



Athens in Motion Commission

Athens-Clarke County Complete Streets Policy

I. Vision and Intent

Athens-Clarke County is committed to improving the health, safety, livability, and opportunity of all of its residents and visitors, regardless of age, ability, gender, sexual orientation, income, race, or ethnicity. Thus, this Complete Streets Policy is written to incorporate the needs of all users into the design and construction of roadway projects.

1. “Complete Streets” are roadways designed and operated to safely and comfortably accommodate users of all ages and abilities, including cyclists, pedestrians, transit riders, the elderly, wheelchair users, delivery and service personnel, emergency responders, and motorists. A Complete Street framework shifts the status quo of street design from being car-centric to being designed for all users.
2. This Complete Streets policy directs ACCGov Department of Transportation and Public Works to address all these varied users during the planning, design, construction, funding and operation of Athens-Clarke County’s transportation network. This policy applies to new construction, reconstruction, retrofits, repaving, and operation of the transportation network, with some exemptions to be described later in this policy.
3. It shall be the official policy of Athens-Clarke County to incorporate Complete Streets into all Transportation Projects that are within the county’s transportation network. In making this commitment, Athens-Clarke County views all transportation improvements as opportunities to foster a safe, convenient, reliable, efficient, integrated, connected and equitable transportation network, especially in the most underserved communities.
4. Athens’ bike and pedestrian master plan, Athens in Motion, creates such a network and uses a Complete Streets approach. This policy, however, addresses not only the Athens in Motion network of projects but applies to all transportation projects in Athens.

II. Benefits

The benefits of Complete Streets are many and varied:

1. Improve safety for people of all ages and physical and mental abilities, using all modes of transportation: walking and biking, using scooters and other micro-mobility devices, taking the bus, and using motorized vehicles.
2. Provide bicycling and walking connections to trip generators such as employment, education, residential, recreation, retail centers and public facilities.
3. Promote healthy lifestyles and provide opportunities for increased physical activity.
4. Create more livable, sustainable, and equitable communities.
5. Stimulate the local economy by inviting private investment and improving access to jobs and shopping.
6. Increase mobility for the young, elderly, and people with disabilities by making roads easier and safer to navigate.
7. Reduce traffic congestion and reliance on carbon fuels, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions and helping fight climate change.

III. Policy Objectives

1. Make the practice of creating Complete Streets a routine part of everyday operations, working in coordination with other departments, agencies, and jurisdictions to maximize opportunities for Complete Streets, connectivity, and cooperation;
2. Approach every relevant project, program, and practice as an opportunity to improve streets and the transportation network for all users;
3. Ensure the use of the latest and best design standards, policies, and guidelines;
4. Utilize a context-sensitive approach and provide transportation system design that considers local land development patterns;
5. Promote safety, quality of life, and economic development;
6. Prioritize the needs of existing neighborhoods and those who reside in them;
7. Address transportation inequity as a community dedicated to acknowledging past mistakes and neglect of our neighborhoods for racial and socio-economic reasons. Thus, prioritize active transportation in neighborhoods that have historically suffered neglect and degradation due to societal inequities.

IV. Equity

A Complete Streets design approach creates a more equitable transportation system by providing affordable, convenient, fair and accessible modes of transportation for all people, including vulnerable populations.

1. Historically, transportation corridor planning processes have disadvantaged minority communities, low income communities, as well as the elderly, children, and people with disabilities. In car-dependent communities, non-drivers have less mobility, resulting in

reduced economic or social opportunities. Equity decisions are based on criteria defined in the Athens in Motion plan (Table 4-1):

- a. Public sidewalk to road ratio,
- b. bus service area coverage,
- c. households with no vehicle,
- d. population commuting by public transit,
- e. percent in poverty over 65,
- f. percent in poverty under 18.

2. In addressing equity in transportation, the Department of Transportation and Public Works will work with the Office of Inclusion and with communities of concern to further outline and expand these criteria.
3. Equity requires routine investment in underserved neighborhoods with vulnerable populations and additional funds to remedy past deficits in transportation funding.
4. Buy-in from these communities in all stages of project development is a critical part of establishing equity in transportation.
5. Because equity also refers to considering the needs of all users, all projects should be addressed from a multi-modal approach. Adding enhancements should not result in impediments for others relying on other modes of transportation. For example, a bike lane intersecting a crosswalk should not impede users of the crosswalk. To that end, Complete Streets efforts shall incorporate Universal Design Principles¹.
6. ACCGov must be dedicated to measuring and evaluating projects to ensure that they have their intended effects on equity and that vulnerable populations are benefiting.

V. Applicability and Requirements

The Complete Streets Policy is to be applied to all new construction and reconstruction projects of local roadways, intersection improvements, repaving, restoration, restriping, resurfacing, road widening and includes the planning, design, approval, and implementation process. Requirements associated with Complete Streets projects include the following:

1. Roadway projects shall accommodate all users of the transportation system, including people walking, people biking, people rolling, people using mass transit, people with disabilities, the elderly, motorists, freight providers, and emergency responders.
2. Roadway projects shall make use of the latest and best design standards, policies, and guidelines. Recommended design guideline standards should include the appropriate use of the following professional guidelines for complete streets design (and their revisions):
 - a. Guide for Planning, Designing and Operating Pedestrian Facilities - American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)
 - b. Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities - AASHTO
 - c. Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach - Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE)
 - d. Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets - ITE

¹ The Seven Universal Design Principles are: 1) Equitable use, 2) Flexibility in use, 3) Simple and intuitive use, 4) Perceptible information, 5) Tolerance for error, 6) Low physical effort, and 7) Size and space for approach.

- e. Urban Bikeway Design Guide - National Association of City Transportation Officials - (NACTO)
- f. Urban Street Design Guide - NACTO
- g. Designing for Pedestrian Safety- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- h. Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks - FHWA
- i. Separated Bike Lane Planning and Design Guide -FHWA
- j. Don't Give Up at the Intersection - NACTO
- k. Designing for All Ages and Abilities - NACTO
- l. Complete Streets Design Policy - Georgia Department of Transportation

3. Accommodations shall be provided to all users of the transportation system to be able to continue to use the road and sidewalk safely and efficiently during any construction or repair work that infringes on the right-of-way and/or sidewalk.

VI. Exceptions

1. Exceptions to this Complete Streets policy in providing for all modes in transportation projects may be authorized in the following situations:
 - a. All parts of the project fall outside the purview of local guidelines, and outside entities are not willing to work with ACC.
 - b. Implementation of this policy compromises the safety of users due to physical constraints, natural or constructed, i.e., an old bridge that is too narrow or a narrow road without a shoulder and no way to widen it due to a sheer face or an unmovable barrier.
 - c. At the discretion of the Transportation and Public Works Director, based on data and analysis of road use, conditions, and/or context.
2. Exceptions to the Complete Streets Policy will go through the following process:
 - a. The Department of Transportation and Public Works in consultation with other departments involved in the project shall put into writing exceptions and provide supporting documentation on how the project fits into one of the aforementioned exception categories.
 - b. Exceptions shall be presented to the Athens in Motion Commission at meetings open to the public.
 - c. Documentation of any proposed exceptions shall be made public in the Athens in Motion agendas and minutes.
 - d. Explanations of these exceptions will be presented to the mayor and commission at appropriate times in the project design phase. Documentation of any proposed exceptions shall be made public through the ACC website.

VII. Land Use and Context Sensitivity

Transportation projects must be developed with sensitivity to the surrounding context including current and planned buildings, parks, trails, and with understanding of current and expected transportation needs.

1. New or revised land use policies, plans, zoning ordinances or equivalent documents are encouraged to support the ACCGov Complete Streets policy and promote dense, mixed-use, transit-oriented development.
2. All Complete Streets' solutions must be appropriate and sensitive to the context and intended character of the immediate area as proposed in the Athens-Clarke County Comprehensive Plan and the Athens in Motion bike and pedestrian master plan.
3. Design criteria shall be based on the thoughtful application of engineering, architectural and urban design principles such that all transportation projects shall make Athens-Clarke county a more appealing, enjoyable, and sustainable place in which to live and work.
4. Roadway, bike infrastructure, and sidewalk design decisions shall include public outreach and input and be sensitive to values of Athens-Clarke County as a walkable, vibrant, sustainable, and bike friendly community.
5. Projects in historic districts shall be designed to enhance the district's historic character.
6. Unintended consequences such as involuntary displacement shall be avoided when possible or addressed with equity and fairness to the affected party or parties.

VIII. Jurisdiction

1. All transportation infrastructure projects requiring funding or approval by the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County shall adhere to this Complete Streets Policy.
2. The City Manager shall require the staff of Transportation and Public Work, Director Capital Project, consultants, and other relevant departments to implement the Complete Streets improvements in a unified and coordinated manner through consistent and thorough communication on Complete Streets topics at regular leadership meetings and in staff activity reports to the county manager and the Mayor and Commission.
3. Projects funded by non-municipal governmental agencies such as regional, state, and federal government shall adhere to this policy as much as possible. To the greatest extent, coordination between municipal and non-municipal staff responsible for planning and engineering of Complete Streets shall receive special attention.
4. Private developments that include transportation infrastructure are encouraged to adhere to this policy. The Planning Department shall make private developers aware of the ACCGov Complete Streets policy to encourage their adoption of Complete Streets design elements.

IX. Implementation

1. The Director of the Department of Transportation and Public Works shall be responsible for adherence to the Complete Streets policy through the work of the Bike-Pedestrian

Coordinator and the Athens in Motion Commission. The City Manager shall oversee that position's adherence.

2. The Bike-Pedestrian Coordinator and Transportation and Public Works Director shall evaluate road projects not in AIM as to whether Complete Streets improvements would enhance the streets use for all users and present findings to AiM Commission.
3. The Bike Pedestrian Coordinator, the department of Transportation and Public Works and the Athens in Motion commission will review and update the Complete Streets policy on an annual basis with the Complete Streets evaluation report.-Any revisions to this Complete Streets policy will be presented to and approved by the Mayor and Commission.
4. TPW shall review and modify its procedures, documents, training programs, and performance measures within TWO years of the effective date of this resolution to ensure that the needs of all users of the highways, roads, and streets in Athens-Clarke County are included in all phases of all transportation projects, including funding, planning, designing, operating, and maintaining transportation infrastructure. Other ACCGov departments are strongly encouraged to do this as well within the same timeframe.
5. Within two years, ACCGov shall ensure the use of design manuals, standards, and guidelines based on the latest and best practices of street design, construction, operations, and maintenance as these apply to bicycle, pedestrian, transit, and highway facilities within Athens-Clarke County. The Bike Pedestrian Coordinator, the department of Transportation and Public Works, the Athens in Motion Commission and other applicable departments will annually review current design standards to ensure that they are the best available resources. All manuals, standards, and guidelines must be made publicly available online; any locally-developed design guidelines should include a public commentary period following the approved AiM/TPW public engagement strategy during the development phase and opportunities for public comment through ongoing use. Recommended design guidelines are included in section IV above.
6. TPW shall fund and encourage staff professional development and training to be fully conversant about Complete Streets issues including motorized and non-motorized transportation conferences, classes, seminars, and workshops and with a focus on design, implementation, community engagement and equity. Staff working on such projects shall attend continuing education and/or regularly review professional publications and research on best practices. Staff shall provide educational opportunities for ACCGov boards, committees and commissions, business district leaders, and other institutions to communicate the importance of the Complete Streets policy.
7. Transportation planning and engineering consultants shall be evaluated and selected based on their leadership in implementation of cost-effective, practical projects that adhere to this Complete Streets policy.
8. ACCGov staff in the Department of Transportation and Public Works, the Capital Projects Director, and other applicable departments are encouraged to identify all funding sources for street improvements and evaluate every upcoming project as an opportunity for a Complete Streets project. Transportation project evaluation and criteria scoring shall include equity factors that prioritize investing in projects in neighborhoods that have been historically underserved by the county.

9. All transportation projects will undergo a public engagement process to ensure all users have a voice in the capital design workflow. Transportation and Public Works will follow the rigorous public engagement process presented to and approved by the Mayor and Commission in 2019. This process shall include both online and in-person commenting opportunities.
10. As appropriate, transportation projects using Complete Streets design elements shall include an educational and/or outreach component to ensure that users of the transportation system understand and can safely use a project's elements. Educational and/or outreach components may include permanent or temporary signage; materials; events; social, web or video posts.
11. ACCGov is encouraged to incorporate Complete Streets design into relevant upcoming revisions to policies and codes. For example, when revising zoning and subdivision codes, housing and development policies, and other plans, laws, procedures, rules, regulations, guidelines, programs, templates, and other materials that would integrate, accommodate, and balance the needs of all users in all street projects on public and private streets.

X. Performance measures

1. Transportation and Public Works shall measure and report every year to the Mayor and Commission, the Athens in Motion Commission, and to the general public, a Complete Streets evaluation using agreed-upon and relevant criteria.
 - a. The Athens in Motion Commission, in consultation with the Bike, Pedestrian, and Safety Coordinator and the Transportation and Public Works department, shall establish performance targets and identify performance measures within one year of the adoption of the Complete Streets Policy.
 - b. In choosing performance measures, the AiM Commission shall consider data availability and strategies for systematic collection of data over time.
 - c. The AiM Commission shall consider both quantitative and qualitative performance measures and shall include performance measures that track progress on equitable implementation in low-income communities, moderate-income communities, and historically underserved African-American communities.
2. Performance measures shall include the AIM plan success measures as well as other measures decided upon such as the following:
 - a. Amount and types/quality of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities, especially relative to race/income of neighborhood residents (i.e., miles of sidewalks and bike infrastructure, crosswalk and intersection improvements, ADA compliant new curb ramps, bicycle parking spaces created) and an analysis of the equitable distribution of projects with respect to factors including but not limited to income, race, vehicle access, and geographical location.
 - b. Measurements regarding existing levels of service for different modes of transport and categories of users to include pedestrian, bicyclist and bus ridership counts and

percentages of employee, student and visitor arrivals by foot, bicycle, transit, motor vehicles and other identified modes of transportation.

- c. Crash statistics by neighborhood and mode of transportation, as well as bicycle and pedestrian injuries and fatalities.
- d. Quantitative and qualitative measurements in categories such as access to improved facilities, economic development, environmental improvements, and health;
- e. Number of and reasons for exceptions granted to Complete Streets policies;
- f. The status of updated documents, such as master plans, design guidelines, and decision-making frameworks to support Complete Streets;
- g. The quality and quantity of community engagement, especially in low- and moderate-income communities through meetings, community events, and creative outreach and consideration of their suggestions along with documentation of improvements that resulted from their input.
- h. Other benchmarks to track the safety, functionality, health, economic development, affordability, and actual use of the neighborhoods and areas within Athens-Clarke County by each category of users.

3. Every other year, the Complete Streets annual evaluation will also include an equity analysis of Complete Streets Policy. The report shall include, but is not be limited to the following:

- a. A summary of how the policy implementation is being prioritized in low-income communities, moderate-income communities, historically underserved African-American communities, and Latino communities.
- b. A comparative analysis of Complete Streets policy implementation of the city overall to the policy implementation in low-income communities, moderate-income communities, historically underserved African-American communities, and Latino communities.

From the National Complete Streets Coalition, 2018,
<https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/elements-complete-streets-policy/>

An ideal Complete Streets policy includes the following:

1. Vision and intent: Includes an equitable vision for how and why the community wants to complete its streets. Specifies need to create complete, connected, network and specifies at least four modes, two of which must be biking or walking.
2. Diverse users: Benefits all users equitably, particularly vulnerable users and the most underinvested and underserved communities.
3. Commitment in all projects and phases: Applies to new, retrofit/reconstruction, maintenance, and ongoing projects.
4. Clear, accountable expectations: Makes any exceptions specific and sets a clear procedure that requires high-level approval and public notice prior to exceptions being granted.

5. Jurisdiction: Requires interagency coordination between government departments and partner agencies on Complete Streets.
6. Design: Directs the use of the latest and best design criteria and guidelines and sets a time frame for their implementation.
7. Land use and context sensitivity: Considers the surrounding community's current and expected land use and transportation needs.
8. Performance measures: Establishes performance standards that are specific, equitable, and available to the public.
9. Project selection criteria: Provides specific criteria to encourage funding prioritization for Complete Streets implementation.
10. Implementation steps: Includes specific next steps for implementation of the policy.