remain clear and passable, including during routine maintenance and repair of county facilities.

During the planning and design of capital improvement projects, county departments will coordinate with each other to ensure that Complete Streets initiatives and needs are incorporated. Relevant county departments include but are not limited to Commerce, Health, Planning Commission, Public Property, Public Safety, and Roads and Bridges.

### **3.2 External Application of this Policy**

*“External Application” is defined as any situation in which the county possesses governmental oversight or the county’s role is secondary or participatory in an outside entity’s effort to construct or reconstruct a physical asset.*

Montgomery County will request Complete Streets elements in all public-sector infrastructure projects, planning efforts, and policy formation undertaken by the county’s partners.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- a. Involvement in transportation capital projects led by partners such as PennDOT, SEPTA, and municipalities.
- b. Assistance in writing zoning and subdivision & land development ordinances, and other municipal policies.
- c. Partnering with municipalities to implement their own Complete Streets policies.

Montgomery County will advocate for Complete Streets elements in all private-sector and non-profit efforts where the county does not have regulatory involvement.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

- a. Official review comments of land development proposals.
- b. County involvement in development or redevelopment projects, with or without county funding.

Montgomery County will require Complete Streets elements when possible as a part of any effort that requires the issuance of county permits or permission.



Examples include, but are not limited to:

- a. County highway occupancy permits.
- b. Health department permits.

Montgomery County will consider Complete Streets elements when evaluating and administering all county grant programs and funding opportunities.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

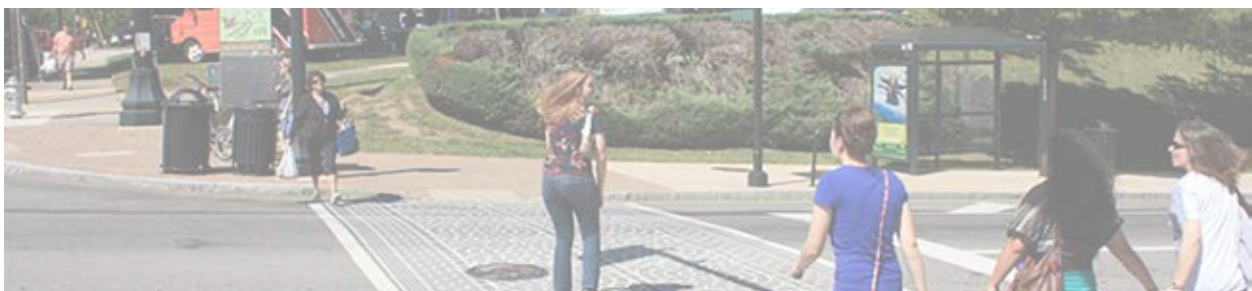
- a. The Montco 2040 Implementation Grant Program
- b. The County Transportation Program as overseen by the Montgomery County Planning Commission
- c. Economic development and similar initiatives through the Commerce Department
- d. Funding from the Department of Housing and Community Development
- e. Programs overseen by the Department of Health and Human Services

## 4.0 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The Planning Commission will track the progress of the Complete Streets policy implementation along county-owned facilities, as well as state and local facilities when possible. The results will be made publicly available. Performance measures can include, but are not limited to:

For county capital improvement projects (“internal application”):

- f. Increase in linear feet of new and/or repaired sidewalk.
- g. Increase in the number of marked crosswalks, ADA-compliant curb ramps, pedestrian signal heads, flashing signals, signs, and other relevant pedestrian safety improvements.
- h. Increase in the number of bus shelters, concrete pads, benches, and other relevant bus stop amenities.
- i. Increase in the number of miles of bicycle lanes, shoulders, sharrows, and other relevant bicycle facilities.
- j. Decrease in the number of reported bicycle and pedestrian-related crashes on county-owned roads.
- k. Increase in the square footage of rain gardens, bioswales, street trees, and other relevant environmental features and place-making elements within or adjacent to roadways.
- l. Increase in the number of municipalities that adopt Complete Streets policies, incorporate Complete Streets elements into plans, and undertake other relevant public policy efforts.



For all other projects (“external application”):

- a. Grants and/or funding amounts awarded to projects that incorporate Complete Streets principles.
- b. Increase in linear feet or number of new environmental features as well as pedestrian, bicycle, and/or transit facilities created through permitting.
- c. Regular attendance at regular county inter-departmental Complete Streets coordination meetings

## 5.0 EXCEPTIONS

Complete Street accommodations, on both county capital improvement projects and external projects, may not be practical due to factors beyond the county’s control.

### 5.1 Exceptions for County Capital Improvement Projects (“Internal Application”)

Exceptions to the Complete Streets policy for a county capital improvement project may be considered under the following situations:

- a. The existing and future (25 year horizon) projected motor traffic volumes on a particular roadway or facility are so low that certain modes do not need to be specifically addressed and/or are already addressed by the current design.
- b. The existing and future (25 year horizon) projected bicycle and pedestrian volumes as well as transit need are so low that one or more of these modes do not need to be specifically addressed.
- c. The cost or impacts of accommodation is excessively disproportionate to the current or future need, which is defined by the FHWA at the time of the adoption of this policy as exceeding twenty percent of the cost of the larger project<sup>1</sup>.
- d. There is an existing or proposed parallel facility with sufficient accommodations, or it is more feasible and/or less costly to locate the proposed accommodations on an alternate route. Compared to the original route, the alternative shall not increase travel distance for pedestrians by more than ¼ mile and/or for bicyclists by more than 1 mile.<sup>2</sup>
- e. The accommodations under consideration conflict with the requirements or regulations of any federal or state agency.

External agencies or municipalities utilizing this Complete Streets policy may refer to these guidelines for their own exception procedures.

<sup>1</sup> Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel: A Recommended Approach, FHWA, [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle\\_pedestrian/guidance/design.cfm](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/guidance/design.cfm).

<sup>2</sup> These distances were calculated using an assumed travel speed of 3mph for a pedestrian and 12 mph for a bicyclist.



### **5.1.1 Procedures for Exceptions Under Internal Applications**

All internal exceptions to this policy must be recommended by the County Engineer and approved by either the Montgomery County Planning Commission Executive Director or the Transportation Section Chief, along with either the Director of Assets and Infrastructure or the Roads and Bridges Administrator, in consultation with other relevant county departments. Written findings and supporting data must be provided for all exceptions and made publicly available.

## **5.2 Exceptions for External Applications**

Montgomery County departments utilizing this policy for external applications that involve capital improvement projects of outside agencies should refer to the exception requirements in Section 5.1 and use sound professional judgment when working with these agencies to reasonably implement Complete Streets principles.

For all other uses of the policy that fall under external applications, County departments will determine exceptions as part of their departmental procedures to enact this policy.

## **5.3 Bike Montco Clause**

Exceptions may not always apply to roadways designated as part of the *Bike Montco* network or its successor, for which a situationally appropriate bicycle facility shall be installed per county plan guidance.

## **5.4 Public Availability of Exceptions**

Exceptions under consideration shall be included as part of a project's public open houses to the greatest extent possible. Exceptions and their related discussions shall be documented and the justification for each exception will be summarized in a report and made available to the public.



## APPENDIX A

Guidelines and standards may include, but are not limited to:

- I. American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHTO) *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets* (Green Book)
- II. AASHTO *Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities*
- III. AASHTO *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*
- IV. *Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines* (PROWAG)  
<https://www.access-board.gov/attachments/article/743/nprm.pdf>
- V. *Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines* (ADAAG)  
<https://www.access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/buildings-and-sites/about-the-ada-standards/ada-standards>
- VI. *NJDOT & PennDOT Smart Transportation Guidebook*  
<https://www.dvrpc.org/reports/08030A.pdf>
- VII. American Planning Association *Complete Streets: Best Policy and Implementation Practices*  
<https://www.planning.org/publications/report/9026883/>
- VIII. Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) *Traffic Calming Measures and Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach*  
<https://www.ite.org/pub/?id=E1CFF43C-2354-D714-51D9-D82B39D4DBAD>
- IX. *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD)  
<https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/>
- X. *SEPTA Bus Stop Design Guidelines*  
<http://septa.org/strategic-plan/reports/SEPTA-Bus-Stop-Design-Guidelines-2012.pdf>
- XI. *SEPTA Cycle-Transit Plan: A Strategic Approach*  
<https://www.septa.org/sustain/pdf/cycletransitplan15.pdf>
- XII. National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) *Urban Bikeway Design Guide*  
<https://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/>
- XIII. *Small Town and Rural Multi-Modal Networks* (FHWA)  
[https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle\\_pedestrian/publications/small\\_towns/fhwahep17024\\_lg.pdf](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/small_towns/fhwahep17024_lg.pdf)
- XIV. *NACTO Urban Street Design Guide*  
<https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/>
- XV. *NACTO Transit Street Design Guide*  
<https://nacto.org/publication/transit-street-design-guide/>
- XVI. *U.S. Forest Service Trail Accessibility Guidelines* (FSTAG)  
<https://www.fs.fed.us/t-d/pubs/pdfpubs/pdf15232812/pdf15232812dpi300.pdf>
- XVII. *U.S. Forest Service Outdoor Recreation Accessibility Guidelines* (FSORAG)  
<https://www.fs.fed.us/t-d/pubs/pdfpubs/pdf15232811/pdf15232811dpi300.pdf>

