

An Analysis of Oxford, Mississippi's Complete Streets Policy
ENVS 399: Special Topics in Environmental Studies

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Presented on April 30, 2014 at 1 PM
Lyceum 200

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Acknowledgements

I first became interested in complete streets in 2012, when I was selected to attend a weekend long training from the Sierra Club in Minneapolis, Minnesota. There, I built a strong understanding of complete streets and how they can greatly benefit and impact a community. I am grateful that I was able to bring my knowledge of complete streets to Oxford through this independent study. My hopes are that, through this report, meaningful changes can be made in Oxford's Complete Streets policy.

I owe many thanks to Dr. Ann Fisher-Wirth and the environmental studies department at the University of Mississippi. I am appreciative of the many unique opportunities the environmental studies minor has offered to me during my four years as an undergraduate.

Thank you to my knowledgeable advisor, Dr. Mike Mossing, for not only taking the time to guide me through this analysis, but also providing me with invaluable advice on complete streets. I would also like to thank a handful of key individuals whose input and guidance has helped to shape my report: Mike Harris, Director of Parking and Transportation at the University of Mississippi; Reanna Mayoral, Assistant City Engineer for the City of Oxford; Dr. Janice Antonow, Member of the Board of Alderman for the City of Oxford, Ward 3; Dr. Kate Kellum, member of the Oxford Pathways Commission; Tim Akers, former City Planner for the City of Oxford; Ian Banner, Director of Facilities Planning and University Architect for the University of Mississippi; Melody Moody, Director of Bike Walk Mississippi; and Colin Murphy, Complete Streets Fellow for the National Complete Streets Coalition.

Finally, I would like to give special thanks to Anne McCauley and to the Office of Sustainability for their support of this study. It is because of this department the University of Mississippi has made such great strides in sustainability.

Executive Summary

The National Complete Streets Coalition (hereinafter referred to as “the Coalition”), established in 2005, is a program of Smart Growth America, an organization dedicated to improving communities nationwide. Each year, the Coalition produces a thorough and comprehensive document presenting all the complete streets policies in the United States. These policies are ranked based on ten elemental ideals:

1. Vision & Intent
2. All Users & Modes
3. All Projects & Phases
4. Clear, Accountable Exceptions
5. Network & Connectivity
6. Jurisdiction
7. Design
8. Context Sensitivity
9. Performance Measures
10. Implementation & Next Steps

There are five possible points to earn for each section, with some sections weighted more heavily than others. I have utilized these ten elements in structuring my recommendations for improving Oxford’s Complete Streets policy.

Oxford’s policy has earned a score of 13.2 out of 100 possible points since it was adopted in May of 2011. The main purpose of this independent study is to understand why Oxford’s policy has earned such a low score and to determine how well the policy is working for the city three years after its adoption. All of my findings have been compiled in this report.

Methods

I have dedicated the majority of this semester and some of last semester to work on preparing this final report. In October of 2013, I attended the Bike Walk Mississippi Summit where I sat in on discussions regarding complete streets in Mississippi. I have used three texts and resources from the National Complete Streets Coalition as references for this report. Bi-weekly meetings between Dr. Mossing and myself were held to discuss the issues presented in this report. To produce the best possible report, Dr. Mossing suggested I interview several individuals within the city, university, and beyond to gain an understand of how Oxford's Complete Streets policy is working and to identify areas of the policy that could be improved. I was able to conduct eight interviews with the following individuals:

1. Mike Harris – Director of Parking and Transportation, University of Mississippi;
2. Reanna Mayorral – Assistant City Engineer, City of Oxford;
3. Dr. Kate Kellum – Member of the Pathways Commission, City of Oxford;
4. Ian Banner – Director of Facilities Planning and University Architect, University of Mississippi;
5. Dr. Janice Antonow, Member of the Board of Alderman, City of Oxford, Ward 3;
6. Tim Akers, former City Planner, City of Oxford;
7. Melody Moody, Director of Bike Walk Mississippi; and
8. Colin Murphy, Complete Streets Fellow for the National Complete Streets Coalition.

I have compiled the responses from these interviews and other resources to produce this report. All references are cited in the final section of the report.

Background

What are Complete Streets?

Complete streets, as defined by the Coalition 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.” Complete streets provide a safe route for all users to get from point A to point B, no matter the mode of transportation.

Complete streets can offer multitude of benefits including encouraging modes of active transportation (biking, walking, etc.). Modes of active transportation promote healthy lifestyles and do not contribute to carbon emissions. According to the Indiana Cancer Consortium, individuals who live in walkable communities get 35-45 additional minutes of exercise as compared to individuals who live in less walkable communities.

Barbara McCann, one of the founding members of the Complete Streets movement and author of *Completing Our Streets*, explains, “Many roads in the United States are built for one purpose.” Almost always this “purpose” is cars. But what about people who are unable to drive or do not have a car? Without a sidewalk or curb ramps, how can a person in a wheelchair travel safely from one place to another? These are the types questions that complete streets address and remedy.

Top Complete Streets Policies of 2013

The following are the top ranking U.S. policies of 2013 as ranked by the National Complete Streets Coalition:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| 1. Littleton, MA – 94.4 | 9. Piqua, OH – 82.4 |
| 2. Peru, IN – 92.8 | 10. Oakland, CA – 81.6 |
| 3. Fort Lauderdale, FL – 89.6 | 11. Hayward, CA – 80.8 |
| 4. Auburn, ME – 88.0 | 12. Livermore, CA – 80.8 |
| 5. Lewiston, ME – 88.0 | 13. Massachusetts Dept. of
Transportation – 80.8 |
| 6. Baltimore County, MD – 86.4 | 14. Cedar Falls, IA – 80.0 |
| 7. Portsmouth, NH – 86.0 | 15. Waterloo, IA – 80.0 |
| 8. Muscatine, IA – 83.2 | |

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.

Incomplete Street

Four lanes of traffic, no sidewalks, no bike facilities

Road Diet

Two thru lanes with center turn lane, bike lanes

Good Complete Street

Sidewalk, bike lanes, center turn lane with median

Better Complete Street

Transit stop, street trees, bike lanes, sidewalk with buffer, crosswalks

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

USERS OF COMPLETE STREETS



Design by Cole Russell, Digital Project Consultant at the University of Mississippi

Complete Streets in Oxford

In March of 2008, the City of Oxford appointed Michael Ronkin from Designing Streets for Pedestrians and Bicyclists LLC and Michael Moule from Livable Streets Inc. to address and review existing plans, designs, policies, etc. regarding transportation in the city. After extensive research and analysis, Ronkin and Moule prepared a report detailing specific recommendations for the city. These recommendations included: 1) adopting a Complete Streets policy; 2) encouraging connectivity of all pathways through Land Development Codes; 3) encouraging MDOT and the city to adopt bicyclist and pedestrian-friendly intersection designs; 4) increasing collaboration between the city and university to create access for all users to commute to and from campus; and 5) encouraging the university to adopt policies that facilitate bicyclist and pedestrian circulation within campus.

The impetus for Oxford to adopt a Complete Streets policy originated from the Pathways Commission. A Complete Streets Resolution was approved and adopted by the City of Oxford in May of 2011. According to Dr. Janice Antonow, by adopting a Complete Streets policy, most immediately the city hoped to obtain funding for bike lanes a bike paths and improve sidewalks. Oxford has changed in many ways since the Complete Streets policy was adopted. Over the past three years, it is apparent that the city has made great strides in implementing complete streets; however, the city's policy does not necessarily reflect its progress. Oxford is a city that is growing rapidly in population and ever changing in development and infrastructure. Dr. Kate Kellum of the Oxford Pathways Commission explains, "The policy that was implemented at the time (2011) was probably the correct policy for the city at that moment in time. It may be time for a change. I think some improvements can be made." It is difficult to draft a policy that can grow with an ever-changing city. By drafting a flexible yet strong policy can likely help to remedy this problem. Dr. Kellum says, "At the time, we saw it as a first step, and a step that we were fairly confident that the city was ready to take. I think there are more steps to take."

How is Oxford's policy working?

Through preparing this report, I have come to the conclusion that our policy does not necessarily reflect our progress and implementation of complete streets; there is an apparent disconnect between the two. For example, the city has a strong public transit system (O.U.T. bus), but there is no mention of it in Oxford's Complete Streets policy.

From the several interviews I conducted, I have received mixed responses on how Oxford's Complete Streets policy is working for the city. Reanna Mayoral, the Assistant Engineer for the City of Oxford explains, "I think the policy is working well for the city. Complete Streets are always a big part of the discussion, as far as requiring sidewalks and bike lanes." Former city planner, Tim Akers, says, "The complete street policy is working as expected." On the contrary, Dr. Kellum says, "Of course the policy could be improved or strengthened. This ranking is a clear indication that our policy does not meet the gold standard. Now, it may be that some of the gold standard isn't appropriate for our town and our current situation, but it is at least worth a discussion. In categories where we received a zero, it's a call to action."

Current and Past Complete Streets Projects in Oxford:

The following are some of the past and current projects that have or are being implemented in Oxford. Most of these projects would not have happened without a Complete Streets policy:

- Belk Blvd.
 - Will now have sidewalks and bike lanes from end to end
- Traffic calming on Vivian St.
- Old Taylor Road roundabouts
 - MDOT project
 - Bike lanes and pedestrians will be provided appropriate walkways
- All new developments in the city are required to build sidewalks:
 - Oxford-University Bank
 - All new subdivisions
 - Lamar Lounge
- The city has added a striped shoulder on N. 9th St. between Washington and Elm and Jefferson, because there was no sidewalk for pedestrians. Reanna Mayoral explains, “We don’t have \$50,000 to build a sidewalk, so we striped the shoulder and narrowed the lanes and turned it into an area where people can walk.”
- Molly Barr from McElroy to Price was converted from four to three lanes, so that it would have bikes lanes.
- Bike lanes added to College Hill Dr.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been compiled from the National Complete Streets Coalition Best Complete Streets Policies of 2013 annual report and an interview with Colin Murphy, the Complete Streets Fellow from the Coalition. All ten elements of the Coalition's policy model are presented in this section with a description explaining the purpose of the category, an explanation for Oxford's score for the category and a recommendation for how to earn more (or full) points, and an example of strong language for the category from another city's Complete Streets policy.

1. Vision & Intent (Score: 6/6)

Description:

This section is dedicated to outlining the city's commitment to follow through on its Complete Streets policy. Strong policies utilize wording including "shall" and "must", and have a very clear vision and intent; such policies receive full points. Average policies – those whose intent is unclear – receive three points. Indirect policies utilize language such as "consider" and "support", and receive one point for this section.

Oxford's policy:

Oxford's policy has received full points for the section. This means that the city's policy is utilizing strong and direct language that clearly outlines their vision and intent.

Example – Livermore, CA:

"The City of Livermore will plan for, design, fund, construct, operate, and maintain a safe and efficient transportation system for all users in all street and roadway new construction, retrofit, or reconstruction projects."

2. All Users & Modes (Score: 4/20)

Description:

This section is one of the most heavily weighted sections, and therefore, one of the most important. A Complete Streets policy is inadequate if it does not mention the users of the road. For a policy to be considered further, it must mention walking and biking. To earn two additional points in this category, the policy must include public transit and an additional transportation mode (cars, emergency response vehicles, etc.). Mention of two additional user modes will earn the policy three more points. A policy can earn two additional points if there is mention of people young and old, as well as people with disabilities.

Oxford's policy

Currently, Oxford's policy mentions pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and persons with disabilities, thus, earning us four points for the category. To earn full points, the policy must mention public transit, two more modes of transportation, and the needs of people both young and old.

Example – Dayton, OH:

“All users of the surface transportation network, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, mass transit, children, senior citizens, individuals with disabilities, freight carriers, emergency responders and adjacent land users, will experience a visually attractive and functional environment while traveling safely and conveniently on and across all surface roadways within the City of Dayton.”

3. All Projects & Phases (Score: 0/12)

Description:

The purpose of this section is to state that “*all* transportation improvements are viewed as opportunities to create safer, more accessible streets for all users.” A policy will earn full points if it includes new construction, reconstruction, changes to the transportation system, and maintenance and operations of all roadways.

Oxford’s policy:

Currently, Oxford’s policy mentions construction and operation of sidewalks, shared use paths, and other elements of the streets, but *not* the roadway itself. In order to earn full points in this category, the policy must include the entire right of way. The policy mentions construction and reconstruction of roadways, but not maintenance and operation. This would include repairs, repaving, resurfacing, etc.

Example – Clayton, MO:

“This policy is intended to cover all development and redevelopment in the public domain within the City of Clayton. This includes all public transportation projects such as, but not limited to, new road construction, reconstruction, retrofits, upgrades, resurfacing and rehabilitation. Routine maintenance may be excluded from these requirements by the Director of Public Works on a case-by-case basis. This policy also covers privately built roads intended for public use.”

4. Clear, Accountable Exceptions (Score: 3.2/16)

Description:

The purpose of this section is to not only list reasonable exceptions to the policy, but also detail the process by which these exceptions are decided upon. This section will not be awarded any points if no exceptions are listed. If too many exceptions are listed, the policy will earn a low score. The recommended number of exceptions is three to four. A policy will earn full points if one or more of the approved exceptions (see the National Complete Streets Coalition Best Policies report) are mentioned along with the approval process by which the exceptions are decided.

Oxford’s policy:

In Oxford’s case, there are too many exceptions mentioned – there are eight exceptions mentioned in the policy. Beyond three or four exceptions, it is easy to create loopholes and undercut the policy. Exceptions a, b and d under section two, paragraph four would be beneficial to retain in the policy. Other exceptions listed should be revisited or taken out altogether. For example, exception one under section three requires some clarification.

“Ordinary maintenance” is unclear. This is where some of the best and cheapest complete streets improvements can happen.

In addition, Oxford’s policy has no mention of the approval process and the decision makers for exceptions. It is important to establish accountability by explicitly listing the decision makers and the approval processes for these exceptions.

Example - Bellevue, NE

“Any exception to applying this Complete Streets Policy to a specific roadway project must be approved by the City Council, with documentation of the reason for the exception...[Exceptions] may be made when:

- The project involves a roadway on which non-motorized use is prohibited by law. In this case, an effort shall be made to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists elsewhere.
- There is documentation that there is an absence of use by all except motorized users now and would be in the future even if the street were a complete street.”

5. Network & Connectivity (Score: 0/2)

Description:

The purpose of this section is to recognize the need for roadways to form a grid, connecting a city or region for all users. “Approaching transportation projects as part of the overall network—and not as single segments—is vital for ensuring safe access to destinations.” Policies that recognize the importance of connectivity and network receive full points.

Oxford’s policy:

In Oxford’s policy, there is no mention of the streets as an interconnected network. The following is a statement from the preamble: “The City of Oxford will implement Complete Streets policy by designing, operating and maintaining the transportation network to improve travel conditions for bicyclists, pedestrians, cars, transit, and freight in a manner consistent with, and supportive of, the surrounding community.” This is a strong statement and would be highly beneficial to include in the actual policy.

Colin Murphy explains, “Not every street needs to serve every user, but together the network of streets together serves to accommodate the needs of all users.”

Example - Waterloo, IA:

“The City of Waterloo recognizes the absolute necessity of promoting pedestrian, bicycle and public transportation network connectivity as an alternative to the automobile in order to provide transportation options and protect all road users, reduce negative environmental impacts, promote healthy living, and advance the well-being of commuters...[T]he City recognizes that the full integration of all modes of travel in the design of streets and highways will help increase the capacity and efficiency of the road network, hopefully reduce traffic congestion by improving mobility options, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and therefore improve the general quality of life.”

6. Jurisdiction (Score: 0/8)

Description:

In many cities and towns, multiple different agencies hold jurisdiction over the roadways. The purpose of this section is to recognize who holds authority over the roadways in the city; policies that do so earn full points for this category. The jurisdiction category is not necessarily in place to compel an agency to take action, but rather to bring up a subject that should be discussed.

Oxford's policy

In Oxford, this section is especially important because there are several areas where city and university streets overlap. Oxford's policy received a zero for this section because it does not recognize the agencies that would potentially work together to implement Complete Streets in the community.

Example – Trenton, NJ:

“Recognizing the inter-connected multi-modal network of street grid, the City of Trenton will work with Mercer County, the Delaware River Joint Toll Bridge Commission, the traffic consultant AECOM and state agencies through existing planning efforts to ensure complete streets principles are incorporated in a context sensitive manner.”

7. Design (Score: 0/4)

Description:

The purpose of this section is to identify the design standards and guidelines the city is using when implementing complete streets. The Coalition looks for the best and latest design standards including the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and others. To earn full points in the design category, the policy must reference the design authorities that guide the implementation of complete streets in the community.

Oxford's policy:

Oxford's policy earned a zero in this category because there is no mention of design authorities in the policy. Colin Murphy suggests not creating too tight or specific of design guidelines, to leave some room for flexibility. Oxford's policy can even earn partial points for this section by mentioning a need for a flexible design approach to complete streets.

Example – Peru, IN:

“The City of Peru shall follow accepted or adopted design standards and use the best and latest design standard available, including but not limited to, existing design guidance from the American Association of State Highway Officials (AASHTO), state Departments of Transportation, the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG).”

8. Context Sensitivity (Score: 0/8)

Description:

The purpose of this section is to recognize that all streets within a community are not going to look the same. Street design should take into account the surrounding land uses. For example, a street through a downtown area will not look the same as a street in a rural area. A policy can earn full points in this category by mentioning that context of the community infrastructure is taken into account during decision making processes.

Oxford's policy:

Oxford's policy has earned a zero for this section because there is no mention of context. To improve the score for this section, the policy must mention that roadways are designed in consideration of the surrounding land uses.

Example – Peru, IN:

“The City of Peru shall implement Complete Streets solutions in a manner that is sensitive to the local context and character, aligns transportation and land use goals, and recognizes that the needs of users may vary by case, community or corridor.”

9. Performance Measures (Score: 0/4)

Description:

The performance measures section is to benchmark a city's performance on implementing complete streets. A policy can earn full points by mentioning at least one performance measure. Being able to quantify progress is essential. The policy must define how it is going to measure success. In many cases with cities that have complete streets, there is a lot of anecdotal evidence, but there is no quantifiable documentation that exists.

Oxford's policy:

Oxford's policy earned a zero in this section because there is no mention of how performance is measured. There is no doubt that the city is making progress, but the method by which the city is reporting that progress is unclear. Oxford must determine a baseline and a method by which the city is going to measure their complete streets performance, whether that be by the number of new accommodations, the miles of bike lanes added, etc.

Dr. Kellum: “Yes, we can do a much better job at benchmarking. I think there is a lot of room for improvement on measurement. Being a small town that has grown rapidly, we still have the mindset that perception equals data. I think we rely on public perception. I think we could do a lot better at coming up with what it is we care about measuring and finding ways to measure that – that don't rely simply on perception.”

Example – Muscatine, IA:

“The City of Muscatine shall put into place performance standards with measurable benchmarks reflecting the ability of users to travel in safety and comfort. Performance standards may include: miles of new bicycle facilities or sidewalks, percentage of streets with tree canopy and low design speeds, public participation, street lighting, or others.”

10. Implementation & Next Steps (Score: 0/20)

Description:

This section is another of one of the most heavily weighted and important sections of a Complete Streets policy. The purpose of this section is to explicitly explain how a city is going to bring a Complete Streets policy to life. This section is also important because it addresses some of the following questions: Who will be responsible to implement this policy? How often will reporting occur? Who will do the reporting and who will it be reported to? The four key steps as suggested by the Coalition for implementing policy are as follows:

1. “Restructure or revise related procedures, plans, regulations, and other processes to accommodate all users on every project.
2. Develop new design policies and guides or revise existing to reflect the current state of best practices in transportation design. Communities may also elect to adopt national or state- level recognized design guidance.
3. Offer workshops and other training opportunities to transportation staff, community leaders, and the general public so that everyone understands the importance of the Complete Streets vision.
4. Develop and institute better ways to measure performance and collect data on how well the streets are serving all users.”

Policies that specify the need for action on at least two of the four key steps mentioned above will receive full points for the implementation section.

Oxford’s policy:

Oxford’s policy has received a zero in this section because it lacks strong language about implementation of the Complete Streets policy. Without an implementation section it is likely that changes will not be made in the city. This section is critical in that it is oftentimes the first step of culture change in the way that transportation agencies and cities do business.

Ian Banner, Director of Facilities Planning and the University Architect, explains, “When we did the master plan (for the university), the master planners told us that planning was easy and implementing was really hard. We are experiencing the fact that it’s really hard to implement.”

Example - Littleton, MA:

“Town shall review and either revise or develop proposed revisions to all appropriate planning documents (master plans, open space and recreation plan, etc.), zoning and subdivision codes, laws, procedures, rules, regulations, guidelines, programs, and templates to integrate Complete Streets principles in all Street Projects on streets. A committee of relevant stakeholders designated by the Town Administrator will be created to implement this initiative.

The Town shall maintain a comprehensive inventory of pedestrian and bicycle facility infrastructure that will prioritize projects to eliminate gaps in the sidewalk and bikeway

network.

The Town will reevaluate Capital Improvement Projects prioritization to encourage implementation of Complete Streets implementation.

The Town will train pertinent town staff and decision-makers on the content of Complete Streets principles and best practices for implementing policy through workshops and other appropriate means.

The Town will utilize inter-department coordination to promote the most responsible and efficient use of resources for activities within the public way.

The Town will seek out appropriate sources of funding and grants for implementation of Complete Streets policies.”

Additional Recommendations

1. Language in the preamble

There is some very strong language included in the preamble of Oxford’s Complete Streets policy. When grading policies, The Coalition does not consider this section. Pulling some of the wording from the preamble into the policy will likely inflate the policy’s score.

2. Trees

As a Tree City, Oxford highly values the presence of trees in the community. Street trees are important in that they are aesthetically pleasing and help to slow down traffic in a natural way. Oxford’s policy is unique from in that it mentions protection for trees and shrubs: “All existing trees and shrubs within a proposed four (4) foot paved shoulder corridor shall be retained where possible and if unable to be retained, the number of trees and shrubs removed shall be replaced within the corridor or on other suitable public property.”

Although policy language requires that trees and shrubs be retained or replaced, this is not always the case. According to Dr. Antonow, many trees have been sacrificed to build bike paths in the city. While the implementation of complete streets in the community is important, it is also imperative that we take greenery into serious consideration. Strengthening this part of the policy by providing a method of accountability could aid in ensuring this part of the policy is implemented.

3. Signage

Through interviews I have conducted, some concern has been raised around signage that complete streets oftentimes require. It may be helpful to look into creative ways to communicate the rules of the road without using signage. For example, in Indianapolis when the bike lane and road overlap (at an intersection), that area of the road is painted green.

4. Organization

The Coalition does not necessarily look for a certain format when ranking policies; however, having a logically organized policy can minimize confusion and eliminate any gray areas.

Dr. Kellum: “We could be more specific in what we mean by complete streets. I would love there to be codes about curbs cuts, pedestrian islands. I think it could be much more comprehensive than it is. A more comprehensive policy could likely lead to fewer decisions having to be made with each new project. This can also lead to more consistency and the more consistent we are, the more drivers, transit users, pedestrians, and cyclists all know how to use it.”

5. University & City collaboration

Because some city streets overlap with the university, sometimes communication is needed between the two parties. Additionally, collaboration between the two can be beneficial in sharing best practices of complete streets implementation. Mike Harris, the Director of Parking and Transportation for the university explains, “The more collaborative effort we have between the two communities, the better. It can’t be one pushing against the other, because the rising tide brings us all up. I will be doing my best to make sure that happens.”

Dr. Kellum says, “I think that the city has done a good job of implementing the policy on their streets including the streets that are on or adjacent to university property.” Ian Banner states, “The first step [in strengthening communication] is that we must want to.”

People travel between the campus and the city all the time using various modes of transportation. Opening up the lines of communication between the university and the city can address issues concerning safe travel, among others.

6. University Complete Streets policy

Previously, there has been no pressure for the university to adopt a policy similar to a Complete Streets policy. Banner thinks that having something similar to a complete streets policy at the university can be beneficial: “The good thing about having a policy like that is that it taps you on the shoulder every time you do a project. It is very difficult when you’ve got consideration of all these buildings, infrastructure, electricity, water, etc. Some things can get missed. It would be good to have a champion in that cause that kept us on track.”

There is no explicit policy or mandate (other than ADA standards) that requires the university to implement complete streets on campus. “I think we’ve become comfortable in just doing it in facilities planning (building bike lanes, sidewalks, etc.); we don’t go reference a policy,” says Banner. “I think the culture of our department supports the implementation of these things.” Again, here is an example of disconnect between policy and implementation. Although a complete streets mindset is prevalent in facilities planning, how can we be sure that it will always be this way? Having a policy or standards that reflect our progress could benefit the university. Even if a policy were not adopted, benchmarking our performance in complete streets would be logical.

Additional Resources

The following cities are similar to Oxford in population and have strong Complete Streets policies:

- Lawrence, KS
- Waterloo, IA
- Cedar Falls, IA
- Evanston, IL

Conclusion and Next Steps

In many ways, Oxford is a frontrunner community in Mississippi. By strengthening the city's Complete Streets policy, Oxford can set an example and serve as a model to other cities in Mississippi looking to adopt a Complete Streets policy. According to Melody Moody of Bike Walk Mississippi, Oxford is among the few communities in Mississippi that have successfully implemented complete streets.

"Complete streets could be at the crux of revitalization in Mississippi," says Moody. "Increased access to transportation and the improving the ways people get around in their cities can directly impact the quality of life. I think investing in implementing complete streets in Mississippi can change the fate of communities." Mississippians for Complete Streets, a campaign launched by Bike Walk Mississippi, will revisit cities that have successfully implemented complete streets in their communities to document their best practices. These practices will then be shared with other communities in the state that are looking to adopt and implement complete streets.

My hopes are that this report will stir up conversation about Oxford's Complete Streets policy. As Oxford continues to expand and grow, it is important that the city has a policy that grows with it. It may be time for Oxford to take those "next steps" by revisiting the Complete Streets policy. With many big changes occurring within the city and university, this is an opportune time to think about how the city's Complete Streets policy reflects its progress.

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