

Complete Streets Act of 2008

What the Bill Does:

The Complete Streets Act of 2008 would add a provision to Title 23 to ensure that future transportation investments made by state Departments of Transportation and Metropolitan Planning Organizations create appropriate and safe transportation facilities for all those using the road – motorists, transit vehicles and riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities.

More than 50 jurisdictions spanning all regions of the country have adopted complete streets policies that direct transportation planners to consider the needs of all users when transportation investment decisions are made. They ensure streets don't create barriers for children, disabled users, older persons, or those who do not drive. They make sure that roads are designed and updated to allow everyone to travel safely.

The Complete Streets Act of 2008 builds on these existing successful state and local policies to define effective complete streets policies, and to direct state DOTs and MPOs to adopt such policies and apply them to upcoming transportation projects. The bill also authorizes needed research and dissemination of complete streets best practices.

The Benefits of Complete Streets

Complete streets can help **increase the capacity of the transportation network** by giving people more choices. The Texas Transportation Institute found that providing more travel options, including public transportation, bicycling and walking facilities, are important elements in reducing congestion¹.

Complete Streets direct **a better use of taxpayer dollars**. In Illinois, the statewide complete streets law was passed last year to avoid unnecessary expense. Lawmakers had heard the story of a bridge near Cary, Illinois that was built without any safe way to cross it via foot or bicycle. After several deaths, and a successful wrongful-death lawsuit filed by the parents of a teenager killed on the bridge, the state DOT had to go back at great expense and retrofit the existing bridge, adding a path to the span. It would have far less expensive to do it right, the first time.

Complete streets **improve pedestrian safety**. About one-third of Americans do not drive, including an increasing number of seniors and low income Americans who cannot afford cars. Yet just like everyone else, they require access to a variety of other transportation options in order to get to work, school, shops and medical visits, and to take part in social, civic and volunteer activities. In 2006, nearly one quarter of pedestrian fatalities were children (8 percent) and older adults (15 percent)². Designing the street with pedestrians in mind -- sidewalks, raised medians, better bus stop placement, traffic-calming measures, and treatments for disabled travelers -- may reduce pedestrian risk by as much as 28%³.

Complete streets **encourage healthy and active lifestyles**. One study found that 43% of people with safe places to walk within 10 minutes of home met recommended activity levels, while just 27% of those lacking safe options were active enough⁴. Nearly one third of transit users meet the Surgeon General's daily activity recommendations just through their routine travels⁵.

¹ Schrank, D. and Lomax, T. (2005) *Urban Mobility Report*. Texas Transportation Institute.

² Fatality Analysis Reporting System, Bureau of Transportation Statistics

³ King, MR, Carnegie, JA, Ewing, R. (2003) *Pedestrian Safety Through a Raised Median and Redesigned Intersections*, Transportation Research Board 1828 pp 56-66

⁴ Powell, K.E., Martin, L., & Chowdhury, P.P. (2003). Places to walk: convenience and regular physical activity. *American Journal of Public Health*, 93, 1519-1521.

⁵ Besser, L. M. and A. L. Dannenberg (2005). *Walking to public transit steps to help meet physical activity recommendations*. *American Journal Of Preventive Medicine* 29(4): 273-280.