

Complete Streets Policy

Background:

Greater Together (2015), the Corporate Strategic Plan for the City of Greater Sudbury contemplates a sustainable approach to how the City plans and delivers infrastructure that includes a variety of transportation modes. A priority of Greater Together is for the City to provide quality multimodal transportation alternatives for roads, transit, trails, paths and sidewalks that connect neighbourhoods and communities in Greater Sudbury. An action of Greater Together is to develop a Complete Streets Policy for the City.

The City of Greater Sudbury Official Plan (2006) envisions Greater Sudbury as a healthy community which recognizes that taking a balanced approach to development that considers the social, economic and environmental needs of the community and ultimately enhances the health and quality of life of our residents. By providing infrastructure that enables residents to choose to travel by foot, bicycle or transit, the City will become a more equitable, healthy, economically competitive and environmentally sustainable community over the long term.

To further achieve the vision outlined in the Official Plan, the Healthy Community Strategy was adopted in 2010 and provides a framework for how the City can work with partners to continue moving towards becoming a more inclusive, resilient and sustainable community. Goal 2 of the Strategy is to advocate for the implementation of the Sustainable Mobility Plan, which was received by Council in 2010 and was the result of extensive community engagement on active and sustainable transportation. The Sustainable Mobility Plan made 66 recommendations, including that the City develop and implement a Complete Streets policy.

In 2016, the Transportation Master Plan (TMP) was updated to better align with these priorities by taking a sustainability-focused approach to optimizing and enhancing the transportation network. The 2016 TMP outlines a cycling facility network, and recommends a suite of policy options to support the delivery of pedestrian and cycling infrastructure in Greater Sudbury. A recommendation to develop a Complete Streets Policy for the City was reiterated in this plan.

In November 2017, ten community priorities for population health were presented to the Community Services Committee for endorsement. These priorities will form the basis for the development of a Population Health Strategy for the City of Greater Sudbury, to be implemented over the next ten years. While all ten priorities will contribute to the achievement of a healthy community, one of the priorities is specifically to support the creation of healthy streets. Healthy streets require safe and accessible space for users of all ages and abilities.

In January 2018, the City of Greater Sudbury was recognized with a Bronze level Bicycle Friendly Community Award from Share the Road Cycling Coalition. By participating in this voluntary evaluation process, staff received valuable feedback on how the community can move towards the Silver level designation. This feedback included a recommendation that the City move forward with adopting a Complete Streets Policy.

A Complete Streets policy ensures that, from the start, linear infrastructure capital projects are planned and designed to meet the needs of every community member, regardless of their age, ability or how they choose to travel. By adopting a Complete Streets policy, there will be greater clarity and transparency in decision-making processes such that social, economic, health and environmental priorities of the community are considered and balanced in the design and operation of the entire road allowance.

What are ‘Complete Streets’?

Generally speaking, complete streets are for everyone. Streets are a significant aspect of the public realm, are integral to the livability of cities and should be designed and operated to enable access for all uses and users within the transportation system. Complete Streets are specifically designed to consider the needs of all users, such as people who walk, bike, take transit or drive, and people of varying ages and abilities.

While not every type of use or user may be accommodated on every street, the goal is to build a city with a well-functioning street network that supports and sustains our quality of life. Complete Streets ensure that social, economic and environmental priorities are integrated with how streets are planned and designed.

There is no single way in which to make a street ‘complete’. It depends on many factors including the character and context of each particular street. For example, on a rural residential street with very low traffic volume, providing a widened paved surface may suffice to accommodate the needs of all users safely. In contrast, on an urban arterial road with significant traffic volume and speed, such as Paris Street, sidewalks on both sides of the road, physically-separated cycling infrastructure and enhanced transit bus stops with shelters and benches would be more appropriate. In both cases, these streets can be considered ‘complete’, recognizing their distinct contexts.

Community Benefits of Complete Streets:

Complete Streets support an appropriate balance between motorized travel and other users of the right-of-way. Beyond enabling different kinds of mobility, Complete Streets serve a number of functions that have social, economic, environmental, health and choice benefits for the community:

Social

The design of a complete street can help build a sense of place in a community by encouraging an inclusive, engaging public realm. As more people begin to use the street in different ways, the social interactions that happen can help build community cohesion and may lead to reduced crime by providing more “eyes on the street”. Taking a complete streets approach to designing streets will complement the application of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles.

Economic

By creating a more varied and interesting public realm, complete streets often encourage the retention of smaller, locally-owned businesses, which contributes to a stronger local economy. Transportation projects that improve safety for all road users and encourage multimodal travel have also been positively correlated with higher retail sales. A study completed in October 2017, by the Toronto Coalition for Active Transportation examined the economic impact of the protected bike lanes installed on Bloor Street in the City of Toronto and found that economic activity in the area increased after the bike lanes were installed in 2016.

Environmental

The most immediate benefit of a complete street is its ability to reduce automobile use, subsequently reducing reliance on fossil fuels and the production of greenhouse gases. If more residents choose to travel by sustainable modes, the subsequent reduction in carbon emissions will also result in improved air quality in the community. For the average Canadian, driving produces about 4.6 tonnes of CO₂e per year per vehicle, which equates to roughly twice as much GHGs than produced by public transit and six times more GHGs than walking or cycling.

Health

Complete streets can encourage walking and cycling as regular and frequent modes of travel. The resulting increase in activity has a significant and positive impact on the health of local residents. Walking and cycling can contribute to meeting the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines of exercising a minimum of 150 minutes per week, which can reduce incidence of diabetes, cardiovascular disease and stroke by up to 50%. Further, the design of a complete street can potentially reduce collisions between vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians by providing safe operating space for all users.

Choice

Multimodal streets offer people options for safe, attractive and convenient travel by foot, by cycle, on transit, as well as in motorized vehicles. A multimodal street network allows people to tailor their trip to their preferred mode of travel and provides better accessibility to locations within the citywide transit and cycling networks, which can enhance the adjoining neighbourhoods and further improve property values.

Policy Development Process:

To develop the Complete Streets policy for the City of Greater Sudbury, staff undertook a variety of activities, including:

1) Background Policy Review

Creating a framework for a Complete Streets policy for the City of Greater Sudbury first required developing an understanding of the environment in which this new policy and approach is to be implemented. As a first step, an examination of internal strategic documents, policies and decisions that guide growth and capital planning in our community was undertaken. Information gathered through this analysis was used to inform the development of a policy that meets the needs and expectations of both residents and staff in the Greater Sudbury community.

2) Environmental Scan of Best Practices

Research was undertaken to review Complete Streets policies recently adopted by cities in both Canada and the United States. To date, only five municipalities in the Province of Ontario have formally adopted Complete Streets policies, with many more municipalities taking a 'complete streets approach'. Policies of municipalities in Ontario reviewed during this scan include:

- Town of Ajax
- Town of St. Thomas
- City of Ottawa
- City of Waterloo
- City of Toronto

In addition to reviewing best practices in the Canadian context, examples from the United States were also examined for their applicability to the local context in Greater Sudbury. The National Complete Streets Coalition (NCSC) has published 'The Ten Elements of a Complete Streets Policy', which outlines the essential components of a comprehensive policy to help communities develop policies and practices to ensure streets are planned and designed for people of all ages and abilities, balance the needs of different modes, and support local land uses, economies and the natural environment. Using this list of ten elements the NCSC scores all newly adopted Complete Streets policies in the United States on an annual basis. The top three policies in 2016, each receiving a perfect score of 100 and tied for first place, were reviewed, including policies from:

- Brockton, MA
- Missoula, MT
- Wenatchee, WA

3) Internal Staff Consultation

In December 2017, an internal staff workshop was held with representatives from Infrastructure Capital Planning Services, Linear Infrastructure Operations, Engineering Services, Planning Services, Leisure Services and Transit Services. Staff were presented an overview of the background to support the development of the Complete Streets

policy and provided with an opportunity to discuss what the benefits and challenges of implementing such a policy in Greater Sudbury may include. Ultimately, feedback collected during this workshop helped to shape the vision and draft policy.

4) Visioning Workshop with the Sustainable Mobility Advisory Panel (SMAP)

In December 2017, a visioning workshop was undertaken with members of the Sustainable Mobility Advisory Panel to better understand the community perspective on Complete Streets. Members of the panel were led in a facilitated activity to gain their input on opportunities, challenges and the context of applying a complete streets policy in Greater Sudbury. Input provided by members of the panel contributed to the development of the vision and draft policy.

5) Development of Vision and Draft Policy

Input received during both the staff and SMAP workshops was compiled, analyzed and used to form the basis of the following vision for Complete Streets:

To create great places and enhance the quality of life of residents, the City of Greater Sudbury will provide safe, accessible streets for all users.

Complete streets will improve quality of life for Greater Sudbury residents and attractiveness of the community over the long-term by providing a balanced and connected transportation system that enhances public health and safety, livability, equity, affordability, and that supports increased economic activity and opportunity.

Data gathered during the background policy review and environmental scan of best practices was used to inform the development of a context-specific draft Complete Streets policy for the City of Greater Sudbury.

6) Final Policy Review by Internal Staff and SMAP

In early April 2018, the draft Complete Streets policy was circulated for input from internal staff as well as from members of the Sustainable Mobility Advisory Panel. Input received was used to refine the draft policy presented in Attachment 1.

Next Steps: Complete Streets Design Guidelines and Implementation Strategy

The development of comprehensive Complete Streets Design Guidelines (Guidelines) and a corresponding Implementation Strategy will provide the City of Greater Sudbury with a consistent and transparent approach to the design of the public right-of-way that integrates the City's key policies, bylaws, standards and guidelines and uses the latest best practices in integrated transportation corridor design.

Since street design has a direct impact on the work, interests and operations of numerous City divisions, it is anticipated that the Guidelines will provide an integrated approach to inform, streamline and better coordinate decision-making and commenting when reviewing development applications and linear infrastructure capital projects. The Guidelines are intended to further help to prioritize the many demands placed upon our streets.

Staff are seeking direction to prepare a business case for the development of Complete Streets Design Guidelines and Implementation Strategy. This will include the use of third party professionals with experience in this area and staff collaboration to ensure the resulting guidelines reflect a “made in Greater Sudbury” approach. It is anticipated that the Guidelines will become the unifying document for ensuring a consistent approach to the design of the right-of-way and provide a means to balance competing interests at the outset of the road design process.

Reporting:

To effectively monitor and evaluate implementation of the Complete Streets Policy, staff will report annually to the Operations Committee regarding:

- Steps taken to implement the Complete Streets Policy;
- Key performance indicators, which will evolve as the policy becomes more established throughout our capital plans; and
- Developments in other communities, lessons learned and other steps we could apply in Greater Sudbury.

Communications Plan:

To promote the adoption of the Complete Streets Policy for the City of Greater Sudbury, staff will work with Corporate Communications to ensure a webpage is created on the City’s website for ‘Complete Streets’ and that the policy (Attachment 1) is made available to the public.

Conclusion:

This report delivers on an action of Greater Together, the corporate strategic plan, under the key pillar of Sustainable Infrastructure, which is to develop a Complete Streets Policy. Infrastructure Capital Planning staff are seeking approval of the Complete Streets Policy and further direction to prepare a business case for the Complete Streets Design Guidelines and Implementation Plan to be considered during the 2019 budget process.

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