



## **Topsham, Maine Complete Streets Policy--Draft**

### **Vision and Purpose**

As a town, Topsham envisions the creation of a community where all residents and visitors can have safe, efficient access to the town's roads, regardless of their preferred mode of travel. By expanding access to town roads and right-of-ways, the town hopes to encourage healthier living in the community along with a more environmentally friendly atmosphere. As multi-modal systems of transportation increase, it becomes more important to keep all users safe as the town continues to integrate current motorist facilities with facilities that allow safe access for expanded public transit and the numerous cyclists and pedestrians that frequent the town's roads and right-of-ways. The town hopes to expand these facilities to allow safe access to all users in order to better the community as a whole.

Complete Streets Policy coincides with goals that the town has set forth in the Comprehensive Plan and that have been addressed in numerous transportation studies performed throughout the town in the past decade. It is the hope of the town that all future planning projects, studies, and plans will incorporate Complete Streets Policy so that the town can efficiently move towards its goal of being a multi-modal community.

### **Users and Modes**

Roads and right-of-ways can be used and accessed by numerous different parties using all types of transportation modes. It is important that in the future the town keeps all possible users of the town's right-of-ways in mind as the town improves and establishes new and current roads. Public transit users, commercial vehicles, and emergency responders utilize the town's roads along with pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists of all ages and abilities. As diversity of interests and background exists in all residents and visitors of the town, numerous different modes of transportation will be utilized today and in the future. The town has to safely integrate all users and modes of transportation on its public right-of-ways and roads as diverse modes of transportation increase in the future.

### **Projects**

One job of the Town of Topsham is to approve new roads that will add to the town's infrastructure and to improve current roads so they are safe to use. All current and potential users are to be considered from the very beginning of every project on all town owned roads and right-of-ways. All projects that involve major changes to current roads and infrastructure are to adhere to Complete Streets Policies. Those projects include, but are not limited to; reconstruction, new road construction, rehabilitation and repaving, and retrofitting roads. As

new road projects in the town are conducted they are to conform to Complete Streets Policies and standards whenever possible.

All projects regardless of the source of funding will consider Complete Streets Policies, principles, and practices whenever the town's public right-of-way is affected. Every construction project involving the public right-of-way is to keep all possible users in mind from the very beginning of each project, and are to help improve the safe access to the right-of-way to all users unless the project qualifies to be exempt because it qualifies as an exception—which are outlined in the exceptions section in this policy.

### **Exceptions**

The town of Topsham will ensure that all projects involving the town's public right-of-ways will appropriately integrate all modes of transportation in context to the zone, neighborhood, and environment in which the project is housed. Exceptions to this policy may be made under one or more of the following project exceptions:

1. Whereas the implementation of Complete Streets Policy interferes with current town codes, state, or federal laws. Such as projects involving limited access highways or roads where some modes of transportation may be prohibited.
  - a. The project must still keep all users in mind that can legally use the road, highway, or right-of-way.
2. Whereas accommodating uses of the town's public right-of-ways is prohibited by law.
3. Whereas the project involves only ordinary maintenance such as: mowing, pothole and crack filling, sweeping and cleaning, or snowplowing, and does not require any major changes to the road or right-of-way.
  - a. Some minor road improvements that should still consider Complete Streets Policy include: expanding pavement, shoulder improvements, and stripping.
4. Whereas the Public Works Director, Planning Board, or town determine that implementing Complete Streets Policy will be a safety hazard.
5. Whereas the town determines that implementation of Complete Streets Policy will not be possible because:
  - a. The cost of a certain project developing a walkway, bike path, or other multi-modal facility comes at too high of a financial cost to the town.
  - b. There is insufficient space in the town's right-of-way to accommodate new multi-modal facilities and nearby or parallel facilities provide sufficient access to nearby destinations
  - c. The project would adversely affect nearby streams, historic landmarks or locations, floodplains, wetlands, or slopes.

- d. The project significantly impacts neighboring land usage, or right-of-way acquisition.
6. Whereas the Planning Board or Town of Topsham votes that the implementation of Complete Streets Policies should not be enforced for a specific project due to genuine extenuating circumstances.

Exceptions outlined in this section must be approved by the Planning Board and then the town in public meeting for applicants attempting to approve a newly constructed road. All other projects must be approved by the Public Works Director.

### **Connectivity and Network Goals**

Through the implementation of this policy all projects should take into account the current multi-modal network and seek to enhance that network. Whenever there is a possible network connection the project should seek to connect multi-modal facilities to the existing network of facilities. For example, if a new sidewalk is being built and it can connect to an existing sidewalk the connection should be made in order to provide greater connectivity throughout the town. Attention should also be given to nearby destination in every project. A project that is near certain locations such as: medical caregivers, malls, schools, parks, and commercial zones should seek to connect these different destinations by allowing safe access along the public right-of-way to all possible users. Special attention should be given to roads and right-of-ways that serve as the primary access to locations such as schools, libraries, or parks. Corridors that have high numbers of non-motorized users should also be given special attention in all projects.

Complete Streets Policy provides roads in town with certain design criteria in order for roads and right-of-ways to create cohesive, safe, and easy to access networks of multi-modal roads that make using the town's roads safer and more accessible. In order to benefit all users, projects should design roads to keep pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists safe. Improvement made to town roads that improve the safety and access of all users will be considered Complete Streets Policy. Some road improvement may include some of the following:

- a. For Pedestrian Safety: sidewalks, sidewalk lights, improved medians, curb extensions, signs, and crosswalk improvements (like the raised crosswalks in downtown Brunswick, or the highlighted crosswalks at Foreside Fields).
- b. For Bicycle Safety: increased pavement markings, signs, bike lanes, wider travel lanes on busy roads, travel medians, wide shoulders, sharrows (shared lanes), separated bike lanes on busy roads, and bicycle parking.
- c. For Disable Person Safety: ADA regulation improvements like curb ramps and accessible pedestrian traffic signals.

- d. For Public Transit Safety: safe bus stops, safe pedestrian access to transit centers, and signs.
- e. For other non-motorized and motorized vehicles when appropriate and legal: street signs, wider shoulders, fences, and off-road paths (This might include snowmobiles, ATVs, or other vehicles and types of transportation not normally allowed on most roads but allowed on certain sections with permission. For example, see sections of the Down East Sunrise Trail and Lovers Lane here in Topsham).

### **Inter-Governmental Cooperation**

Whenever it is appropriate the town of Topsham will reach out to other governments, organization or business in order to achieve cohesion between different parties. The town will work with the Maine DOT in some instances when needed and will coordinate with both the state and surrounding towns to improve multi-modal connectivity and safety.

The town will also coordinate with different companies that also utilize the public right-of-way. Utility companies like CMP, or the Brunswick-Topsham Water District will notify the town when performing projects on the public right of way and will ensure that maintenance and design practices integrate the town's Complete Street Policies within the town's public right-of-way.

### **Context Sensitivity and Environment**

The town of Topsham will ensure that Complete Streets Policy will be implemented in all projects with the knowledge that the enactment of Complete Streets Policy will look different depending on the zone the road is located in, the surrounding locations, and the neighborhood environment. Zones closer to downtown Topsham will require a larger focus on pedestrians than Rural zones far from the built-up section of town. Each project should be reviewed by the Planning Board and the Director of Public Works in regard to the location and necessary steps the project needs to take in order to implement Complete Streets Policies. Nearby location must also be taken into account as a project in a rural zone might also be located in a neighborhood with high frequency of pedestrian use. Some roads in town are also official bicycle routes and projects involving these roads need identify the area and implement Complete Streets Policies accordingly.

### **Design Criteria**

The Planning Board and Planning Department will develop and adopt guidelines, zoning standards, and design criteria based on common design practices throughout Maine and the United States. Design criteria and standards are based off some of the following resources: the AASHTO Green Book; AASHTO Guide for the Planning, Designing and Operating Pedestrian Facilities; AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities; ITE Designing Walkable

Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach; NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide; Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices; the US Access Board Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines, and PACTS Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Design Guidance for the PACTS Metropolitan Planning Area.

The town will be permitted to also consider other innovated designs that are similar to standards set by these resources but are not necessarily dictated by these resources so long as they maintain similar or greater safety and accessibility features.

### **Performance Measures**

On an annual basis, the Director of Public Works in Topsham shall present before the town's selectmen a summary of all projects over the past year. This summary shall include how each project implemented Complete Streets policies and to what extent the policy's objectives have been met. The Director of Public Works will also present which projects did not implement Complete Streets due to exceptions to the policy and why.

### **Implementation**

The town will work to develop strategies of implementation so that the Complete Streets policies can be implemented correctly and efficiently.

- a. Form Committee
  - Form and establish a Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee to help oversee improvements and projects involving Complete Streets policy and other bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout town.
- b. Revise and Restructure Existing Regulatory Policies:
  - Revise current town codes to where they meet standards for Complete Streets implementation.
  - Develop and restructure current strategies and plans to include Complete Streets Policy.
- c. Developing Design Criteria:
  - Along with current design standards develop new criteria for where and how to implement future Complete Streets Policies. Such as lane width changes, striping and other similar changes.
- d. Provide Training:
  - Educate town officials and public works employees on Complete Street policies and how best to implement them in new project on town roads
- e. Measuring Progress and Performance:

- Record and develop a record of Complete Streets implementation as this policy is implemented so that the planning department can review the success of the policy and its implementation.