

WHY COMPLETE STREETS?

City streets are public spaces where the shared life of our city occurs. They need to be safe, comfortable, and convenient for everyone.

Austin City Council adopted a Complete Streets policy in 2014 because this approach provides so many co-benefits for our community.

10 Key Benefits for Austin

Safety. Substantial data shows that Complete Street designs result in fewer crashes, injuries, and deaths for people walking, biking, and driving.

Mobility. Streets designed and updated to serve people using all modes expand the capacity of our streets, and everyone's mobility choices. Austin's existing street network can carry more travelers if some people travel by transit, bike, and on foot.

Health. Complete Streets encourage people to make active transportation choices, which are associated with improved health outcomes for people at all stages of life. Multiple public health benefits also result from reducing the air and climate pollution caused by vehicles.

Equity. Complete Streets serve people of all ages and abilities. They create more mobility and independence for young people, seniors, and the disabled. They serve motorists and non-motorists, people in wheelchairs and parents pushing strollers, kids biking and walking to school, and people who can't afford or don't want cars.

Affordability. Complete Streets help people reduce the cost burden of car ownership. They are needed to make it attractive and feasible to walk, bike, or take transit in Austin. As relatively affordable transportation investments, Complete Street improvements can deliver a great return, protect the City budget, and even protect against tax increases to fund roadways over time.



Beautification. Streets built to a high standard for urban design enhance life for all Austinites. They enhance civic pride through the thoughtful creation of place. Streets that become destinations in themselves – such as the Second Street District – define and elevate our city.

Economy. Our streets define the experience of Austin – so residents, companies, and visitors all thrive and benefit when they are handsome, well-designed, economically vibrant, and inviting. They help to make us competitive as a world-class city.

Environment. Streetscapes offer a great place to integrate nature and green practices into our city, with trees, landscaping, rain gardens, and other green/sustainable features. By encouraging alternatives to driving, they reduce the many negative environmental impacts of vehicles.

Fiscal Efficiency. As the Policy states: “A Complete Streets approach provides a unique opportunity to thoughtfully integrate and advance multiple objectives for our community, now and in the future, while delivering maximum benefits from both public and private investments.”

Comprehensive Plan. The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan calls for Complete Streets investments. The City Charter requires the City to implement its comprehensive plan through City investments. Activity Centers and Corridors are established as priority areas for Complete Streets, to support compact-and-connected growth.

TRAFFIC & MOBILITY: THE COMPLETE STREETS SOLUTION

Do Complete Streets improvements make traffic better or worse?

The body of evidence shows that multimodal streets benefit people when they drive, as well as when they take other modes. Well-designed Complete Streets reduce crashes, while having little or no impact on travel time.

We can't build our way out of congestion. But by improving our streets, we can improve mobility.

7 Mobility Benefits

Reducing new cars on the road. As Austin continues to grow in population, no one wants to see a corresponding increase in traffic. Complete streets make it feasible for people to take transit, bike for transportation, or walk for short trips – rather than adding their cars to congested roads. Complete Streets create a surprisingly big benefit aiding congestion.

Encouraging people to try new modes. To see these congestion-reducing benefits, Austin must make other modes safe and attractive. Research shows that more people will walk or bike if they feel safe. This is the goal of Complete Streets improvements. For example, research shows that when safer bikeways are added, a significant increase follows in people who bike regularly for trips of less than three miles to school, work, or for errands.

Doing more with less. The City right-sizes road lanes during routine roadway resurfacing and reconstruction. This low-cost approach can add two new bike lanes without removing vehicle travel lanes, all within the existing right of way.

Moving more people per road mile. In Central Austin, the right-of-way isn't wide enough to add more vehicle travel lanes, in most cases. What's a city to do? Roads designed to carry only vehicles – usually one person driving alone – require a lot of



road capacity per person. Streets actually increase their people-carrying power as they add modes. Maximizing people-carrying capacity through a complete streets approach is a smart solution. It makes more efficient use of a valuable public asset – the right-of-way.

Reducing neighborhood traffic. When people take short trips on foot or by bicycle, especially from their homes, it translates to fewer non-resident cars driving and parking on neighborhood streets.

Calming neighborhood traffic. Discouraging speeding on streets where people walk and children play or bike is integral to the complete streets approach. Research has shown that features that complete streets also help to reduce speeding – especially slowing the worst speeders.

Bang for the transportation buck. New roadways are tremendously expensive, typically costing hundreds of millions of dollars. Transportation funding is extremely limited. Complete Street improvements are fiscally conservative and taxpayer-friendly because they make better use of the City streets that we already have.