

## **Complete Streets Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. What is a Complete Street?**

According to Michigan Public Act (PA) 135 of 2010, a Complete Street provides “appropriate access to all legal users in a manner that promotes safe and efficient movement of people and goods whether by car, truck, transit, assistive device, foot or bicycle.”

### **2. Is Complete Streets a law?**

Complete Streets is an approach to transportation planning and design that considers appropriate access for all legal roadway users in the various phases of a transportation project. PA 134 and 135 are laws intended to further the development of Complete Streets and facilitate communication between agencies regarding transportation projects and project elements that contribute to Complete Streets.

### **3. What do these two laws require?**

In summary, PA 135:

- Requires the State Transportation Commission (STC) to adopt a Complete Streets Policy for MDOT.
- Establishes a Complete Streets Advisory Council within MDOT.
- Specifies consultation requirements.

Michigan Public Act 134 of 2010, a companion bill to PA 135, amends the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. This amendment expands the definition of "street" to include all legal users, and expands elements that may be included in a master plan to include all forms of transportation and their interconnectivity. It further specifies that transportation improvements be appropriate to their context and implemented in cooperation with the appropriate road agency.

### **4. What is a Complete Streets policy?**

According to PA 135, a Complete Streets policy provides guidance that promotes Complete Streets. The law states that the policy should be sensitive to the local context and consider the functional class of the roadway, project costs, and the varying mobility needs of all legal users of the roadway. Additionally, the law states the policy should allow for appropriate exemptions. The law requires the STC to adopt a Complete Streets policy by August 2012. The law also requires that the STC develop a model local Complete Streets policy that may be adopted at the discretion of local units of government.

### **5. Are local agencies required to adopt Complete Streets policies?**

Neither PA 134 nor PA 135 requires local agencies to adopt a Complete Streets policy.

**6. How can my community compete for Complete Streets funding?**

There is no specific funding set aside for Complete Streets, nor is there any new mandate for the redistribution of existing funding sources to fund Complete Streets. Section 10k of PA 51 of 1951 already requires that an average of 1 percent of distributed state transportation funds in all jurisdictions be used for nonmotorized facilities. PA 135 modified the language in PA 51 to clarify that nonmotorized facilities that contribute to Complete Streets are an eligible use of those funds.

**7. Is Complete Streets a grant program?**

Complete Streets is not a grant program and does not offer or entitle any community to funding for infrastructure improvements. Complete Streets is a concept in which multiple modes of transportation are considered and, when appropriate, addressed in some form as part of transportation projects.

**8. How does having a Complete Street policy tie in to Federal Transportation Enhancement Program Funding?**

The federal Transportation Enhancement (TE) program is a competitive grant program administered by MDOT to fund a variety of projects, including but not limited to projects that support walking and bicycling. Because the TE program funds projects that contribute to Complete Streets, it is logical that communities will pursue it. However, because of the program's popularity, communities with Complete Streets policies in place must still submit applications that are competitive and meet other program goals and criteria. TE program review criteria have been revised to enable communities with Complete Streets policies to receive additional consideration. It is important to understand that simply having a Complete Streets policy in place does not guarantee a project will be funded.

**9. How do we pay for Complete Streets?**

Amenities and facilities associated with or that contribute to Complete Streets may be funded from several existing sources. There is no designated source of money to pay for funding Complete Streets projects, nor is there any additional funding available in regular transportation funding programs. Implementing Complete Streets concepts or facilities may be accomplished by shifting of resources, leveraging new sources of funding, or both. Most federal transportation funding programs allow program funds to pay for Complete Streets-related facilities. The Michigan Transportation Fund (MTF) also can be used to fund Complete Streets facilities. Other *non-traditional* sources of funding that can be considered include: Capital Improvement Programs, Downtown Development Authority programs and other local tax increment finance authorities, grants from public or private entities, special assessments, the private sector via new development agreements, Community Development Block Grants, foundations, and many more.

**10. Who manages Michigan's Complete Streets Program?**

No one agency or group “manages” Complete Streets in Michigan. A Complete Street is a concept, not a program, and as such no one agency is responsible. Many local groups, or agencies with statewide reach are involved in Complete Streets in one form or another. If a community has a Complete Streets policy, it is coordinated and implemented locally by an individual or group of individuals within the community. A good place to find local information is the local planning or engineering department, the clerk’s office, the city manager or a similar municipal official. Since the passage of a Complete Streets policy will directly affect road agencies that have jurisdiction over transportation facilities within the community, it is important to engage and continually communicate with road agencies that will be affected.

**11. Is Complete Streets only for nonmotorized trail projects?**

The law states that Complete Streets are “roadways planned, designed, and constructed to provide appropriate access to all legal users,” and it defines a policy as: “a document that provides guidance for the planning, design and construction of roadways or an interconnected network of transportation facilities.” The definition of Complete Streets does not indicate nor specify what type of facility or project is required to constitute a Complete Street. There are no *standards* for what a Complete Street looks like or should include. When planning, scoping and designing transportation projects, MDOT uses a Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) process in working with our stakeholders to determine how to address Complete Street needs.

**12. Can a community require a road commission or MDOT to build pathways if it has adopted a Complete Streets policy?**

State law does not give local communities authority or jurisdiction over the projects planned or undertaken by transportation agencies. The law requires road commissions, MDOT and local units of government to consult with one another regarding projects or plans and to agree on how best to address their respective Complete Streets policies.

As required by the STC's CSS policy (2005), MDOT utilizes a CSS process on all of its projects. As defined in PA 135 Sec. 10p (b), a Complete Street “is sensitive to the local context and recognizes that needs vary according to urban, suburban, and rural settings.” Through the CSS process, MDOT engages dialog among stakeholders to discuss: community land use and transportation planning, community context, and user needs.

The goal of this process is to determine the appropriate response to a community’s needs, which includes addressing all legal users as defined under Complete Streets.

**13. How does a local government pass a Complete Streets policy?**

Efforts to pursue a local Complete Streets policy should not be done in a vacuum. Individuals or groups interested in having a local government pass a Complete Streets policy should begin their efforts by communicating with and educating appointed and elected officials on the specific aspects they believe are relevant and important to them and their community; and how and why they believe a Complete Streets policy would enhance or strengthen those qualities. During this process, it also will be necessary to work with local planning and engineering departments, the clerk's office, and municipal officials. Because the passage of a Complete Streets policy will directly affect road agencies that have jurisdiction over roads within the community, it is important to engage and continually communicate with road agencies that will be impacted. Efforts also should be made to inform residents, property owners, business officials and non-profit organizations during this process. All communities are unique and, as such, each community should develop a policy that is unique to them rather than pass a "boiler plate" resolution, policy, or ordinance.

**14. Who can I call for more information?**

There is not one point of contact or source for information concerning Complete Streets. Who you call will depend on the nature of the information being sought. If the information you are seeking relates to a local community, a good place to start would be the local planning or engineering department, the clerk's office, the city manager or similar municipal official.