



Filling in the Gaps:

Assessing the Implementation of NJDOT's Complete Streets Policy



September 2011

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Acknowledgements

This report was authored by New Jersey Future policy analyst Jay Corbalis with the support of Peter Casellini, who contributed greatly to the research as an intern for New Jersey Future.

New Jersey Future would also like to thank the following New Jersey Department of Transportation staff members for their help in researching this report:

Sheree Davis
Lynn Rich
Andrew Swords
Melanie Armstrong
Michael Russo
David Kuhn

Finally, New Jersey Future would like to thank Janna Chernetz and Kate Slevin of Tri-State Transportation Campaign for their helpful insights and valuable input on earlier drafts of the report.

Overview

Throughout history, streets have been a focal point of community life, providing a public space for commerce, transportation and socializing. For much of American history, streets served a similar purpose, acting as bustling marketplaces and chaotic thoroughfares for all types of transportation. It was only relatively recently that streets evolved from their role as the lungs of city life to utilitarian corridors, used only to speed people from point A to point B. Beginning with the rise of the automobile in the early 20th Century, and accelerating after World War II, roads were increasingly designed solely for cars, leaving out sidewalks and accommodations for other uses. Official design guidelines at the local, state and federal levels enshrined this practice, and many private developments followed suit, constructing roads meant only for cars. At the same time, the rise in automobile travel allowed houses, offices, shops and other buildings to be built farther apart from one another, making travel between many places, especially in the growing suburbs, impractical without a car.

The legacy of auto dependency influenced nearly all of the development that occurred during that time, and many areas in New Jersey reflect this legacy. Today, in spite of New Jersey's relatively robust transit network, it is nearly impossible to get around safely and conveniently without a car outside of the state's major cities. Long distances between destinations, combined with roads that were designed only for cars, make biking or walking an arduous and dangerous task.

Still, there is a growing recognition, in New Jersey and across the country, that over-reliance on automobiles for transportation has serious, negative consequences. Concerns over public health, global warming, high gas prices and mobility have led policy makers and advocates to call for a rethinking of how roadways are designed in an effort to encourage other uses besides driving. Public safety is also a serious concern. Aside from the dangers inherent in driving (car accidents are one of the leading causes of death in the United States), streets in New Jersey are dangerous for non-drivers as well. Between 2000 and 2009, there were 1,514 pedestrian fatalities in New Jersey,¹ and studies show that senior citizens are particularly vulnerable.²

In December 2009, in response to calls from a range of advocacy groups (including New Jersey Future), the New Jersey Department of Transportation (hereinafter the Department) adopted a Complete Streets policy to govern road projects under its control in an attempt to address concerns over pedestrian safety. The policy is similar to ones adopted by other jurisdictions across the country, and is aimed at ensuring that all modes of transportation, not just automobiles, are accommodated when planning for new roads or retrofitting existing ones. The goal of this report is to examine how this policy has been implemented since its adoption by the Department, and suggest ways to improve its effectiveness in the future.

¹ <http://t4america.org/resources/dangerousbydesign2011/states/?state=nj>

² http://www.tstc.org/reports/older11/Older_Pedestrians_at_Risk_2011.pdf

Key Findings

- Since the Department adopted its Complete Streets policy, only one exemption to this policy has been issued.
- In accordance with its Complete Streets policy, the Department has introduced an incentive within its Local Aid program for municipalities to adopt their own Complete Streets policies.
- Resurfacings represent a substantial proportion of all Department projects, yet the Department does not apply its Complete Streets policy to these projects.
- To date, 14 local jurisdictions have adopted Complete Streets policies, though the quality of these policies varies widely.
- To implement its Complete Streets policy, the Department has reformed its project review system to give greater influence to bicycle and pedestrian (bike/ped) design.

Prior Practice

To be sure, the Department engaged in a range of activities designed to promote pedestrian and bicycle travel before the Complete Streets policy was adopted. It had, and still has, numerous programs designed to fund bike/ped projects throughout the state, including the Safe Routes to School, Safe Routes to Transit, Transit Village and Bikeways programs.³ These programs allow municipalities to apply for funding from the Department for bike/ped projects. The Department has also been active in using its own capital funding for projects to enhance bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. In 2010, the Department allocated \$127 million for projects under its “multimodal” program, much of which went for such projects as the Route 1 pedestrian bridge in Mercer County and the 6th Street Viaduct Pedestrian and Bicycle Pathway in Hudson County (the multimodal category also includes projects related to freight rail and maritime transportation).⁴

While these efforts indicate a serious commitment by the Department to improve bike/ped facilities in the state, their status as distinct projects, set apart from other, “traditional” projects, is part of the paradigm that the Complete Streets concept seeks to change. Before Complete Streets, bike and pedestrian accommodations were treated as separate from the roads they flank, rather than as an extension of the roads themselves. The idea behind the Complete Streets policy is that, rather than making special accommodations through supplemental projects and retrofits, accommodations for all users – bicyclists, pedestrians, the disabled, transit riders, etc. – should be the norm, not the exception, for all transportation projects.

On this point, the Department’s record before the adoption of its Complete Streets policy has been mixed. While the Department has included sidewalks and, less often, bike lanes in some of its projects, particularly in urban areas and on bridges, it has not done so uniformly. In fact, a New Jersey Future analysis (Appendix B) of several recently completed projects in the state found that while pedestrian accommodations were made in some instances, they were ignored in others, with no discernible difference in project type. (These projects were designed before the Complete Streets policy was adopted in 2009, and were not subject to that policy.) Moreover, while projects before the policy’s enactment would often begin the design process with bike/ped accommodations, it was common for them to be removed as the project made its way through the internal design review process, without any formal justification.

³ It should be noted, however, that the FY 2012 Capital Plan reduces by half the dedicated funding for Safe Routes to Transit, from \$1 million to \$500,000, and eliminates entirely funding for the Transit Village program.

⁴ <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/capital/tcp10/sec2/multimodal.pdf>

How Things Have Changed

Since the Complete Streets policy's adoption, inclusion of bike/ped facilities in Department projects has become a more formal process. Each project goes through a lengthy, multi-step project development process, involving a number of different subject matter experts within the department (structural, traffic, right of way, utilities, environmental, etc.). Before the policy was enacted, a representative from the bike/ped bureau within the Department would be present at the initial design meeting, and would sign off on the bike/ped aspects of the project. Those design elements could be removed from the project, however, as it progressed through the design process. Now, the Department has instituted a new process, with a subject matter expert from bike/ped reviewing and signing off on the design at every juncture, ensuring that the project meets the criteria laid out in the Complete Streets policy. In order for a project to omit bike/ped accommodations, it must receive a formal exemption, approved by an assistant commissioner and supported with data, following one of the five criteria laid out in the policy (see Appendix A). According to the Department, there has only been one exemption issued since the adoption of the policy -- the Route 22 bridge over Chestnut Street in Union -- where it was determined that no need existed because pedestrians utilized an underpass to traverse the intersection.

While these changes represent positive steps toward meeting the goals of the Department's policy, it may be too early to judge the true effectiveness of the policy in changing outcomes on the ground. Projects typically take many years from conception to completion, and projects that were in the design phase when the policy was adopted in December 2009 are considered "grandfathered," meaning that the policy does not apply to them. Accordingly, as of August 2011, no project has advanced fully from conception to completion since the policy was adopted. As a result, there are no brick-and-mortar examples to consider when examining how the policy has been implemented -- though it is clear that, thanks to the reformed review process described above, the policy is having an impact on the design of projects currently under review.

Remaining Issues

Resurfacings

Although the Complete Streets policy adopted by the Department applies to “new and retrofit transportation facilities” administered through the Department’s Capital Program, the policy does not apply to resurfacing projects. Every year, the Department spends hundreds of millions of dollars to resurface roads across the state in an effort to maintain a state of good repair. In 2011, the Department allocated \$191 million for various resurfacing and reconstruction activities, and has allocated \$284 million for that purpose in 2012.⁵ The Department uses what is known as a “pavement management system” to prioritize which roads will be resurfaced. This system takes into account data on roadway conditions across the state to decide which roads are most in need of repair. Once selected, projects are completed on a schedule. The whole process takes only a few months, much shorter than the average project delivery process, mainly because it does not involve right-of-way acquisition, utility relocation or environmental review.

The Department gave several reasons the Complete Streets policy is not applied to these resurfacing projects. The most significant hindrance to incorporating Complete Streets into resurfacing projects, according to the Department, is time. Resurfacing projects can be completed relatively quickly because they do not involve major changes to the roadway design. Adding elements such as sidewalks, curb cuts or bike lanes would require additional design work, slowing down the process. Another factor cited by the Department is cost. Adding sidewalks or other pedestrian amenities can increase the cost of an otherwise routine resurfacing project if it requires acquiring new right-of-way.

While it is possible to incorporate bike/ped facilities into some projects without acquiring new right-of-way by reducing the width of auto lanes, eliminating on-street parking or reducing the number of lanes, the Department stated that it does not investigate these options as part of resurfacing projects. The Department also cited the potential for triggering a lengthy environmental review as a reason for not adding additional elements to resurfacing projects. According to the Department, adding anything over a quarter of an acre in new impervious surface coverage (by adding sidewalks, for example), or disturbing more than one acre of land, requires the Department to obtain environmental permits and mitigate the disturbance by providing additional land at a ratio of 2 to 1 (two acres supplied for every one disturbed) under the state Department of Environmental Protection stormwater regulations, substantially increasing the cost and time it takes to do a project.

While the Department does not apply the Complete Streets policy to resurfacing projects, it has reformed its procedures for resurfacings in light of the Complete Streets policy. The policy states that the Department will “establish a procedure to evaluate resurfacing projects for Complete Streets inclusion according to length of project, local support, environmental constraints, right-of-way limitations, funding resources and bicycle and/or pedestrian compatibility.” To that end, the Department has established a procedure whereby pedestrian needs that are identified during the resurfacing process are documented and recommended to be addressed through separate, exclusive bike/ped projects if and when funding is available in the future.

⁵ <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/capital/tcp12/>

Right-of-Way Acquisition and Utility Relocation

One significant impediment to implementing Complete Streets elements, particularly installing sidewalks, is the difficulty in acquiring the land needed to accommodate them. Acquiring this land, known as the right-of-way, can be a long and costly process, particularly on existing roads. Typically, on a state road, the Department owns the land between the utility poles on each side of the road. The land beyond these poles is owned by private individuals. In order to add sidewalks, or additional space for bike lanes, to an existing road where the Department does not own sufficient right-of-way, it must acquire the required land from private owners. This process can be extremely time-consuming, causing delays in a project. It can also increase the cost of the project significantly and, since these costs are attributed to the bike/ped aspect of the project, can cause costs to exceed the 20 percent threshold necessary for an exemption under the Department's Complete Streets policy.

Another impediment to adding bike/ped infrastructure to existing roads is utility relocation. Frequently, utilities such as telephone lines, fiber-optic cables and gas and water mains are located alongside state roads. Placing a sidewalk within the right-of-way may require relocating these utilities, a process that can add considerable cost to a project and cause it to exceed the 20 percent threshold.

Sidewalk Maintenance

The Department provides maintenance for state roads under its control. This includes activities such as plowing snow, resurfacing the road and repairing potholes. When the Department constructs a sidewalk along a state road, however, it negotiates a "jurisdictional agreement" with the local municipality, requiring that the municipality assume the responsibility, and cost, of maintaining the sidewalk. Some municipalities are reluctant to agree to maintain sidewalks under these circumstances. Since the Department has a policy of not building projects without local approval, this can lead to situations where bike/ped improvements proposed by the Department do not get built because the municipality does not agree to maintain them. This has happened in at least one case: Several years ago, before the adoption of the Complete Streets policy, the Department proposed installing sidewalks along a busy portion of Route 22 in Union Township where it identified pedestrian safety issues. The township objected to the project, however, and the Department did not move forward with it. There is no indication that the relationship between the Department and municipalities on this matter has changed since the adoption of the Complete Streets policy.

ADA Compliance

It is a common sight at many intersections, both in New Jersey and across the country: A new intersection is constructed with curb ramps and pedestrian signals, but these ramps lead only to grass, not sidewalks. While this situation may seem absurd – what good is a pedestrian ramp if it doesn't lead anywhere? – it is a direct result of the Department's attempt to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The act, adopted in 1990,



Recently completed project. Route 130 at Branch Pike, Burlington County.

“assures that no qualified disabled person shall solely by reason of disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination in access to its programs, services, or activities or in any aspect of their operations.” For the Department, this means providing curb ramps or other sloped areas where pedestrian walks cross curbs.

Since 2008, the Department has taken a number of steps aimed at complying with the ADA, after being prompted to do so by the Federal Highway Administration. These steps include establishing an internal ADA working group, updating a Draft Transition Plan, compiling an inventory of state roadway intersections to determine the number that have sidewalk curb

ramps and holding ADA training sessions for Department staff. To comply with the ADA, the Department regularly installs curb cuts at intersections for new projects, including resurfacings. All of these ADA compliance efforts are only loosely coordinated with the Department's Complete Streets policy, however, and curb cuts are installed to comply with ADA requirements regardless of whether connecting sidewalks and other accommodations are available or included in a project.

Local Complete Streets Policies

In response to the Department's newly created incentive to adopt Complete Streets within its Local Aid program (see Local Aid section), as well as the Sustainable Jersey program's inclusion of Complete Streets in its scoring criteria (see Local Aid), many municipalities across the state are taking steps to introduce Complete Streets principles at the local level. To date, 14 different New Jersey jurisdictions (13 municipalities and one county) have adopted formal Complete Streets policies or resolutions in support of the Complete Streets concept.

Because Complete Streets policies are still relatively new, there is not yet any official standard for language that municipalities have at their disposal when crafting their own policies. As a result, the policies adopted at the local level in New Jersey vary widely in scope and strength of commitment. The National Complete Streets Coalition (NCSC) has recognized this wide disparity in policies, and has created a scoring rubric to evaluate how effectively written Complete Streets policies at all levels of government across the country are, as well as to promote a set of best practices for policymakers.

The NCSC has listed a set of weighted criteria for policy evaluation:⁶ Vision and language, users and modes addressed, connectivity, jurisdiction, phases of construction to which the policy applies, policy exceptions, design criteria, context sensitivity, performance standards and implementation. Weighted most heavily are the user and mode considerations and implementation, followed by policy exceptions and phases of construction, respectively. These criteria provide a fairly thorough rating for the breadth and depth of the policies' language. Under NCSC criteria, the Department's internal policy is highlighted as one of the leading statewide policies, with a rating of 84.8 out of 100. It receives the maximum possible score of 5 out of 5 within the users and modes and construction categories, and 4 out of 5 in the implementation and design categories.

Applying the same methodology to evaluate the 14 adopted local policies provides a more mixed picture. A number of the local policies scored relatively well, including those of Monmouth County, Netcong and Linwood. Not accounted for in NCSC's scoring rubric, however, is the cost threshold for Complete Streets exemptions seen across most of the state and local policies. This threshold sets a limit on what percentage of a project's cost can be spent on meeting the Complete Streets policy before a review is triggered, and can be one of the biggest factors in determining how far-reaching a policy is. The state and Linwood policies allow exemptions when incorporating Complete Streets would increase a project's cost by 20 percent or more, but Montclair, Bloomfield, Emerson and Maywood set the threshold at only 5 percent before triggering a feasibility review by their respective mayors and councils. Maywood's policy goes even further, stating that nothing within its policy "shall be deemed to require the expenditure of funds." The remaining policies include more vague language, with three municipalities exempting projects from Complete Streets consideration when cost estimates are "excessively disproportionate" and another four simply calling for Complete Streets infrastructure "whenever feasible."

One area within the NCSC's guidelines where most governing bodies fall short of best practices is in performance standards and implementation plans. No New Jersey Complete Streets policy has specified any minimum level of service for its infrastructure, nor has any performance review been developed to examine the effectiveness of any policy or its results. With respect to implementation, the state and Netcong have both detailed multi-level plans for Complete Streets implementation, but only four other municipalities made any general mention of implementation plans beyond the applicability of policies to new construction and reconstruction projects.

⁶ <http://www.completestreets.org/webdocs/resources/cs-policyanalysis.pdf>

Local Aid

The Department's adoption of its Complete Streets policy in late 2009 represented a significant step in its ongoing effort to improve pedestrian safety, as well as a formal recognition that roads in New Jersey are meant for all users, not only drivers. The policy applies only to state roads, however, which represent less than 10 percent of all lane miles in the state.⁷ The rest are controlled by counties and municipalities, which are encouraged, but not required, to adopt their own Complete Streets policies. Indeed, one of the provisions in the Department's Complete Streets policy was that the Department would "establish an incentive within the Local Aid program for municipalities and communities to develop and implement a Complete Streets policy." The Local Aid program is a significant source of funding for municipal and county road projects, providing \$78.75 million each to counties and municipalities for local projects each year. Funds for county projects are awarded based on a legislatively established formula, but municipal funds are awarded through a competitive grant process that ranks each proposed project on a 25-point scale.

Since the passage of the Complete Streets policy, the Department has taken several steps to meet the goal of providing an incentive to adopt local Complete Streets policies through the Local Aid program. Most significantly, the Department has amended its scoring system to offer one point on the 25-point scale to projects from municipalities that have adopted Complete Streets policies. This change was enacted in 2011, and will apply for the first time in the fiscal year 2012 Local Aid grant cycle. This represents a significant advantage in the Local Aid process for municipalities that have adopted Complete Streets policies. The one point available to municipalities with Complete Streets policies, however, is not a "new" point available in the 25-point system. Rather, the Department expanded the criteria for an existing point, adding Complete Streets to a list of qualifying criteria that includes a town being a designated Transit Village, a State Plan Designated Center or a Pinelands Center. This means that a town that already qualifies under one of these criteria does not receive an extra point for adopting a Complete Streets policy. For example, Hoboken is already a State Plan Designated Center, so it would not receive an additional point in the Local Aid application process for adopting a Complete Streets policy. By contrast, Linwood, which does not qualify under the other criteria, would receive that extra point in the application process for adopting a Complete Streets policy. To ensure legitimacy, municipal policies are evaluated and approved by the Department before they can qualify for the additional point in the Local Aid process, though there are no formal standards for evaluation, and to date no town has had its policy rejected by the Department as inadequate.

Moreover, this new incentive in the Local Aid program only rewards municipalities for passing policies, however, not for acting on them. Under this system, projects proposed by municipalities that have adopted a Complete Streets policy are awarded a point in the Local Aid process regardless of whether these projects conform to the Complete Streets policy. In other words, a municipality could receive an additional point simply for adopting a Complete Streets policy, even for a project that has nothing to do with carrying out this policy. .

⁷ <http://www.state.nj.us/transportation/publicat/lmreports/pdf/pavementreport2010.pdf>

In addition to amending the 25-point rating criteria for Local Aid projects to incentivize municipalities to adopt Complete Streets policies, the Department has modified the application process to level the playing field within the Local Aid program between “traditional” road projects and “non-traditional” projects that would include streetscape improvements and bike/ped facilities. Rather than using the same evaluation system for all types of projects, the Department recently introduced separate applications for bike, pedestrian and streetscape projects, in addition to the existing application for road projects. This allows these different types of projects to be graded against one another on the 25-point scale, in spite of their differing characteristics. (For example, the application for a road project looks at existing pavement condition, while the application for a pedestrian project might look at connectivity to civic buildings.) Since this new application system was implemented, between 5 and 10 percent of local projects funded through the Local Aid program have been in “non-traditional” categories.

Recommendations

Overall, the Department has made good progress implementing its Complete Streets policy to date, but because of the lack of completed projects carried out under the program, it is impossible to make a definitive statement about how the policy has affected projects on the ground. Successful implementation of Complete Streets is about more than creating new review processes or establishing checklists; it requires changing the institutional philosophy of how the Department thinks about roads and what they entail. As such, it may be unreasonable to expect that the adoption of a policy will transform an entire institution overnight. Still, the Department deserves credit for taking a number of positive, direct steps to implement its policy.

There are, however, a number of additional steps, outlined below, that should be taken by the Department to integrate the policy fully into its operations, and to encourage local jurisdictions to do the same. These actions can be taken now by the Department, without need for legislative or regulatory changes.

- *Consider low-cost bike/ped improvements on resurfacing projects.* While the hundreds of millions of dollars the Department spends annually on road resurfacings represent an incredible opportunity to reshape the state's roads to be more friendly to all users, there are valid reasons all resurfacing projects cannot be given the same Complete Streets "treatment" given to new projects under the policy. Completely redesigning an existing street to meet Complete Streets goals, and acquiring the right-of-way necessary to do so, would significantly increase the cost and time of completing these projects and detract from the goal of the program, which is to keep the state's pavement in a state of good repair. In spite of these impediments, the resurfacing program does present opportunities to improve pedestrian and bicycle conditions. For example, many existing roads are wider than necessary for the safe flow of traffic, or contain more lanes than are necessary to handle traffic volumes. These roads could easily be redesigned to include bike/ped amenities, such as bicycle lanes and crosswalks. Such so-called "road diets" can be implemented inexpensively simply by adding new paint, and would not require lengthy engineering work or right-of-way acquisition. Accordingly, to advance its Complete Streets policy further, the Department should reform its project review process for resurfacings to include formal consideration of a "road diet." Similar to the Complete Streets policy, this review should start with the assumption that a road diet will be included in the project, unless it is proven infeasible by supporting evidence. The Department should also set a goal that 5% of resurfacing projects include "road diet" amenities. A portion of existing funds should be set aside to help pay for any incremental costs incurred by incorporating such improvements.
- *Reward Local Aid projects that include Complete Streets.* As noted, part of the Department's Complete Streets policy called for amending its Local Aid program to create an incentive for municipalities to adopt their own Complete Streets policies, something the Department has done by giving a point on Local Aid applications for towns that have adopted policies. While this is a step in the right direction, by adding Complete Streets to an existing point category, this amendment provides an incentive to adopt a Complete Streets policy only for municipalities that do not qualify under other criteria in the category, such as Transit Village designation or Designated Center status. For municipalities that already qualify for the point under

these criteria, there is no additional incentive within the Local Aid program to adopt a Complete Streets policy. To rectify this, the Department should create an additional available point in the rating system available only to those municipalities that have adopted a Complete Streets policy.

Additionally, even with the changes made to the criteria, the system only incentivizes municipalities to adopt policies, not act on them. The Department should further amend the Local Aid project rating system to award additional weight to projects that are designed in accordance with the Department's Complete Streets principles, whether or not that project is proposed by a municipality that has adopted a Complete Streets policy.

- *Reform maintenance requirements for sidewalks.* Budgets are tight at every level of government, with jurisdictions across the state having to do more with less. Still, for Complete Streets to be implemented effectively, bike/ped accommodations cannot continue to be treated as a separate aspect of a project, a frill that can be cut when money is tight. Currently, municipalities have the power to effectively reject the installation of sidewalks on state roads within their borders by refusing to maintain them. There are two potential solutions to this problem. The Department could assume responsibility for maintenance of these facilities, a reasonable proposition in light of the Department's commitment to Complete Streets, but an unlikely one given the current funding situation at the state level; or, failing that, in those cases where a municipality refuses responsibility for maintaining sidewalks on a state highway, the Department could cancel the project entirely, rather than simply remove the bike/ped component of it, as is the practice today.
- *Integrate ADA compliance with Complete Streets.* For reasons of cost and expediency, it is not feasible to construct an integrated sidewalk network at every intersection. Still, as the Department continues to devote resources to constructing curb cuts to comply with ADA regulations, it should make a stronger effort to integrate these efforts with its Complete Streets policy. This should include closer collaboration between staff in the Civil Rights Division, which handles ADA compliance for the Department, and the Department's bike/ped staff, when planning ADA compliance projects. Additionally, the installation of new curb ramps intended for ADA compliance should be prioritized based on potential connectivity to a wider pedestrian network.
- *Develop standards for local policies.* One of the goals of the Department's Complete Street's policy is to encourage counties and municipalities to adopt their own policies. This makes sense; since counties and municipalities control the vast majority of roads in the state, widespread adoption of Complete Streets principles will require their involvement. Though local adoption started off slowly after the statewide policy was adopted, it has begun to gather pace in 2011. As of this writing, 14 local jurisdictions (13 municipalities and one county) had adopted their own policies, with more likely in the future, spurred by incentives within the Local Aid program, as well as the Sustainable Jersey program. Still, as previously noted, the quality of local policies varies widely and, though this analysis does not look at local implementation, it is likely that implementation also varies widely. Therefore, in order to provide guidance to municipalities and ensure that local Complete Streets policies are in accordance with the goals of the statewide policy, the Department should issue a set of guidelines for local jurisdictions that establish the model components and lay out the minimum criteria that a Complete Streets policy should contain. These criteria should be used by the Department to evaluate municipal policies that are submitted for consideration under the Local Aid program.

The Department should improve their website to better aid local governments, and make it clear that Voorhees Transportation Center maintains a listing of localities with Complete Streets ordinances and provides guidance documents.

- *Exempt new sidewalk construction from NJDEP stormwater regulations.* There are a number of financial and legal impediments to constructing new sidewalks on existing roads in the state, including property acquisition, maintenance responsibility and utility relocation, that are out of the state's control. But one impediment to sidewalk construction that can be addressed is the limit on impervious surface cover by the DEP's stormwater regulations. Currently, if the DOT or a local government wants to construct any significant new sidewalk, it must receive environmental permits and perform mitigation measures in accordance with the DEP's stormwater regulations, which can increase the costs of a project. While these regulations serve an important purpose of ensuring that new development does not overwhelm the land's capacity to absorb run-off water, in this case they impede an otherwise worthwhile goal of increasing pedestrian mobility through the construction of new sidewalks. Currently, the DEP's stormwater regulations provide an exemption for increased impervious surface that results from the widening of shoulders on DOT resurfacing projects. The DEP should work with the Department to extend this exemption to sidewalk construction, or at least lessen the mitigation requirements in these cases and streamline the permit process.

I. PURPOSE

To create and implement a Complete Streets Policy in New Jersey through the planning, design, construction, maintenance and operation of new and retrofit transportation facilities within public rights of way that are federally or state funded, including projects processed or administered through the Department's Capital Program.

II. DEFINITIONS

A Complete Street is defined as means to provide safe access for all users by designing and operating a comprehensive, integrated, connected multi-modal network of transportation options.

III. BACKGROUND

The benefits of Complete Streets are many and varied:

- Complete Streets improve safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, children, older citizens, non-drivers and the mobility-challenged, as well as those that cannot afford a car or choose to live car-free.
- Provide connections to bicycling and walking trip generators such as employment, education, residential, recreation, retail centers and public facilities.
- Promote healthy lifestyles.
- Create more livable communities.
- Reduce traffic congestion and reliance on carbon fuels, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- Complete Streets make fiscal sense by incorporating sidewalks, bike lanes, safe crossings and transit amenities into the initial design of a project, thus sparing the expense of retrofits later.

IV. POLICY

The New Jersey Department of Transportation shall implement a Complete Streets policy through the planning, design, construction, maintenance and operation of new and retrofit transportation facilities, enabling safe access and mobility of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users of all ages and abilities. This includes all projects funded through the Department's Capital Program. The Department strongly encourages the adoption of similar policies by regional and local jurisdictions who apply for funding through Local Aid programs.

1. Create a comprehensive, integrated, connected multi-modal network by providing connections to bicycling and walking trip generators such as employment, education, residential, recreational and public facilities, as well as retail and transit centers.
2. Provide safe and accessible accommodations for existing and future pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities.
3. Establish a checklist of pedestrian, bicycle and transit accommodations such as accessible sidewalks curb ramps, crosswalks, countdown pedestrian signals, signs, median refuges, curb extensions, pedestrian scale lighting, bike lanes, shoulders and bus shelters with the presumption that they shall be included in each project unless supporting documentation against inclusion is provided and found to be justifiable.
4. Additionally, in rural areas, paved shoulders or a multi-use path shall be included in all new construction and reconstruction projects on roadways used by more than 1,000 vehicles per day. Paved shoulders provide safety and operational advantages for all road users. Shoulder rumble strips are not recommended when used by bicyclists, unless there is a minimum clear path of four feet in which a bicycle may safely operate. If there is evidence of heavy pedestrian usage then sidewalks shall be considered in the project.
5. Establish a procedure to evaluate resurfacing projects for complete streets inclusion according to length of project, local support, environmental constraints, right-of-way limitations, funding resources and bicycle and/or pedestrian compatibility.
6. Transportation facilities are long-term investments that shall anticipate likely future demand for bicycling and walking facilities and not preclude the provision of future improvements.
7. Address the need for bicyclists and pedestrians to cross corridors as well as travel along them. Even where bicyclists and pedestrians may not commonly use a particular travel corridor that is being improved or constructed, they will likely need to be able to cross that corridor safely and conveniently. Therefore, the design of intersections, interchanges and bridges shall accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians in a manner that is safe, accessible and convenient.
8. Design bicycle and pedestrian facilities to the best currently available standards and practices including the New Jersey Roadway Design Manual, the AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities, AASHTO's Guide for the Planning, Design and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities, the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices and others as related.
9. Research, develop and support new technologies in improving safety and mobility.
10. Make provisions for pedestrians and bicyclists when closing roads, bridges or sidewalks for construction projects as outlined in NJDOT Policy #705 – Accommodating Pedestrian and Bicycle Traffic During Construction.
11. Improvements should also consider connections for Safe Routes to Schools, Safe Routes to Transit, Transit Villages, trail crossings and areas or population groups with limited transportation options.
12. Establish an incentive within the Local Aid Program for municipalities and counties to develop and implement a Complete Streets policy.
13. Improvements must comply with Title VI/Environmental Justice, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and should complement the context of the surrounding community.

14. Implement training for Engineers and Planners on Bicycle/Pedestrian/Transit policies and integration of non-motorized travel options into transportation systems.

15. Establish Performance Measures to gauge success.

V. EXEMPTIONS

Exemptions to the Complete Streets policy must be presented for final decision to the Capital Program Screening Committee in writing by the appropriate Assistant Commissioner and documented with supporting data that indicates the reason for the decision and are limited to the following:

1) Non-motorized users are prohibited on the roadway.

2) Scarcity of population, travel and attractors, both existing and future, indicate an absence of need for such accommodations.

3) Detrimental environmental or social impacts outweigh the need for these accommodations.

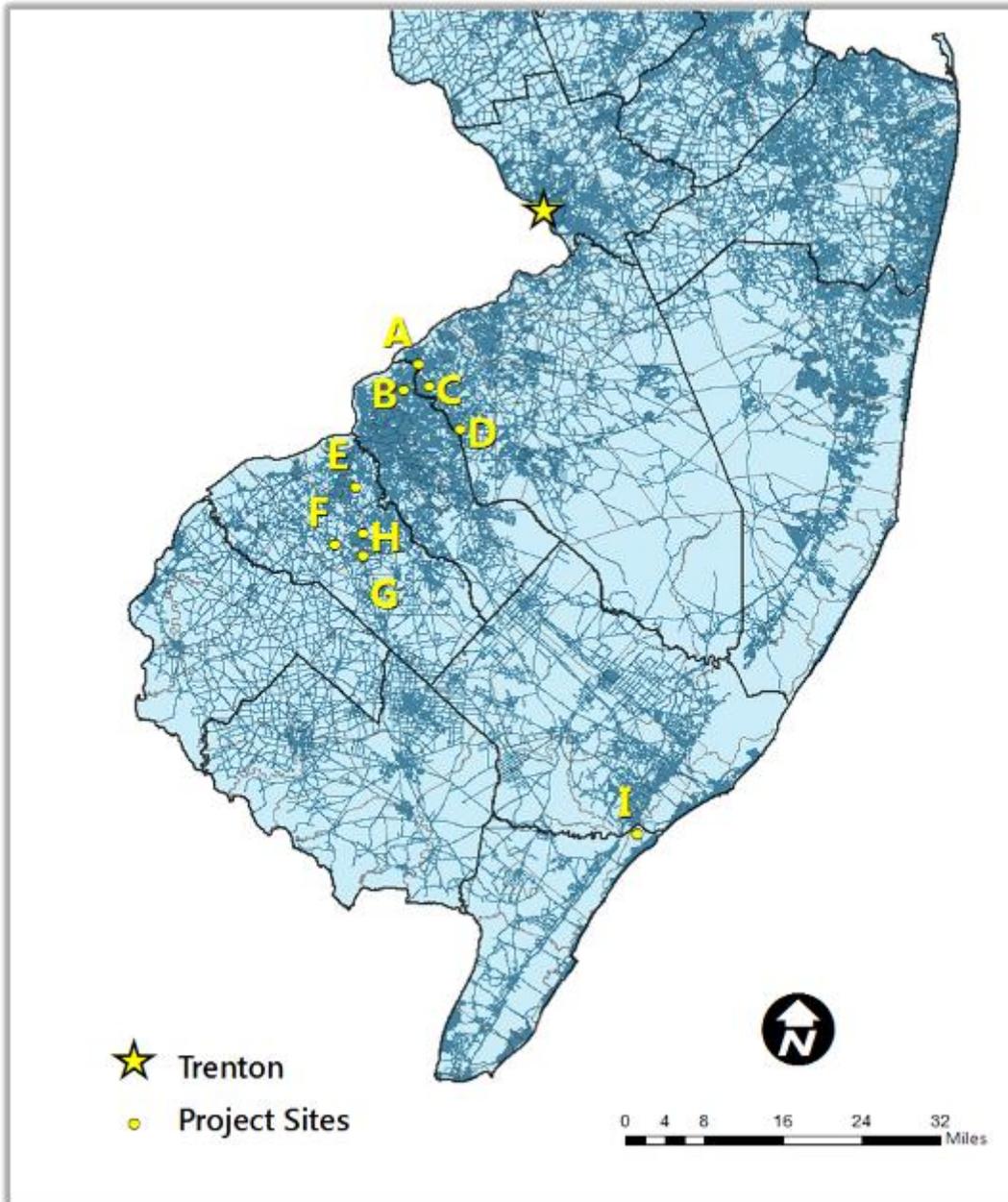
4) Cost of accommodations is excessively disproportionate to cost of project, more than twenty percent (20%) of total cost.

5) The safety or timing of a project is compromised by the inclusion of Complete Streets. An exemption other than those listed above must be documented with supporting data and must be approved by the Capital Program Committee along with written approval by the Commissioner of Transportation.

VI. AUTHORITY

N.J.S.A. Title 27

Appendix B: Recently-Completed Project Photo Gallery



The following photos were taken on July 14, 2011, by New Jersey Future intern Peter Casellini. They are of projects recently completed by the Department. The projects were identified by analyzing the Department's recent capital plans. Because of the long lead time in designing and completing projects, none of these projects is considered to fall under the Department's Complete Streets policy, since they were in the design phase prior to that policy's adoption and thus grandfathered under old procedures. They are presented here as an illustration of practices by the Department in providing bike/ped facilities prior to the adoption of the Complete Streets policy.

A – US 130 at Cinnaminson Avenue and Branch Pike, Cinnaminson



Photo 1: View facing the southwest exit of The Shoppes at Cinnaminson shopping plaza onto Cinnaminson Avenue. Full pedestrian facilities are provided on both sides of the road.



Photo 2: Full crossing facilities are provided for pedestrians across US 130 at Cinnaminson Avenue.



Photo 3: Pedestrian access to bus facilities has been constructed by the developer, along with sidewalk access from the intersection of US 130 and Cinnaminson Avenue. The public sidewalk along US 130 ends just past the bus shelter to the left of this picture.



Photo 4: View facing northeast on the southbound side of US 130. The pedestrian access to the shopping plaza is to the left.



Photo 5: Southwestern corner of US 130 and Branch Pike facing southwest. Sidewalk is provided along the southeast-bound side of Branch Pike, but abruptly ends when brought around to US 130.



Photo 6: While the only sidewalk provisions on Branch Pike are on the southeast-bound side, pedestrians are required to cross US 130 along the northwest-bound side of the road, adding pedestrian movements and creating more potential points of conflict.



Photo 7: When pedestrians cross Branch Pike to continue across US 130, they are met with curb ramps for ADA compliance but no additional facilities. The missing grass at the corner shows clear evidence of pedestrian use.



Photo 8: Once pedestrians cross US 130 on the northwest-bound side of Branch Pike toward the shopping plaza, no further sidewalks are provided.

B – Maple Avenue and Chapel Avenue bridges, Pennsauken and Cherry Hill



Photo 9: The eastbound sidewalk along Maple Avenue east of the bridge ends abruptly shortly past Canning Avenue, while a sign is placed instructing motorists to share the roadway with cyclists. Although a sidewalk can be seen continuing on the westbound side of Maple Avenue, no crosswalk has been provided on this side of the bridge; a crosswalk is provided on the western end of the bridge.



Photo 10: View facing east on the western side of the Maple Avenue bridge. Transit access has been included with the bridge redesign, along with full sidewalks and wide shoulders across the bridge along both sides of the street.



Photo 11: A crosswalk with curb ramps has been provided past the western side of the bridge toward a residential area.



Photo 12: This view of the southeastern end of the Chapel Avenue bridge in Cherry Hill shows the pedestrian provisions toward the residential area behind the photographer. Pedestrian safety is maintained by asking pedestrians to cross Monroe Avenue, seen in the foreground, along Chapel Avenue to maximize visibility to motorists.



Photo 13: Sidewalks are provided along both sides of the Chapel Avenue bridge, and continue along the street for a significant distance in both directions past the extent of the bridge project.

C – East Main Street across NJ 73, Maple Shade



Photo 14: East Main Street crossing NJ 73 features full sidewalk facilities in various states of reconstruction, as well as temporary crosswalk markings. The traffic signals are not yet fully functional, as the pedestrian signals are not operating while East Main Street and the ramp for northbound access to NJ 73 get flashing amber and flashing red lights respectively.



Photo 15: View of NJ 73 facing south from the East Main Street bridge. Although they're still under construction, it appears that sidewalks will be provided only on the northbound side, although commercial activity exists on both sides of NJ 73 at this location.



Photo 16: View of the ramp for access to NJ 73 southbound at East Main Street. Temporary crosswalks can again be seen, along with a new bus shelter on East Main Street westbound. A "No Pedestrians/Use Crosswalk" sign is shown to the right, likely seeking to protect pedestrians from motorists exiting NJ 73 making right turns on red signals. The lack of pedestrian access to the southbound side of NJ 73 can also be seen.

D - NJ 73 and NJ 70, Marlton



Photo 17: View of the intersection of the ramp for NJ 73 southbound at NJ 70.



Photo 18: View of the sidewalk along NJ 70 eastbound approaching the intersection with NJ 73. The sidewalk abruptly ends, despite the installation of curb ramps at the intersection of the ramps servicing the southbound traffic on NJ 73.



Photo 19: Another view of the abrupt end to the sidewalk along NJ 70 eastbound.



Photo 20: A view further down NJ 70 eastbound at the intersection with the ramps for NJ 73 south. Curb ramps and pedestrian signals have been installed, although no connection to the sidewalk exists. "No Pedestrians" signs are distantly visible on a lamppost adjacent to the NJ 73 overpass, presumably only a temporary measure for construction given the presence of curb ramps.



Photo 21: View across NJ 70 facing north, showing another "No Pedestrians" sign.



Photo 22: View facing west along NJ 70 eastbound at the northbound NJ 73 off-ramp. Despite the installation of curb ramps and pedestrian signals on the opposite side of the overpass, no sidewalks have been installed along this portion of NJ 70. "No Pedestrians" signs have been erected. A shopping plaza is located outside the frame to the left.

E – Tanyard Road at Cattell Road, Deptford and Wenonah



Photo 23: View from the northern corner of Tanyard Road at Cattell Road facing south. Crosswalks, curb ramps, and pedestrian signals have been installed, but no sidewalk connectivity has been provided.

F – US 322/Mullica Hill Road at Barnsboro Road and Harrisonville Road, Mullica Hill



Photo 24: Privately owned sidewalk providing access to the site of the former Wawa on the eastbound side of US 322. A sidewalk is present on the opposite side of the road (ending shortly outside the left extent of this image) but only curb ramps are installed at the nearest corner.



Photo 25: Another view of the sidewalk to the former Wawa. This sidewalk is entirely on private property, and no connection has been made to the curb ramps present at the intersection.



Photo 26: The curb ramp installed at the southwestern corner.



Photo 27: A view of the sidewalk on the westbound side of US 322 west of the intersection, ending after only a few hundred feet.



Photo 28: The view north along Barnsboro Road at US 322. The sidewalk is provided for the length of the building on the corner only. The sidewalk on the opposite side of the road ends a short distance farther.

G – US 322 at Rowan Boulevard, Glassboro



Photo 29: View of the roundabout at US 322 and Rowan Boulevard, facing west. Full sidewalks and crossing facilities with visually distinguished crosswalks have been installed.



Photo 30: Pedestrian access has been maintained during ongoing construction.

H - NJ 47/Delsea Drive at Holly Avenue and Pitman Downer Road, Sewell and Pitman



Photo 31: Crosswalk across East Holly Avenue. Curb ramps are provided at the traffic island, but the northern end of the crossing features only a curb cut leading to a steep grassy incline.



Photo 32: Crosswalk across East Holly Avenue. Curb ramps are provided at the traffic island, but the northern end of the crossing features only a curb cut leading to a steep grassy incline.



Photo 33: A similar situation exists in this south-facing view along NJ 47 crossing the driveway opposite West Holly Avenue. A curb ramp and sidewalk exist at the southern end of the driveway, but only a relatively steep grassy hill is present at the northern end.



Photo 34: This particularly confusing arrangement facing south along NJ 47 across from West Holly Avenue shows a curb ramp connected to nothing, while a curb cut with a sidewalk is seen a few feet ahead, and a full sidewalk is provided only a couple of feet later.



Photo 35: View facing west of the northeastern corner of NJ 47 at Pitman Downer Road. The sidewalk is arranged in an interesting manner to avoid the utility cover, but a connection remains. The curb ramp across NJ 47 leads directly to a guard rail with narrow grassy areas in either direction, leaving very little room for safe pedestrian movement.



Photo 36: Pedestrians are made to cross along the eastbound side of West Holly Avenue. Only curb ramps are present on the opposite side of the intersection, despite sidewalks along the bridge and a sidewalk farther along the eastbound side of West Holly Avenue.



Photo 37: A sidewalk along West Holly Avenue in Pitman connects the residential areas along the road to this small playground. The sidewalk ends abruptly to the left of this photo prior to the intersection with NJ 47 a few feet later, however, despite the inclusion of curb ramps and pedestrian signals.



Photo 38: A view east just past the playground on West Holly Avenue showing the lack of connectivity to the intersection with NJ 47.

I – Route 52 Causeway, Somers Point and Ocean City



Photo 39: View of signage indicating restriction of bicycle traffic along the NJ 52 causeway southbound toward Ocean City.



Photo 40: View southbound of the partially completed NJ 52 causeway approaching Ocean City. Upon completion, the area on the right of the causeway is designed to be shared between bicycles and pedestrians.



Photo 41: View of the southbound NJ 52 causeway facing east. Provisions for bicycles and pedestrians have not been made during construction.



Photo 42: View westbound along NJ 52 south showing the sidewalk designed to be shared between cyclists and pedestrians.



Photo 43: Cycling is a popular mode of transport around Ocean City during the summer months.