

TOWN OF AMHERST COMPLETE STREETS POLICY
Adopted May 14, 2018
Town of Amherst Select Board

Preamble:

Amherst is a unique community. It has a three-centuries-long history, a New England town character that includes a compact downtown and numerous localized village centers, large amounts of conservation land and wide areas of rural character, and many narrow roads. It is home to three institutions of higher education, and many college and graduate students. Its neighborhoods have strong identities. It is very diverse, with a range of races and ethnicities, people from all over the world, and a large fraction of low-income students and families.

The Town, through the proven commitment of the Select Board, Town Meeting, Town departments and committees, stakeholders and citizens, has long supported the principles of Complete Streets. Its previous support include formation of the Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee in the 1970s and the recent Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC); the adoption of Safe Routes to School; the development of numerous bicycle lanes and off-road multi-use paths, including the Norwottuck Trail and the Swift Connector; the maintenance of a robust array of hiking trails; fiscal support for UMass Amherst Transportation Services and Pioneer Valley Transit Authority and advocacy for transit routes that are relied upon by all residents and particularly by low-income residents; the reconfiguration of roads and intersections to include crosswalks, sidewalks, bus stops, and roundabouts; support for the upcoming Regional Bike Sharing Program; and the development of the 2015 Amherst Transportation Plan.

1. Vision & Intent

Under this Complete Streets Policy, the Town of Amherst shall develop and provide an integrated multimodal transportation network that contributes directly to the safety, health, economic vitality and quality of life of all residents especially the most vulnerable.

Non-automobile modes of transportation including bicycling, walking, and public transportation shall be included in transportation planning and projects. They will be parts of daily life in Amherst, with enhanced networks and inter-modal connections. Motor vehicular traffic will continue to serve personal needs, commerce, and emergency response, with reduced pollution and traffic congestion. Persons of all ages, abilities and circumstances will be able to use a diversity of transportation modes for all kinds of trips, including commuting, shopping, going to school, and recreating; and they will be able to meet their transportation needs safely, conveniently, reliably, affordably, and efficiently.

The desired outcome of the Complete Streets Policy is to create an equitable, balanced, and effective transportation system where every transportation user can travel safely and comfortably, and where sustainable transportation options are available to everyone. Together, this integrated transportation system will support healthy and thriving people, neighborhoods, village centers, cultural life and businesses.

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The intent of this Policy is to formalize the strategic and comprehensive planning, design, operation and maintenance of Amherst roadways so that Complete Streets principles are incorporated. These principles strive to provide the best possible combination of service, mobility, convenience, health and safety while strengthening social, economic, equity and environmental influences within Amherst.

Core Commitment

2. All Users and Modes

Amherst's transportation system shall be designed, maintained and operated to the greatest extent possible to ensure and promote the safety, health, comfort and convenience of all users of all modes of transportation. These users include pedestrians, bicyclists, assistive mobility device users, public transit and paratransit riders, motorists, commercial vehicle drivers, emergency crews, and freight providers. Those who cannot drive private cars – including children, and many elderly, disabled or low-income residents – will have increased mobility, independence and safety. The transportation system will contribute directly to the safety, health, economic vitality and quality of life of all Town residents and will promote access to multi-modal transportation for users of all ages, abilities, incomes, races, ethnicities, genders and circumstances.

3. All Projects and Phases

All transportation and roadway projects, including municipal road repairs, upgrades and expansion projects on public right-of-way, are an opportunity to implement Complete Streets planning, design and construction. Complete Streets elements that anticipate future demand for walking, bicycling, transit and motorist uses will be integrated into the design of new, rehabilitated or reconstructed roadways and/or transportation infrastructure projects. Complete Streets may be achieved by incorporating single elements into a particular project or incrementally through a series of smaller improvements or maintenance over time.

The Town will develop procedures to incorporate Complete Street elements in all transportation projects, including municipal road repairs, upgrades, or expansion projects on public right-of-way. The Town will approach every relevant project – transportation, public utilities, infrastructure, and public and private development – as an opportunity to improve the public way and transportation network and will actively seek opportunities to repurpose rights-of-way to enhance inter-connections for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit.

4. Exceptions

Any work to the transportation network that is considered routine maintenance that does not change the roadway geometry or operations, such as traffic signal upgrades, mowing, sweeping, pothole repair and non-structural overlays shall be automatically exempt from this policy.

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Additional exceptions to the Policy may be approved when:

- A reasonable and equivalent project along the same corridor is already programmed to provide facilities exempted from the proposed project.
- Transit accommodations are not required where there is no existing or planned transit service.
- Cost of accommodation is excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use.
- Documentation or factors indicating an absence of current and future need.

Additional exceptions from the Complete Street Policy shall be reviewed by the Transportation Advisory Committee, which will forward its recommendations to the Select Board with supporting documentation. Any exceptions must be approved by the Select Board, with documentation made publicly available.

Best Practices:

5. Network

The Town of Amherst Complete Streets Policy will focus on developing an interconnected, integrated, multi-modal transportation network. This network will offer robust transportation routes and options together with inter-modal transfers, to provide connections between homes, neighborhoods, schools/higher education institutions, major employers, recreation/retail destinations including downtown, village centers as well as adjoining towns and transportation systems.

6. Jurisdiction

All transportation infrastructure and street design and construction projects requiring funding (state, federal, and private) or approval by the Town of Amherst shall adhere to the Town's Complete Streets policy. For projects inside the Town's boundaries but outside its jurisdiction, such as on a private development or at a higher education institution, the Town shall advocate that the project comply with the Complete Streets Policy and interconnect with the existing multimodal transportation network.

Complete Streets infrastructure within its jurisdiction shall be performed by the Department of Public Works (DPW) in coordination with the Town Planning Department, Transportation Advisory Committee, Select Board and other relevant departments, boards/committees, agencies and jurisdictions as needed. The Town will build and maintain partnerships with MassDOT, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Pioneer Valley Transit Authority, Amherst School Districts, neighboring municipalities, private developers, public and private utilities, higher education institutions and other entities in order to further the Town's vision of an interconnected and integrated multi-modal network.

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7. Design

The Town of Amherst shall use the best and latest design guidance, standards, and recommendations to maximize design flexibility and innovation while balancing user and modal needs. The goal will be to design at the human scale so that transportation users from all locations and walks of life can navigate routes and networks safely, conveniently, affordably and reliably. Design criteria shall not be purely prescriptive but shall be based on the thoughtful application of engineering and urban design principals. References include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Documents and plans created for the Town of Amherst, including but not limited to:
 - ▶ Amherst Master Plan
 - ▶ Amherst Transportation Plan
 - ▶ Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)
 - ▶ Amherst Street Tree Inventory & Map
- The Massachusetts Department of Transportation Project Design and Development Guidebook
- Massachusetts Separated Bike Lane Planning and Design Guide
- The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Street Design Guide
- The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Bikeway Design Guide
- Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's Healthy Community Design Toolkit
- Urban, Rural and Suburban Complete Streets Design Manual for the City of Northampton and Communities in Hampshire County
- American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), A Policy on Geometric Design of Highway and Streets
- The United States Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)
- Guidelines provided in the ADA Standards for Accessible Design
- Transportation Plans from Amherst's higher education institutions

8. Context sensitivity

Complete Streets elements included in the development and implementation of roadway projects shall be applied in a manner sensitive to the context of the community's physical, economic, and social setting. This context sensitive approach seeks a balance between preserving and enhancing scenic, aesthetic, historical, community and environmental resources while improving or maintaining safety, mobility, accessibility and infrastructure. It includes participation of those affected, and, as much as feasible, neighborhood-based community outreach and/or meetings on or near project sites. Balance is achieved through broad, active and innovative public outreach efforts early and continually, the application of flexibility through design, addressing all modes of travel, and considering the community's goals, values and aesthetics at a level commensurate with project needs.

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9. Performance measures

Established performance standards that measure how well the street is serving all users will ensure the policy's success. As better data collection evolves so will the standards.

Using existing baseline data, the following performance measures will be used to show progress:

- Linear feet of new or reconstructed sidewalks
- Miles of new or restriped on-street bicycle facilities
- Number of new or repainted crosswalks
- Number of new street trees/number of street trees removed/ Total number of street trees
- Crosswalk and intersection improvements
- Miles of repaved or reconstructed road

The following data will be collected moving forward:

- New intermodal connections
- New and enhanced connections between areas of lower income households to downtown, villages, workplaces, retail and service centers, and other transportation modes
- Miles of buffered and off-street bicycle facilities

Additionally, the Town will work toward using the following metrics as data become available:

- Condition of existing sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes and markings, including during winter months
- Percent completion of bicycle and pedestrian networks envisioned by Town plans
- Change in percentage of transit stops accessible via sidewalks and curb ramps
- Change in rate of crashes, injuries and fatalities by mode
- Reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT)
- Number and reasons of approved exemptions from Town Complete Streets Policy

10. Implementation

The Town of Amherst shall implement Complete Streets so it becomes integral to everyday transportation decision-making practices and processes. The following is the implementation plan:

1. Develop a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan (Tier 2) and submit to the MassDOT for approval.
2. Establish new or revise existing procedures, plans, regulations, policies, guidelines and other documentation to assure accommodation of all users in each project and to reflect current best practices in transportation design.
3. Encourage municipal staff and community leaders to attend training on Complete Streets principles and best implementation practices.
4. Establish and maintain a comprehensive inventory of pedestrian, bicycle and transit infrastructure to assist with prioritization of improvement projects.
5. Develop a town-wide pedestrian and bicycle network plan.
6. Promote inter-departmental project coordination among Town departments to encourage the most responsible and efficient use of resources for projects within the public way.

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7. Consider capital planning and funding increases to encourage implementation of the Complete Streets Policy.
8. Pursue appropriate sources of funding and grants related to Complete Streets.
9. Foster partnerships with neighboring communities and influence agencies to further the Town's Complete Streets initiatives and infrastructure beyond the Town's borders in order to expand the network.
10. Every Complete Streets project shall include an educational and community outreach component to ensure that all users of the transportation system understand and can safely utilize Complete Streets elements while promoting healthy habits. Outreach will include investigation of the needs of diverse users that would help support shifts to greater walking, biking and transit use.
11. Enforce and provide education on proper road use behavior for all users and all modes, and adopt additional regulations as necessary.
12. Present a Progress Report to the Transportation Advisory Committee, Select Board and Town Manager each year including performance measures, outcomes and Complete Streets implementation successes.

Oversight responsibility: The Select Board through the Town Manager shall oversee implementation and execution of this policy in consultation with the Transportation Advisory Committee and other appropriate Town departments and committees.

Effective Date:

This Policy shall be effective May 14, 2018 and any subsequent amendments shall become effective upon the date of their adoption.

Amherst Select Board

Approved this 14 day of May, 2018