

Complete Streets in Mississippi

Citizen's Resource Guide

Complete Streets policies ensure that roads are designed to enable safe access for drivers, transit users and vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as some of the most vulnerable users including the elderly, children, and people with disabilities.



Complete Streets:

- Respond to the needs of each individual community.
- Provide children, older adults and the disable with safe mobility options.
- Are the fiscally responsible decision for the future - Complete Streets encourage doing it right the FIRST time.
- Increase Health, Access AND Safety



COMPLETE STREETS

"Complete Streets are for everyone. They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users of all ages and abilities. Complete Streets make it easier to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. They allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from train stations." (National Complete Streets Coalition)

Complete Streets provide opportunities for increased physical activity by incorporating features that promote regular walking, cycling and transit use into just about every street.

One Complete Street may look quite different than the next, but both will be designed to balance safety and convenience for everyone using the road, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation.



A network of safe sidewalks and bikeways provided by a Complete Streets policy is important for encouraging active travel.

There is no ONE way to create a Complete Street, but can include:

- Sidewalks
- Paved Shoulders
- Crosswalks & Crossing Signals
- Bike Lanes
- ADA Accessible Ramps
- Curb cuts
- Adding Pedestrian and Bicycle Access to Bridges

Find a downloadable copy of this guide along with more tools and resources to help Complete the Streets in Mississippi at: www.completestreetsms.org

MISSISSIPPIANS



FOR COMPLETE STREETS

USERS OF COMPLETE STREETS

Courtesy: Sara Douglass, Ole Miss Communications and Indiana Cancer Consortium

Resource Guide

In this guide, you'll learn the in's and out's of Complete Streets in Mississippi. It is our goal that at the end of reading this guide, you will feel more equipped to educate others about Complete Streets and you'll know how to articulate the need in your community. In just a few pages, you'll find replicable tools and resources that you can use as a local advocate for complete streets in your community.

We'll walk you through some of the benefits for Complete Streets in your community, give you tips for how to talk about Complete Streets to others and we'll go over frequently asked questions so you'll be ready! We've also included copies of several Complete Streets policies and resolutions that have been passed in Mississippi along with some policies and ordinances that have been used as "best practices" around the U.S and links to even more resources to speak out for Complete Streets in your community.

You can also find a downloadable copy of this resource guide at: www.completestreetsms.org
Need something specific that's not included in this toolkit?
Contact us at: bikewalk@bikewalkmississippi.org

YOU DON'T HAVE TO HAVE ALL THE ANSWERS - YOU JUST NEED TO EXPRESS A NEED FOR A BETTER COMMUNITY!

Let's get started...

HOW YOU CAN GET BETTER STREETS IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Many people who have changed the world have simply been interested citizens who learned more about an issue and got involved locally. We created this toolkit to help you be that citizen! As a citizen who simply wants a healthier, safer and more accessible community, you can make change simply by making connections and starting conversations about the problem - the next step is to educating others about the solutions and successes others have had - and how it can work for your community! Let's join together to make the need known.

We want safer roads for ALL users of the roads in Mississippi!

Know the facts....

There is no singular design prescription for Complete Streets; each one is unique and responds to its community. Think: **CONTEXT & FLEXIBILITY**. A complete street may include: sidewalks, bike lanes or wide paved shoulders, special bus lanes, comfortable and accessible public transportation stops, frequent and safe crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, narrower travel lanes, roundabouts, and more.

A complete street in a rural area will look different from a complete street in a highly urban area - but, in each case, the streets are designed to balance safety and convenience for everyone using the road.

Tip:

The best approach is to address the issue of **SAFETY**.

Especially the safety of the most vulnerable:
children, seniors
and the disabled.

Remember that Complete Streets make the roads safer for **EVERYONE**.

ALL users of the road are impacted by poorly designed roads - making them unsafe for pedestrians, bicyclists AND MOTORISTS.



Photo: Anne M. McMahon

Some talking points....

**Health. Economic Development. SAFETY.
Fiscally Responsible. Cost Effective. SMART.**

Mississippians want to live in walkable communities.

Since many of Mississippi towns are rural, we know the importance of investing in today's "Main Streets". These are the corridors that bring with them connectivity and economic development. By improving on these thoroughfares, we have a tool that can increase the health, the wealth and the safety of these communities simultaneously by investing in Complete Streets. We know that safer streets and walk-able communities support businesses and attract tourism. Complete Streets is a choice for a better community.

MAKE SURE YOU ARE SPEAKING THE SAME LANGUAGE!

We can give you all the "talking points" in the world, but you must be sure you are speaking the **SAME LANGUAGE!** Sometimes when we get caught up in educating others or building our case, we can easily forget that **SOME** people may already know what what we are talking about - so, it's important to get on the same page and "define your terms."

For example, Transportation Engineers and Developers may already be familiar with the term, "Complete Streets" but it is also possible that they may have misconceptions about how it will impact them. **There may be liability issues for engineers or city employees, there may be concerns from developers concerning the fear that they may be forced to pay for sidewalks or other features that they did not have to pay for prior to Complete Streets.** This is why it's important to remember that although we may be **SAYING** the same thing - everyone might **MEAN** something different.

HEALTH:

Poorly designed roads discourage physical activity: Especially the most popular exercises like biking and running!

Complete Streets will support infrastructure in Mississippi that directly leads to better opportunities and access for better health!

Frequently Asked Questions:

Now for the big question: HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

This is a tough question, and one you will undoubtedly face. The one thing to remember (and what makes Complete Streets so wonderfully flexible) is that EACH CASE IS DIFFERENT.

Whether it is a policy, ordinance or resolution, Complete Streets is about maximizing the RETURN ON INVESTMENT AND MAKING COST EFFECTIVE DECISIONS.

The flexibility for local context and needs also allow changes to be made faster rather than at the end of the project - when it is more costly.

Complete Streets = Common Sense

Complete Streets is a process that encourages building streets right the **FIRST TIME** - rather than fixing them after problems, or even worse after an avoidable tragedy.

TIP: Listen for concerns and offer your support.

- **Would it help if you had photos showing the issues locally?**
- **Would it help if you gathered letters of support?**
- **Would they like economic studies?**
- **How about sample policies from around Mississippi and around the country?**

ALL of these resources are easily available - but first, you need to find out exactly what their concerns are and ask them what you can do to help.

Find out what they think, what they need and make sure you FOLLOW UP.

Next Steps...

CREATE A COMPELLING STORY: TELL OTHERS WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU!

One way to do this is to be ready with a compelling personal story about why Complete Streets are important in your community.

EVALUATE YOUR LOCAL SURROUNDINGS:

In order to build a compelling case, you'll want to go out into your community and document the need!! *(Make it a field trip with your kids or get a group of friends together and make it a scavenger hunt!)* Take your camera and document areas in your community where sidewalks end, where you see the need for handicapped accessible infrastructure, scout out potential bike lanes, damaged curb cuts and list the intersections in your town that most need pedestrian crossing signals, crosswalks and signs!

STOP, COLLABORATE AND LISTEN:

You'll want to identify allies and build a team of collaborators - this makes your case even more compelling. Because Complete Streets is so broad - the potential is HUGE!

Potential Allies can include:

Public health agencies
Local AARP Chapters
Advocates for the Disabled
Running Groups
Biking Clubs
Neighborhood Associations
Chambers of Commerce
Private Engineering Firms
and so much more!

TIP:

There is one way to find out more: ASK!

Ask a city planner or engineer in your city or town about previous work on sidewalks, road re-designs or bicycle supported infrastructure (you'll find out how decisions are made and who makes them!)

Another good way to find common group and identify potential champions is to find out if any of them have kids who rides bikes or if they ride themselves! Do a little digging to see if any of them are runners (runners typically using the sidewalks or roads on a regular basis) or if they have any other connections to health, safety, access.

Find out what they care about and make your case for what you care about.

**YOU
CAN
DO IT
TOO!**



In Mississippi in 2013, we received a call from a very motivated and concerned mother who lived within a mile from the school where her children attended. Diligent about walking her kids to school, she knew she had to take action to get sidewalks built in her community. She was so close, there was no reason they should be able to easily travel by foot or bike to school. But, they lived by a busy street. She didn't know what to do but she knew she had to take action.

She contacted her city officials, began attending public meetings on infrastructure and worked with Bike Walk Mississippi to create a form letter for parents to send to city officials and statewide transportation officials at MDOT. She gathered the support of several other neighbors and parents and soon they had a Facebook page and people were listening! To bring more attention to the issue, her children and friends even made "Please Support Sidewalks" signs and stood alongside the roads nearest the school. This small group of parents and community members told their stories to MDOT's Safe Routes to Schools Program and through partnership with the city officials, by 2014, the grant request was approved and the process has started for the sidewalks to break ground - the new sidewalks are right in front of their house.

It took patience and it took perseverance but through building a collaborative process, expressing a need, building a case, documenting the need and letting others know - and CHANGE WAS MADE! And, now even more kids can more easily bike and walk to school in Mississippi!

Don't forget...

Encouraging Complete Streets in your community is a communal effort.

So, don't forget to build a collaborative effort by identifying allies, showcasing needs & encourage locals to get involved!

If you can, find a local champion in your city council or talk to your Mayor or county commissioner. Find out what they think about Complete Streets and tell them your story! Remember, elected officials want to see public demand - don't be afraid to raise awareness about what you care about!

And, remember, it's a group effort.

There are educational resources available.

Let's find out the needs together.

We are here to help you make change in your community.

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