

COMPLETE STREETS NEWS

Summer 2016

Celebrating Two Years of Complete Streets Progress

June 2016 marks the second anniversary of City Council’s adoption of the City of Austin Complete Streets policy. With the policy as its guide, the City has made tremendous progress on taking a Complete Streets approach to everything we do.

To optimize opportunities for integrating pedestrian, bicycle, transit, landscape and safety improvements into *every* project, we’ve established stronger, clearer Complete Streets review processes for all City of Austin projects via the Public Works Department and for private projects via the Land Use Review Division. Meanwhile, staff has been working steadily to update the guidance and regulations that govern the design of our streets.



In 2015, examples of Complete Street improvements completed include:

- 28 miles of new or improved bike lanes
- 16 miles of ADA-compliant sidewalks
- Nearly 5 miles of urban trails (completed or under construction at the end of the year)
- 5 major Great Streets improvements projects Downtown
- 2,918 new street trees and two new rain gardens

In 2015 and 2016, two major corridor improvement programs have moved ahead, one for South Lamar Boulevard and one for Guadalupe Street (The Drag) – both of which take a multimodal approach. (Photo shows a “walk audit” of the Drag.) Improvements have already been made that were recommended through the [South Lamar Corridor Program](#), to enhance safety and connectivity for pedestrians along the corridor, including a new traffic signal and several new pedestrian-activated lights with sidewalks.



Numerous street redesigns by the Austin Transportation Department, all grounded in a Complete Streets approach, were made with the help of Public Works. These include the low-cost, popular “polka dot intersection” at Sixth and Waller streets, and colorful sidewalk extensions at Govalle Avenue and Tillery Street (shown in photo) -- both to improve pedestrian safety.



Improving our streets for transit users and operations also has advanced, thanks to a collaborative working group that includes City and Capital Metro staff – informed by the new National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Transit Street Design Guide.

Safer streets for people is a goal that informs all we do. On May 19, 2016, Austin City Council adopted the Vision Zero Action Plan, towards a goal of zero deaths on our streets. Austin Transportation has undertaken a major safety initiative to redesign the five highest-ranked locations where safety can be improved with engineering solutions, as well as redesigns for neighborhood streets and intersections. Over at Public Works, 153,221 students received safety training from the Safe Routes to School program (2012-2015). Plus, an updated Sidewalk Master Plan was adopted June 16, 2016 – to guide and prioritize projects to make Austin a more walkable, livable and pedestrian-friendly city. As part of our work on the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Smart City Challenge, we began working on the safety of the future – and the day our streets open more fully to driverless cars (beyond the current Google Car testing).

The past year also saw the launch of **Smart Trips Austin** -- an active transportation encouragement program that works directly with individuals and families to encourage them to take trips by walking, biking and transit. As an equity initiative, it was offered first to the Restore Rundberg area, an underserved community. A before-and-after study showed that participants took 11.8 percent more trips by walking, bicycling or using transit and 2.2 percent fewer trips in cars by themselves.



Making our streets more attractive and lively has gotten attention, too. We've partnered with the Economic Development Department and others to add new street banners that identify neighborhood business districts, create "Artboxes" on drab signal boxes to enliven streets popular with tourists and locals alike (coming to South First Street in August), and improve our programs for sidewalk cafes, including parklets.



Like the policy itself, the Complete Streets Program focuses specifically on transforming auto-centric streets into multimodal streets – with a focus on safety, community health, and expanding people’s choices. Program staff served as liaisons to efforts across City departments and developed metrics for evaluation of the City’s progress towards complete streets.

Ultimately, a Complete Streets approach serves to ensure that our transportation system advances the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan vision – for our community’s mobility, equity of access, quality of life, sustainability, health, special character and economic vitality.

About the Complete Streets Policy

The policy states, “The City of Austin commits to improvements that support safe, efficient, and convenient mobility for all roadway users – pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists – regardless of age or ability.” Policy implementation serves to realize the community’s [Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan](#), which provides the overarching Vision for a healthy, green, vibrant, compact and connected community. Complete Streets are an action item in the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan; progress on policy implementation therefore also will be included in that annual report.

The Complete Streets Policy also 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.” Read the policy [here](#).

Mayor’s Challenge for Safer People, Safer Streets

Austin’s award-winning Complete Streets Policy aligns with the core challenge in the [USDOT Mayor’s Challenge for Safer People, Safer Streets](#) first challenge, which is to “take a Complete Streets approach.” The Progress Report fulfills the third challenge, which is to “gather and track biking and walking data.” Mayor Steve Adler committed Austin to join over 200 U.S. cities in participating in the challenge, issued by USDOT Secretary Anthony Foxx to city leaders across the country to “raise the bar for bicyclist and pedestrian safety.”



A March 2016 interim progress report on Austin’s ambitious list of activities is posted on the Austin Transportation [Complete Streets website](#). The Challenge period was extended by USDOT; it now runs through September 2016. A final report on Austin’s accomplishments will be compiled and made available after the challenge closes. (Photo shows new two-way protected bike lane that was installed on Lakeshore Boulevard.)

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