

December 1, 2009
Susan Bransen
Associate Deputy Director
California Transportation Commission
By email to susan.bransen@dot.ca.gov

Dear Ms. Bransen:

I am writing to applaud the inclusion of strong "complete streets" components within the CTC's draft RTP guidelines and to urge the CTC to retain or strengthen these provisions.

As noted in the draft guidance, "A 'Complete Street' is a transportation facility that is planned, designed, operated and maintained to provide safe mobility for all users, including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders, and motorists appropriate to the function and context of the facility."

The CTC's draft guidance goes on to: 1) note existing California law pertaining to complete streets, 2) explain how complete streets can improve public health, and 3) encourage (but not mandate) regional transportation agencies to work with their local partners to ensure that complete streets-compatible projects are integrated into transportation planning and funding activities.

Complete streets are badly needed in California, where obesity rates are skyrocketing (CA Dep't of Public Health), transit services are increasingly desired (Public Policy Institute of CA) and fully twenty percent of traffic-related fatalities are people walking or bicycling (CHP).

Complete streets will enable California communities to promote safer and healthier transportation while helping the state achieve key goals related to climate change and public health. The CTC should retain a strong complete streets component within its draft RTP guidelines.

Thank you for your considerations.
Sincerely,
Andrew Bloomgarden

Complete Streets-related language included in CTC's draft RTP guidance
(See page 30
at http://www.catc.ca.gov/programs/rtp/Archive/RTP_Guidelines_Ver_1_6_102609_Draft.doc)

Complete Streets

A "Complete Street" is a transportation facility that is planned, designed, operated and maintained to provide safe mobility for all users, including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders, and motorists appropriate to the function and context of the facility.

The Complete Streets Act of 2008 ensures that the transportation plans of California cities and counties meet the needs of all users, including pedestrians, transit, bicyclists, the elderly, motorists, and disabled. AB 1358 requires cities and counties to identify how the jurisdiction will provide accommodation of all users of roadways during the revision of the circulation element of their general plan. The bill directs the Office of Planning and Research to amend guidelines for the development of the circulation element to accommodate all users.

Planning for Complete Streets will enable local governments to provide healthier lives. Complete streets encourage physical activity. Public health studies have demonstrated that people are more likely to walk in their neighborhood if it has sidewalks. Also, studies have found that people with safe walking environments within a 10 minute walking radius are more likely to meet recommended physical activity levels. The integration of sidewalks, bike lanes, transit amenities, and safe crossing into initial design of projects is more cost effective than making costly retrofits later. Complete Streets is also a key strategy in the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Providing community residents with the option that gets them out of their cars is a proven strategy for improving communities, reducing air pollution, and generating local business.

While AB 1358 provides no statutory requirement for MPOs and RTPAs, the consideration and integration of Complete Streets policies is strongly recommended:

MPOs and RTPAs should integrate Complete Streets policies into their Regional Transportation Plans, identify the financial resources necessary to accommodate such policies, and should consider accelerating programming for projects that retrofit existing roads to provide safe and convenient travel by all users.

MPOs and RTPAs should encourage all jurisdictions and agencies within the region to ensure that their circulation elements and street and road standards, including planning, design, construction, operations, and maintenance procedures, address all users of the transportation system, to the extent practicable.

Regional planning agencies should also include "Complete Streets" improvements in MPO/RTPA funded transportation system projects to the extent feasible.

Requirements (Shalls)

Federal: None

State:

Recommendations (Shoulds)

Federal: None

State: Government Code 65040.2 Section (2)(h) (h). It is the intent of the Legislature to require in the development of the circulation element of a local government's general plan that the circulation of users of streets, roads, and highways be accommodated in a manner suitable for the respective setting in rural, suburban, and urban contexts, and that users of streets, roads, and highways include bicyclists, children, persons with disabilities, motorists, movers of commercial goods, pedestrians, public transportation, and seniors.

Best Practices: Caltrans and MPOs/RTPAs impact transportation decisions, not just at a statewide and regional level, but also influence local transportation planning decisions. AB 1358 is significant to future local land use and planning decisions. Complete Streets policies and practices are best implemented with a comprehensive and integrated approach of all agencies involved.