

## Complete Streets

Complete Streets policies ensure that roads are accessible for all kinds of transportation, including biking, walking, and public transit. Complete Streets policies ensure that members of the community have the opportunity to be physically active when making choices about transportation, with safety considered a key element. Currently, 28 states and the District of Columbia have a Complete Streets policy on the books.<sup>1</sup> Complete Streets policies are helping cities redesign to promote healthy lifestyles and active transportation and should be expanded to the rest of the country.

### Why are Complete Streets policies needed?<sup>2</sup>

- ▲ Half of adults and nearly 72 percent of high school students in the United States do not meet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's recommendations for physical activity.
- ▲ Car accidents involving a pedestrian are more than twice as likely to occur on streets without sidewalks. Although pedestrian fatalities have declined over the last decade, this has been attributed to fewer people walking and biking, not an increase in street safety.
- ▲ More than 40 percent of fatalities occurred on roads where no crosswalk was available.
- ▲ Many streets are not safe to navigate for those with disabilities.

### What does a Complete Streets policy do?

- ▲ Complete Streets policies require transportation officials to look beyond automobile traffic when maintaining roads and changing operating procedures and make roads safer and more appealing for pedestrians and cyclists.
- ▲ There is no "cookie-cutter" complete street. Every road differs in order to best serve its particular community and state and metropolitan planning officials retain local control.

### Why do Complete Streets policies work?<sup>3</sup>

- ▲ 43 percent of people with safe places to walk within 10 minutes of home met recommended activity levels, versus only 27 percent of people without safe places within 10 minutes of home.
- ▲ Residents of walkable neighborhoods did about 35-45 more minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week and were substantially less likely to be overweight or obese than similar people living in low-walkable neighborhoods.
- ▲ Nearly one third of transit users meet the Surgeon General's recommendations for minimum daily exercise through their daily travels.

## How could Complete Streets policies improve?

- ▲ There are still many underserved areas that would benefit from Complete Streets policies. Efforts should be made to reach the remaining 22 states without such policies.
- ▲ A series of metrics must be developed to accurately measure the impact of Complete Streets. Being able to quantify the results make it clear which elements work to improve public health and which do not.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> F as in Fat: How Obesity Threatens America's Future (Trust for America's Health and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2013), p.86

<sup>2</sup> "Safety." National Complete Streets Coalition. Smart Growth America, 2014. Web. 28 May 2014.

<sup>3</sup> "Health." National Complete Streets Coalition. Smart Growth America, 2014. Web. 29 May 2014.

<sup>4</sup> "Measuring Performance." National Complete Streets Coalition. Smart Growth America, 2014. Web. 29 May 2014.