

BEST COMPLETE STREETS POLICIES 2025



Acknowledgments



We envision a country where transportation, housing, and development choices create communities that are healthy, prosperous, and resilient—no matter where you live or who you are. Learn more at:

www.smartgrowthamerica.org



National Complete Streets Coalition

The **National Complete Streets Coalition**, a program of Smart Growth America, is a non-profit, non-partisan alliance of public interest organizations and transportation professionals committed to the development and implementation of Complete Streets policies and practices. A nationwide movement launched by the coalition in 2004, Complete Streets is the integration of people and place in the planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of transportation networks.

Project Team

This report was written by Courtney Cole, London Weir, Maxwell Reinisch, Raveena John, and Nora Brown, with editing and oversight from Dustin Robertson, Heidi Simon, Eric Cova, and Rachel Ellis. Additional support was provided by Jaibin Mathew and Joseph Mendonca. This report was released in June 2025.

caption

Graphic design provided by Caption Design.



SGA and NCSC also thank the **American Society of Landscape Architects** for its generous support of this project.

This program was made possible by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Cooperative Agreement CDC-RFA-PW-24-0080. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of CDC. These efforts are

part of the CDC’s **Active People, Healthy Nation**SM Initiative that is working to help 27 million Americans become more physically active by 2027.

Additional thanks to the **National Complete Streets Coalition Steering Committee**.



Table of Contents

03 Benefits of Complete Streets

04 Policy Analysis & Scores

- 05 Analysis of new policies
- 07 Top scoring new policies

08 Case Studies

- 09 San Antonio
- 11 Nashville
- 14 Clyde

18 Diving Deeper into Complete Streets Policies

- 19 State level policies
- 20 Action in two states: New Jersey and Washington
- 21 Past top policies: Where are they now?

Community

Complete Streets foster vibrant public spaces and a stronger sense of community and social connection. A Complete Streets approach also increases opportunities for participation by community members in the transportation planning process.

Complete Streets and active transportation are linked to greater social interaction with neighbors, lower depression rates, increased independence for children, older adults, and people with disabilities.

Economy

Complete Streets not only reduce crashes and costs associated with deaths and injuries, but also boost employment levels, property values, investment from the private sector, and net new businesses.

Complete Streets can provide a 10:1 return on investment (according to Researchers at the University of Arizona)

Environment

Walking, biking, rolling, and riding public transit are better for the environment than driving. They create fewer emissions and pollution and can also help other areas, such as stormwater management.

Transportation is the top contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in the U.S., with 28% of total emissions. Half of all daily trips are less than three miles, and over a quarter of trips are less than one mile.

Health

Complete Streets encourage daily physical activity and recreation, improving both physical and mental health.

People in walkable neighborhoods are 1.5 times more likely to engage in adequate levels of physical activity, and 0.76 times less likely to have obesity.

Safety

Designed for all users, Complete Streets slow traffic, prevent crashes, and reduce severe injuries and deaths.

70% of Complete Streets projects resulted in reductions in crashes according to our study.

Benefits of Complete Streets



POLICY ANALYSIS AND SCORES

Over the past two decades, communities across the U.S. have embraced the Complete Streets approach—but many policies still fall short of delivering real change. This section explores how policies are scored, where they're being adopted, and what sets the highest-performing policies of 2025 apart.

Photo by Justin Wallace on Unsplash





Photo by [Nikhil Mistry](#) on Unsplash

Popularity of Complete Streets policies continues to grow, but too many policies are failing to hit the mark

Twenty years ago, a group of transportation professionals gave a new name to the approach of designing, building, and maintaining streets to meet the needs of all users—Complete Streets. Since then, over 1,700 Complete Streets policies have been adopted across the United States for communities to develop new transportation solutions that meet the needs of all users, including people walking, cycling, taking transit, and driving. The Complete Streets approach involves practical and tangible changes—such as putting sidewalks under people’s feet, adding raised crosswalks, and building safe bicycle infrastructure.

It also requires less visible changes like a public accountability system for implementation, evaluation processes, and more. Beyond these, though, adopting a Complete Streets approach is an acknowledgment that the old way of doing things wasn’t working and that communities deserve so much more.

With [pedestrian fatalities at near-record levels](#), Complete Streets policies are critical. Our streets are unsafe and create a number of hazards for all road users. [Vulnerable roadway users](#) such as people walking, cycling, and people with disabilities are at particular risk.



Complete Streets is an approach to planning, designing, building, operating, and maintaining streets that enables safe access for all people who need to use them, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders. Adopting a Complete Streets policy is an indicator that policymakers, practitioners, and neighbors alike recognize that current roadway designs are not working and that a pivot is needed.

Complete Streets provide a number of important benefits, including better health, economic growth, a sense of place, and overall quality of life. Communities that implement strong policies can expect to see changes in the way people travel and people gathering in vibrant public spaces, shopping at locally owned businesses, and getting to know their neighbors. Complete Streets policies are official policy documents created and adopted

by cities, towns, counties, municipal planning organizations, states, or other jurisdictions that embrace the Complete Streets approach for transportation and land use. This report presents new Complete Streets policies that have been adopted between 2023 and 2024 and scores them based on the criteria below. The report highlights the policies with the highest scores and analyzes general trends and observational data from SGA’s policy review.

Complete Streets and Our Scoring Process

For a detailed explanation of each element, see our [Complete Streets Policy Framework](#).

A “strong” Complete Streets policy is one that addresses a substantial number of the elements in our policy framework and sets the jurisdiction up for important improvements to its transportation system.

The National Complete Streets Coalition recognizes multiple types of documents in our definition of a Complete Streets policy, including legislation, resolutions, executive orders, and internal policies. Each policy is awarded up to 100 points across 10 established elements of our Complete Streets Policy Framework:

-  1. Establishes commitment and vision
-  2. Prioritizes underinvested and underserved communities
-  3. Applies to all projects and phases
-  4. Allows only clear exceptions
-  5. Mandates coordination
-  6. Adopts excellent design guidance
-  7. Requires proactive land-use planning
-  8. Measures progress
-  9. Sets criteria for choosing projects
-  10. Creates a plan for implementation

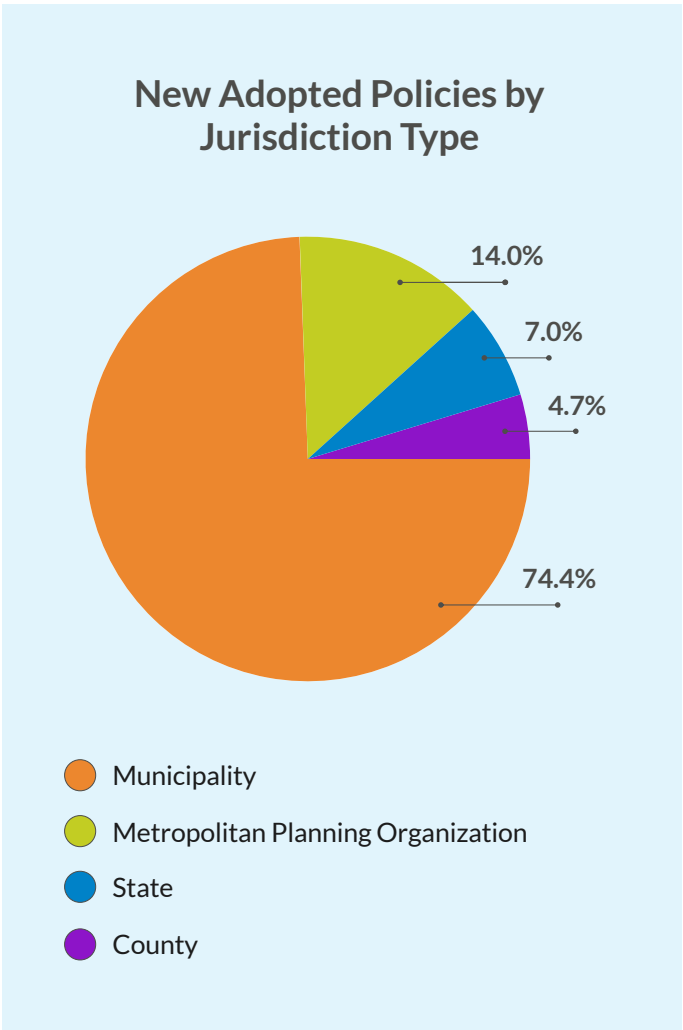
Despite the average upward trajectory of scores, scores are still too low

Overall, new policies continue to score higher than policies adopted in previous years. The average Complete Streets policy score for the 2025 Report is 52 out of 100 points, which shows an improvement from the previous reports. The 2023 report had an average of 45 Points, which was an increase from 39 points in 2018. While an upward trajectory is encouraging, an individual policy with an overall score of 52 points is less likely to make a significant impact on how a community plans, designs, and builds its streets, based on our policy framework. Some policies

reviewed for this report scored in the 70s, 80s, and 90s, but our review also included many policies that scored in the 40s, 30s, 20s, and even the teens. The consequences that stem from policies that lack critical components could mean that tangible, long-term community changes are not implemented or not implemented in a manner that meets all users’ safety needs. For example, many policies with lower scores did not include how the processes, responsibilities, and funding would be changed to make sure transportation systems work to safely move all people.

The top ten policy scores are lower on average than the 2023 report

The average score for the top 10 policies in this report is 79 points out of 100—a decrease from 89 points in 2023, but still higher than the 72-point average in 2018. Diving deeper into this trend, a pattern seems to have emerged. Policies receive inconsistent marks on elements specifically related to prioritizing underinvested communities and implementation (Elements #2, #9, and #10 in the [Complete Streets Policy Framework](#)). SGA revised its policy framework in 2018 to include these elements and without these commitments, it is **much less likely that a policy will result in positive changes**. This leads to frustration and disenchantment around Complete Streets in some places because, although jurisdictions are indicating an interest in Complete Streets, they are not making the requisite commitments to change things.

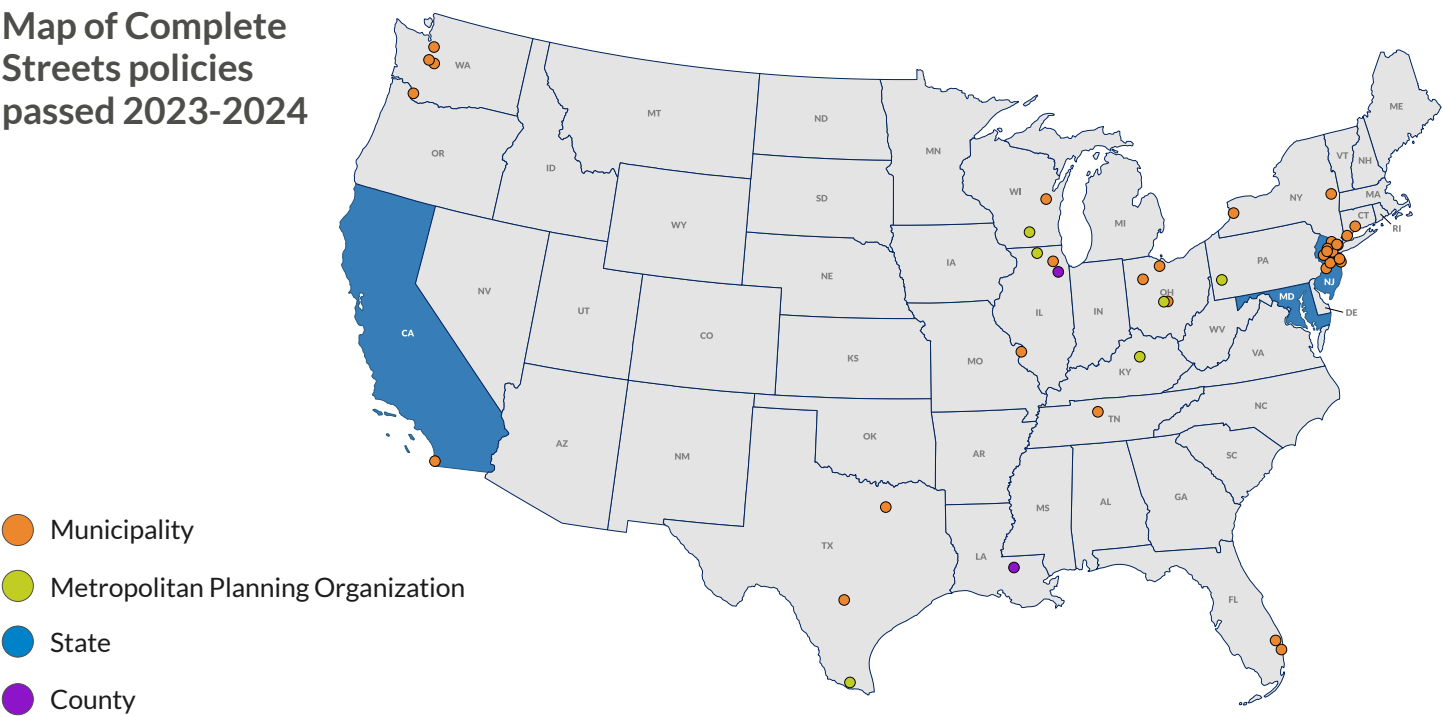


The number of policies adopted in the last two years is less than in previous years

In the U.S., there are over **19,000 incorporated places**, more than **3,000 counties**, and 50 states and territories, and the vast majority of jurisdictions still lack a Complete Streets policy. While there has been a steady stream of new policies—16 in 2023 and 27 in 2024—there remains significant opportunity for further adoption to meet the growing demand for effective policies.

Year	New Policies
2018	114
2019	73
2020	31
2021	35
2022	18
2023	16
2024	27

Map of Complete Streets policies passed 2023-2024



Geography

While communities from coast to coast have adopted a Complete Streets policy in the past two years, the distribution across the US is uneven, revealing both promising clusters of new policies and troubling gaps. For example, thirteen of the new policies adopted between 2023-2024 come from New Jersey alone, while no new policies were adopted in western states outside of Washington and California. Similarly, southeastern and Gulf Coast states—home to some of the **most dangerous places in the country for pedestrians**—saw very few new policies. These inconsistencies underscore the importance of more widespread Complete Streets policy coverage to improve road safety across the country.

The Best Complete Streets Policies 2025

Smart Growth America reviewed and scored 43 Complete Streets policies passed in 2023 and 2024. Based on the policy evaluation using our Complete Streets Policy Framework, the following 10 communities have been recognized as the best Complete Streets policies passed between 2023 and 2024.

**All populations are based on 2023 Census estimates, except for Rockford MPO region which is based on 2020 Census.*

Framework elements			Establishes commitment and vision	Prioritizes underinvested and underserved communities	Applies to all projects and phases	Allows only clear exceptions	Mandates coordination	Adopts excellent design guidance	Requires proactive land-use planning	Measures progress	Sets criteria for choosing projects	Creates a plan for implementation	Total Score
Total possible points			12	9	10	8	8	7	10	13	8	15	100
Jurisdiction	State	Population*											
San Antonio	TX	1,495,295	12	9	10	6	8	7	10	13	8	13	96
Nashville	TN	687,788	12	9	10	6	8	7	10	7	8	12	89
Clyde	OH	6,337	12	9	4	8	8	7	10	13	8	6	85
Bluffton	OH	3,903	12	9	2	6	8	7	10	11	8	8	81
Boca Raton	FL	99,974	10	9	4	8	3	7	7	13	8	11	80
East Baton Rouge Parish	LA	448,467	11	9	10	6	3	7	9	13	1	9	78
Appleton	WI	74,719	11	9	10	4	5	7	8	5	8	7	74
Rockford MPO	IL	315,302	12	9	10	4	8	1	8	9	8	3	72
Asbury Park	NJ	15,391	12	5	10	4	8	7	7	11	1	5	70
Red Bank	NJ	12,779	12	7	8	6	8	3	5	10	5	5	69

Complete Streets policies can be adopted in places of all sizes and be tailored to meet the transportation and mobility goals of each community. As the top policies and case studies in this report demonstrate, it is possible to take action, whether you are a state, a county, a small city under ten thousand residents, or a large urban metropolis.

The policies and trends in this report suggest that some places are on the path to safer transportation for all users and providing numerous benefits, such as giving people more options about how to get around, and more opportunities for physical activity. However, without Complete Streets policies that meet the scoring criteria, communities across the country will experience unsafe road conditions, risking injury or death for drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and all other road users.



Photo by [Arthur Tseng](#) on Unsplash

Everyone in a community has a role to play:

- **All people** – can continue to promote the benefits of the Complete Streets approach and how these policies can foster increased economic activity, walkability and convenience, and increased opportunities to be active.
- **State Governments** – can create their own policies and promote Complete Streets implementation to communities of all sizes by providing tangible support or technical assistance to support local adoption.
- **Local and regional jurisdictions without a Complete Streets policy** – can create a policy using the Complete Streets framework and begin building a local cross-sector Complete Streets coalition.
- **Local and regional jurisdictions with a Complete Streets policy** – can focus on policy implementation, and key actions such as building Complete Streets projects, engaging communities, [evaluating progress based on performance measures](#), and more.

CASE STUDIES

Local leaders across the country are raising the standard for Complete Streets. These standout examples—the three highest-scoring policies in this year’s report—show what’s possible when bold vision meets thoughtful policy design.

1. SAN ANTONIO, TX
2. NASHVILLE, TN
3. CLYDE, OH

Photo by [Shizuko Alexander](#) on iStock



San Antonio, Texas

A coalition that leads to change

San Antonio’s Complete Streets Policy is the result of a year of deep collaboration among partners, including a coalition of dedicated Complete Streets champions. By working closely together to build consensus among community members and partners, the city updated its previous policy to better address the community’s needs with the necessary structure that can lead to improvements in how streets are built and maintained. The shared purpose of improving safety and comfort for all helped to maintain the momentum this robust team needed to pass a strong policy that scored very high according to our framework.

City of San Antonio Complete Streets Policy, adopted September 19th, 2024



Photo by [Eric Francis](#) on Unsplash

Part I: Background

San Antonio first passed a Complete Streets policy in 2011, but there was frustration that the policy did not easily or consistently lead to the outcomes it promised, especially as pedestrian and cyclist crashes and fatalities increased ([San Antonio is the 25th most dangerous metro area for pedestrians](#)).

Inspired by peer cities like [El Paso](#) and [Tucson](#) that had recently passed high-scoring policies, San Antonio decided to revise its Complete Streets policy. The revised policy included an updated system for [prioritizing proposed infrastructure projects](#), which now assigns points (or priority) to proposed projects that increase safety for all road users and multimodal transportation options.

“It was too long since we had first adopted our Complete Streets policy, and all of us were hungry for some clear direction on how we’re creating safer, healthier, more equitable, resilient streets in our city. There’s unprotected, disconnected bike lanes, and San Antonio is heating up, it’s extremely hot in the summers. We need a clear direction on how we’re remaking our largest public spaces in our city.”

— Joey Pawlik, Executive Director of ActivateSA



Since San Antonio’s 2011 policy, new standards have been developed, including the National Complete Streets Coalition’s updated Policy Framework and [CityHealth Complete Streets Policy Framework](#). The San Antonio Complete Streets Coalition pointed to these new standards as a reason for the city to upgrade its policy and the frameworks helped guide the city in its update.

Elements	Score
Establishes commitment and vision	12/12
Prioritizes underinvested and underserved communities	9/9
Applies to all projects and phases	10/10
Allows only clear exceptions	6/8
Mandates coordination	8/8
Adopts excellent design guidance	7/7
Requires proactive land-use planning	10/10
Measures progress	13/13
Sets criteria for choosing projects	8/8
Creates a plan for implementation	13/15



NCSC SCORE
96/100



POPULATION
1,495,295
(2023 ACS)



MEDIAN INCOME
\$62,917
(2023 ACS)



LAND AREA
499 mi²
(2020 Census)

Part II: Road to adoption

In 2023, [ActivateSA](#), a local tactical planning initiative and think-tank, assembled the San Antonio Complete Streets Coalition: a group of local, regional, and national champions whose missions would all be advanced by the city improving its policy. This multi-sector coalition included representation from disability rights groups, active transportation organizations, public health agencies, and environmental organizations, as well as support from the American Heart Association staff who had previously supported the creation of [El Paso’s Complete Streets](#) policy. ActivateSA, leading the San Antonio Complete Streets Coalition, approached the city about updating the policy. The city was already working on its [Bike Network Plan](#) and [Vision Zero](#) updates, and with the spark from the coalition, began to update the Complete Streets policy as well.

In early 2024, the city transportation department rewrote the policy based on current best practices and lessons learned from peer cities.

Throughout this process, the city transportation team convened a recurring partner group that included the San Antonio Complete Streets Coalition and fourteen city departments. The partner group’s detailed review of the updated policy (at times discussing the draft line by line) ensured the policy met the needs of all road users, including those at greatest risk for injury or death. Partners also worked to ensure city departments responsible for construction and maintenance of the new infrastructure, such as the City Attorney’s office and Public Works, were involved in the policy revision process. The partner group worked to build support for the updated policy, including hosting town halls to spread awareness on the policy updates to the public, and coalition leaders meeting individually with community groups to address any concerns. The coalition educated city council members on the updated policy before the policy came to their desks for signature, allowing them to highlight the benefits of the updated policy to decision makers.

Part III: What makes this policy great

One of the strengths of San Antonio’s Complete Streets policy is the commitment to serving all San Antonians, including those who have been historically excluded from transportation discussions in the past. This is apparent [throughout the policy](#). However, San Antonio’s policy goes beyond a mere vision statement by using localized community data to prioritize projects based on road user data. The policy also calls for the creation of a Technical Review Task Force, which is responsible for reviewing future policy changes, policy updates, and determining if the city is meeting its stated performance measures.

As part of its commitment to ensure meaningful improvements and outcomes, the city’s policy also includes actions to mitigate the potential unintended effects of Complete Streets infrastructure on rising living costs. The policy calls on departments from across the city to work together to “thoroughly consider measures to preserve housing affordability and increase new affordable housing options,” tying land use and transportation planning together.

Safety is a central part of Complete Streets, but to really support people walking, biking, and using transit, the streets need to be comfortable as well. San Antonio’s policy goes above and beyond by also including comfort, particularly in a subtropical climate, as a central goal of the policy which reads:

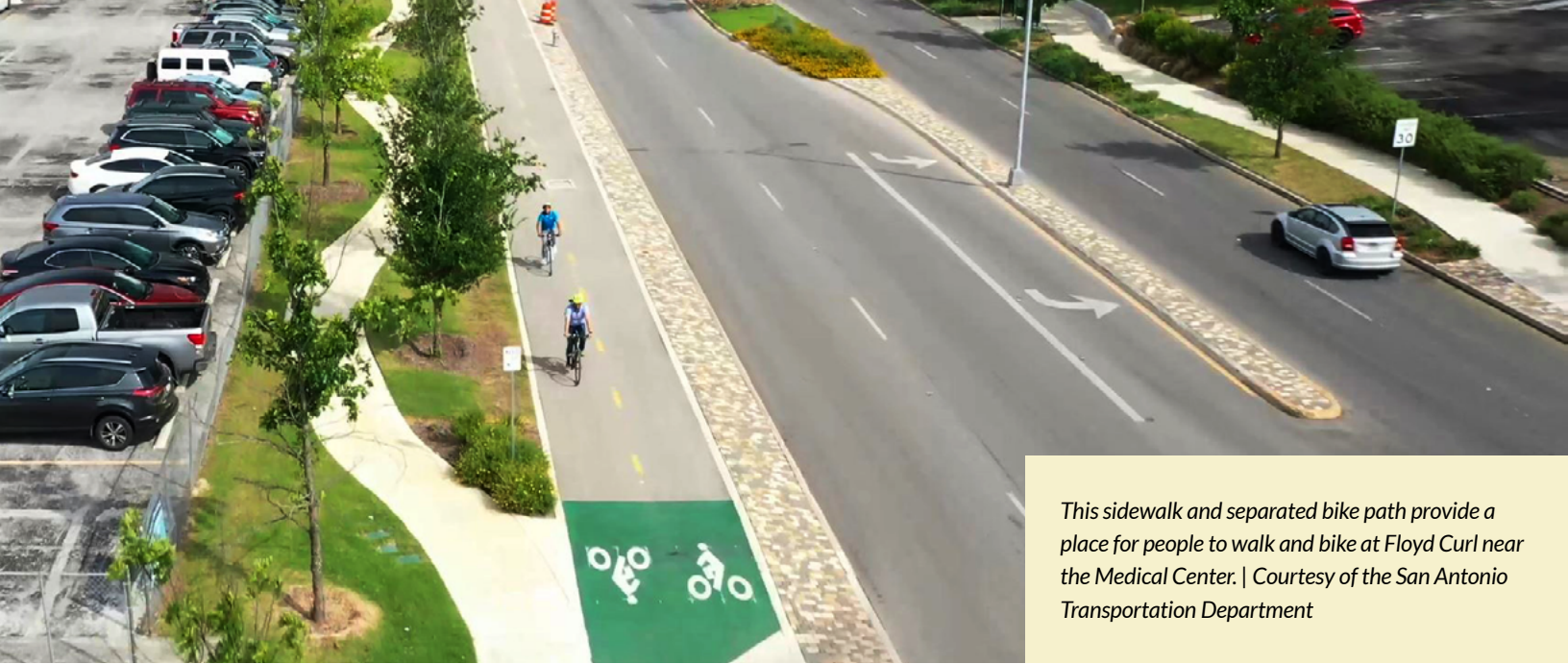
“To meet Complete Streets goals, the city must make different modes of transportation possible and safe in multiple types of weather including the extreme heatwaves, flash floods and torrential downpours, and hailstorms that occur throughout the year. While striving to make all modes of travel safe and comfortable, the city strives to address the ways the natural and built environment can coexist and serve San Antonians.”

Part IV: Putting the policy into practice

Early signs suggest that the city is already translating the policy into action. In May, 2025 the San Antonio City Council approved the creation of a [multimodal transportation commission](#) as required by the Complete Streets policy. The city is currently updating its Design Guide Manual to set standards for designing Complete Streets based on current best practices. The city is also developing a project prioritization tool, integrating existing community-based data. New projects will also include performance measures to track progress, including tracking any changes in the number and rate of road injuries or fatalities, improvements in comfort for all road users, and the number of infrastructure improvements constructed as a result of this policy.

A public meeting about the Complete Streets policy update for San Antonians to learn about and discuss the updates. | Courtesy of the San Antonio Transportation Department





This sidewalk and separated bike path provide a place for people to walk and bike at Floyd Curl near the Medical Center. | Courtesy of the San Antonio Transportation Department

Part V: Lessons learned

Build a multi-sector, robust, engaged coalition, including decision makers and elected officials who will implement the policy as well as the broader community. The strength of this policy comes from people and groups with varying perspectives and needs working together to ensure the policy meets everyone’s goals. By including community stakeholders as well as representatives from relevant government departments, the policy has broad support and can be more easily and effectively implemented.

Get to a large consensus through small conversations. Building and maintaining a coalition is not easy, and including everyone’s input in a policy update takes a lot of work. In addition to monthly meetings, ActivateSA and other coalition organizers made sure to have smaller, more personal conversations with partners and coalition members to understand the why behind different perspectives. Reaching out to individuals who may not have been

able to speak up in larger meetings made sure their voices were not just heard but that they were included.

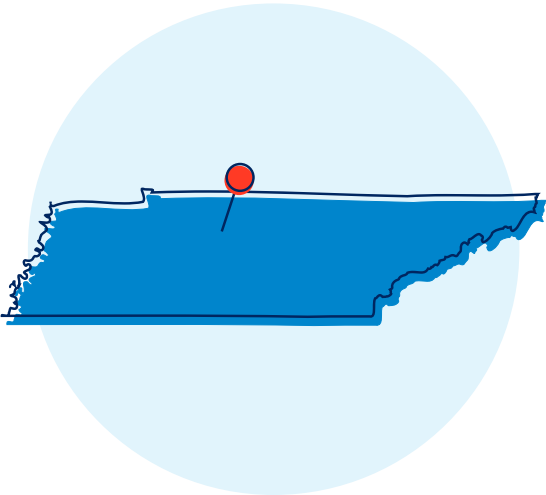
Use existing momentum, pointing to peers and standards along the way. This policy update started with the coalition pushing the city to revisit their old work. With peer cities such as El Paso passing Complete Streets policies and getting recognition (including in the [2023 Best Complete Streets Policies Report](#)), San Antonio was sparked to meet and even exceed their progress. With the support of the San Antonio Complete Streets Coalition, dedicated city transportation staff, and American Heart Association support, they had the tools to do so.

Thank you to Zan Marshall and Isaac Levy, Senior Transportation Planners at the City of San Antonio and Joey Pawlik, Executive Director of ActivateSA, for their time and expertise in producing this case study.

Nashville, TN


Building on the foundation: Nashville’s strong Complete Streets policy solidifies the city’s commitment

Nashville has passed multiple Complete Streets policies over the past fifteen years, improving them with each iteration. The strong Complete Streets policy passed by the city in 2024 is a testament to their efforts and should bolster the city’s progress in the years to come. Nashville shows how cities already making strides on Complete Streets can take their efforts further by refining and updating their policies.



Nashville Mayor Freddie O’Connell Executive Order 045: Green and Complete Streets Policy, adopted January 17, 2024

Elements	Score
Establishes commitment and vision	12/12
Prioritizes underinvested and underserved communities	9/9
Applies to all projects and phases	10/10
Allows only clear exceptions	6/8
Mandates coordination	8/8
Adopts excellent design guidance	7/7
Requires proactive land-use planning	10/10
Measures progress	7/13
Sets criteria for choosing projects	8/8
Creates a plan for implementation	12/15



NCSC SCORE


89/100



(2023 ACS)

POPULATION


687,788



(2023 ACS)

MEDIAN INCOME

\$75,197



(2020 Census)

LAND AREA

476 mi²

Part I: Background

Nashville has had the goal of creating safer streets for years, but their case shows the importance of persistence and continual improvement. Nashville’s first Complete Streets policy was [adopted in 2010](#), which was then [amended in 2016](#) by mayor Megan Barry. While these earlier policies had room for improvement, Nashville used them to demonstrate its commitment and vision to changing the status quo. In addition to creating foundational documents that support safe streets, Nashville has worked to create tangible improvements. For example, in 2022-2023 [Nashville participated](#) in Smart Growth America’s [Complete Streets Leadership Academy](#), where they implemented

safety interventions on state-owned routes. They have also recently passed a new transit referendum to fund continued street design changes.

When the new mayor came into office in January 2024, he wanted to put his own stamp on the city’s transportation future. Nashville’s New Complete Streets policy passed relatively quickly and built on the policies, design changes, and efforts that took place before it took effect on January 17, 2024. This new policy embodies a strong commitment to Complete Streets and addresses some areas that previous policies lacked.

Part II: Road to adoption

Nashville’s current Mayor, Freddie O’Connell is a champion for Complete Streets and has supported improved transportation throughout his career, including serving on the board for Nashville’s Metropolitan Transit Authority. It was not a surprise when he confirmed this commitment with an updated Complete Streets policy just a few months after taking office.

Since it came in the form of an Executive Order, the Complete Streets policy did not require significant political negotiations or a council vote. However, passing the policy so quickly presented challenges since the administration had to review previous policies and other materials to make sure the new policy aligned with the city’s



Complete Streets project at Madison Station Boulevard

A bike lane created using temporary art and cones on Nashville’s Dickerson Pike was part of the Smart Growth America Complete Streets Leadership Academy



master plan. This was especially demanding since it took place during the early days of the new administration, a time when there are numerous competing priorities. The administration also had to balance the need for including precise and strong policy language with the goal of moving quickly and beginning working on Complete Streets as fast as possible.

The pros and cons of executive orders: The fact that a mayor can create a Complete Streets policy via executive order means that they can do it quickly and use whatever language they choose. However, it also means that these policies are relatively easy to overturn when a new administration takes over. It is important

that Complete Streets policies and actions last beyond political timelines so jurisdictions should adopt the strongest and most binding policies and language possible.

By the time the 2024 Complete Streets policy was created, Nashville had some implementation experience under its belt in the form of both permanent and quick-build projects. This helped identify what types of tools would be helpful for improving the implementation process, which were embedded in the Complete Streets policy and the subsequent [Complete Streets Implementation Guide](#) adopted later that year.



Photo by [C Hanchey](#) on flickr

Nashville’s Complete Streets policy was not created from scratch but was built on a foundation of previously established goals and values. Nashville has also taken complementary steps and created other policies with related goals and strategies.

The city also created a [Vision Zero Action Plan](#) and [Vision Zero Implementation Plan](#), which focus on improving safety and eliminating road deaths and severe injuries. These documents informed the development of Nashville’s Complete Streets Policy, with the [Vision Zero High Injury Network](#) identified as a key tool for prioritization in the Complete Streets policy.

Nashville had a few years to work towards their Vision Zero objectives and identify their challenges—most of which stemmed from a lack of guidance and consistency regarding implementation. This experience allowed them to tailor their new Complete Streets policy to increase efficiency and cut down on waste of time and funding, which enhanced Nashville’s ability to deliver on their previously established goals around road safety and transportation.

Part III: What makes this policy great

Nashville’s new policy effectively lays out project selection criteria and incorporates community data within that process—prioritizing underinvested communities and areas that have high rates of fatalities and injuries.

In recent years, Nashville has seen a significant [increase in the rate of pedestrian fatalities](#). And [evidence suggests](#) that fatalities and injuries disproportionately affect underinvested communities in Nashville. For example, African Americans make up about 25% of the population of Nashville, but account for over 35% of pedestrian deaths and serious injuries in the last 5 years. Incorporating community data into project selection will help ensure that Nashville’s efforts reach the areas of highest need.

“To facilitate this, NDOT shall develop a project prioritization tool based on a point system to prioritize projects that improve safety and increase multimodal level of service for the most vulnerable communities.” Nashville Mayor Freddie O’Connell Executive Order 045: Green and Complete Streets Policy

Using strong, binding language regarding vulnerable and underserved communities rather than vague and suggestive language also makes Nashville’s policy stand out. And laying out specific steps for how that prioritization will happen, including using data to develop an informed community engagement plan, makes the policy

much more likely to have an impact.

Nashville’s policy provides guidance for effective implementation. This characteristic makes it a valuable tool for making tangible changes within the community. In particular, their commitment to providing training for transportation staff and addressing barriers to community engagement set this policy apart. The accompanying implementation guide provides additional support and guidance.

“We really wanted to make sure that there was practical and direct language, so it would be a tool for us to craft policies around successful implementation.”

— Justin Cole, Transportation Planner
Nashville Department of Transportation and Multimodal Infrastructure

Part IV: Putting the policy into practice

Nashville’s new and improved policy is another important step on its path to safer streets and healthier communities. It reaffirms some of the practices and procedures the city was following and adds some essential new elements.

For example, the new project selection criteria means that projects that feature the Complete Streets approach are more likely to receive funding and support. Additionally, the “project life cycle” tool in [Nashville’s Complete Streets Implementation Guide](#), which was developed to support the policy, has allowed them to ensure Complete Streets considerations and principles are implemented from the start of a project rather than added as an afterthought.



Temporary bike lane tested on Nashville’s 31st Avenue

The city has also identified some obstacles and is working to address them, such as updating engineering standards to reflect its commitment to Complete Streets. They’ve also recognized that the same approach does not work on every street, and are working to develop specific street typologies so that the characteristics of the existing infrastructure are considered within the Complete Streets approach. The city also partnered with Smart Growth America to host a [webinar series about Complete Streets implementation](#) for city staff, other relevant stakeholders, and the general public.

Nashville’s Complete Streets efforts will receive a major boost from its [Choose How You Move program](#). Funded by a new sales tax approved by voters in November 2024, this will support the installation of over 80 miles of sidewalks, over 50 miles of [all-access corridors](#), updated signals at nearly 600 intersections, and the implementation of Complete Streets projects along approximately 40 miles of roadway.

“We wanted to get away from the idea of a complete street as a thing, but as an approach, so that every decision that we make, no matter how small or large, is consistent with that approach.”

— Justin Cole
Transportation Planner
Nashville Department of Transportation and Multimodal Infrastructure

Part V: Lessons learned

Build on your foundations and continually improve: Nashville’s new Complete Streets policy did not emerge from a vacuum. Instead, it was based on the previous policies and aligned with other complementary efforts such as Vision Zero. However, the new policy addressed important gaps that were missing or weak in earlier policies. Complete Streets policies are not a one-time action. Instead, jurisdictions should constantly seek to refine and improve them based on progress and impacts.

Action-oriented words speak louder: Nashville recognized the need to use their policy not only as a proclamation of a commitment to Complete Streets policy but as a tool for implementation. Focusing on practical language that requires practitioners to create processes and standards leads to policies that move from the page into practice.

Give yourself tangible tools for success: Nashville realized that they needed standards, procedures, and guidelines so that Complete Streets are implemented as a process rather than an attribute of a single project. As a crucial first step, they created their Complete Streets Implementation Guide in tandem with their Complete Streets policy.

Thank you to Justin Cole, Transportation Planner at Nashville Department of Transportation and Multimodal Infrastructure for his time and expertise in producing this case study.

📍 Clyde, OH


The small city championing big ideas

Clyde, Ohio is proof that communities of all sizes can have a strong Complete Streets Policy. Starting with just a few champions focused on public health improvements and increased mobility for Clyde’s large population of individuals with developmental and physical disabilities, Clyde passed a strong policy backed by a dedicated coalition.




City of Clyde Complete Streets Policy, adopted December 19, 2023


Elements	Score
Establishes commitment and vision	12/12
Prioritizes underinvested and underserved communities	9/9
Applies to all projects and phases	4/10
Allows only clear exceptions	8/8
Mandates coordination	8/8
Adopts excellent design guidance	7/7
Requires proactive land-use planning	10/10
Measures progress	13/13
Sets criteria for choosing projects	8/8
Creates a plan for implementation	6/15




NCSC SCORE
85/100



POPULATION
6,337
(2023 ACS)



MEDIAN INCOME
\$48,705
(2023 ACS)



LAND AREA
5 mi²
(2020 Census)



Aerial view of Clyde

Part I: Background

A rural city in northwest Ohio of just over 6,000, Clyde's a small place with a big identity. With an official "Tree City USA" [designation](#) from the National Arbor Day Foundation, Clyde has long been committed to green infrastructure. The city has a large population of individuals with developmental and physical disabilities, thanks to local company [Sandco](#), who helps with job training and placement. This makes it even more critical that the city's infrastructure finds ways to support every community member. When Justin LaBenne, city manager, was approached about individual concerns regarding mobility, he realized that the problem was much larger than a single story. He knew it was time to revamp Clyde's streets and the policies that support them so that all residents could access sidewalks, parks, grocery stores, or water fountains. The result? A Complete Streets policy that is anything but small.

Part II: Road to adoption

Complete Streets came on Clyde's radar when Laura Bogard, Creating Healthy Communities Program Coordinator at Sandusky County Public Health, approached Justin LaBenne with the idea of creating a Complete Streets Policy. LaBenne quickly realized that such a policy could be a solution for the safety and access concerns he was hearing from residents. Armed with Sandusky County's Creating Healthy Communities grant funded by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the two put together a team to draft and pass the policy.

Clyde's motto throughout this process was finding creative solutions for a small city. That started with forming a coalition representing multiple interests across the community, including the economic development director, residents, and representatives from the Great Lakes Community Action Partnership, Mobility

Management, Habitat for Humanity, the Health Department, and the Sandusky County Regional Commission. Bogard led the charge, using her public health background to show the importance of green space and walkable streets. LaBenne believes that the key to action is "having people on the steering committee that are willing to guide the policy and take action." The committee wasn't looking for glory in passing this policy – they just knew it was the right thing to do. A policy would make sure these changes supported a long-term vision and were sustained for years to come.

The coalition formed in December 2022 and met throughout 2023, culminating in the passage of the Complete Streets Resolution in December 2023. With such a small community, the policymakers had to find ways to develop language that was appropriate for Clyde. They had a lot of back-and-forth with residents and the city council, making sure that all voices were heard and reflected in the policy. The coalition worked hard to balance addressing concerns around new ideas with finding ways for the policy to support a vision for a brighter future. It was this can-do attitude and willingness to fight for what would work that pushed Clyde's policy to approval both by the city council and community members.

Support from Sandco on identifying residents' mobility struggles and offering solutions within the Complete Streets framework made the engagement and approval process smoother. They were eager for their clients to be able to access more of downtown Clyde through

streetscape updates. The coalition was also eager to use this as an opportunity to capture the lived experience of all community members and have it inform the eventual policy. Throughout 2023, the Complete Streets Steering Committee conducted walk audits across Clyde, ensuring that community members recognized how the policy could support the potential changes they needed.



Members of the coalition conduct a walk audit in Clyde

Part III:
What makes this policy great

Clyde’s policy opens with a **clear vision** to implement a Complete Streets policy. They go above and beyond in naming street users they intend to benefit, listing “pedestrians, motorists, cyclists, transit and school bus riders, delivery and service personnel, freight haulers, and emergency responders...”

While Clyde is a small city, they made no excuses in their dedication to prioritizing **underinvested and underserved users** throughout their policy. They list a number of users to prioritize, including cyclists, youth, older adults, and those with limited mobility, physical challenges, or limited access to a personal vehicle. They even define design features they hope to implement in the future, including reachable buttons, wheelchair-friendly sidewalks, and more median crossings.

Their policy specifies the need to **mitigate unintended consequences** for certain users, which they will track through extensive community involvement. This includes a long list of strategies, such as public comment opportunities at Complete Streets Steering Committee meetings, walk audits, community surveys, and educational opportunities for the public, like bicycle rodeos and youth traffic safety events. Coupled with their extensive short- and long-term performance measures that cover items such as infrastructure improvements, public health, connectivity, and community engagement, Clyde’s policy never falters in their commitment to turning “roads into people-oriented spaces and increasing mobility options for all.”

Part IV:
Putting the policy into practice

Though Clyde’s resolution only passed recently, Bogard and LaBenne are already seeing wins. They’ve been able to use more Creating Healthy Communities funding for three upcoming projects, all of which will paint crosswalks, add curb cuts and streetlights, and improve the Clyde pedestrian experience. These improvements are all in line with the new **Downtown Clyde Revitalization Plan**. Sandco has also been identifying projects across Clyde that may help improve mobility and access, including new bike racks, more ramps, increased bus stops, and accessible parking. With the new community engagement strategies outlined in the Complete Streets policy, Bogard and LaBenne can hear what community members need most.

While rallying community members to volunteer their time has been difficult, Bogard and LaBenne continually reach out to Clyde locals and invite those with lived experiences to give their input. This has meant recruiting from all spaces—when a resident complains that their jogging path is impeded by bumpy sidewalks, tree branches, or a lack of curb cuts, LaBenne invites them to work on Complete Streets implementation.

With limited funds, larger-scale projects have been difficult to implement. Big streetscape projects are currently cost-prohibitive, but LaBenne hopes for these larger projects down the line. They also have plans for speed ramps near the Whirlpool Corporation facility and concrete



Complete Streets policies and projects such as the **pedestrianization of this alley** in downtown Clyde can increase walkability while also building a sense of community and character. | Courtesy of the City of Clyde



Members of Clyde’s working group/committee

barriers downtown along streets with wide turns. LaBenne knows that even small wins can make big differences for Clyde residents. With or without a policy, they were going to make a more liveable, and safer community, but the strong Complete Streets policy has certainly contributed to the changes that have been made.

“Success is when I can finally see people that I know have had struggles actually get to where they’re trying to go.”

— Justin LaBenne, Clyde City Manager



Complete Streets policies can help improve access to amenities like parks and green spaces. | Courtesy of the City of Clyde

Part V: Lessons learned

It can start with one. With Bogard as a champion for Complete Streets across Sandusky County, Clyde had the spark they needed. Once LaBenne was on board, the Complete Streets Coalition could navigate the policymaking process with confidence. Sometimes, it just takes one person to spearhead the process and believe in the mission to see success in the end.

Listen to community members. With stakeholders from various backgrounds, Clyde was able to learn about what issues were important to local residents. By taking their time, hosting walk audits, and educating community members about what Complete Streets are, Clyde was able to pass a policy that accurately represented the community’s vision. This also built support for the implementation of future street design changes,

building momentum for these issues across Clyde.

One size does not fit all. Every community has its own personality, and a good Complete Streets policy must reflect that. With a large elderly and disabled population, Clyde knew their focus needed to be slow-moving traffic, accessible sidewalks, and a policy that could be implemented by a city of their size. They had to pave the way to their own policy, not copy what larger, urban cities have done.

Thank you to Justin LaBenne, Clyde City Manager, and Laura Bogard, Creating Healthy Communities Program Coordinator at Sandusky County Public Health, for their time and expertise in producing this case study.

“Our stakeholder group had 14 city departments and 15 outside organizations, and that was a really big deal. I’m very proud of that. I’m very proud of the people who participated. It was really important because it gave us access to knowledge that we didn’t personally have as transportation planners. Having that robust stakeholder group provided a lot of perspectives that gave a more holistic approach to the policy, and that really made it for San Antonio. **These are people who are here for San Antonio: this is their community. This is their home.**”

— **Zan Marshall, AICP**
Senior Transportation Planner
City of San Antonio
Transportation Department

Want to create or evaluate a policy?

Get started with these resources:

Complete Streets Policy Action Guide

Policy Evaluation Tool

DIVING DEEPER INTO COMPLETE STREETS POLICIES

This section takes a close look at the important role states can play in Complete Streets. It also revisits three of the top policies from the past to see what progress has been made.

Photo by [HABesen](#) on iStock



State-level Complete Streets policies

States across the U.S. own some of the deadliest roadways for pedestrians—66 percent of all pedestrian fatalities in the **101 largest metro areas occur on state-owned routes**. State agencies can play a huge role in improving road design and enhancing safety. While some states have enacted Complete Streets policies to address these issues, most state level policies score very low on the Complete Streets Policy Framework. Our analysis of three new state-level policies underscores the importance of state efforts and outlines strategies for enacting stronger, more effective measures.

Overview of State Policies

This year’s report analyzes three new state-level policies: California Senate Bill 960, Maryland Department of Transportation’s Complete Streets policy, and New Jersey Department of Transportation’s Complete Streets Policy/ Procedure. SGA has previously scored policies from eight states (California, Iowa, Maine, Minnesota, North Carolina, South Carolina, Washington, and Wisconsin), with California’s 2021 policy achieving the highest score at 61.

*The California Department of Transportation 2021 Director’s Policy scored a 61 in the previous **Best Complete Streets Policies Report**. The 2024 California Senate Bill 960 codifies Complete Streets and was passed to ensure and strengthen implementation of the 2021 policy: requiring implementation targets, transparent decision-making processes, and prioritization of improvements for people walking, biking, and taking transit. Each of these policies has been scored separately on their own merit, according to SGA’s protocol. Learn more at **Streetsblog California** and the **California Bike Coalition**.

State	Year Passed	Score
California	2021	61*
Minnesota	2022	58
Washington	2022	49
New Jersey	2024	45
Maryland	2024	44
Iowa	2018	44
North Carolina	2019	40
California	2024	35*
Maine	2019	33
South Carolina	2021	31
Wisconsin	2021	22



Complete Streets can promote active transportation and physical activity.

Why a Statewide Policy?

States can play a crucial role in transportation and road safety. The most dangerous roadways are **owned and controlled by states**. Thus, state departments of transportation can develop and implement Complete Streets policies to ensure that roads are designed and maintained to achieve safety and access for everyone. Beyond the roads that they directly control, though, state departments of transportation have significant influence on policies and jurisdictions (such as cities, towns, and counties) through funding, planning, and rule making. They can also encourage and incentivize local jurisdictions to create their own Complete Streets policies to match local conditions and needs.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The three state policies reviewed for this report clearly outline their vision (**Element 1**) for Complete Streets. They also clearly describe relevant design guidance (**Element 6**), establishing standards that enable the effective design and construction of Complete Streets and serve as models for local jurisdictions statewide.

However, the three states reviewed for this report do not set criteria for choosing projects (**Element 9**) by not updating project selection processes to prioritize Complete Streets projects. Similarly, the three policies do not adequately incorporate performance measures (**Element 8**) meaning that assessing true impacts will be challenging. Despite a clear Complete Streets vision, further commitment is needed to implement the Complete Streets approach fully.

Considerations

Considering the reach and broad impacts that state-level Complete Streets policies can have, states, territories, or similar jurisdictions may consider creating one. It is important that a new policy addresses all elements of the Complete Streets framework. States that currently have a lower scoring policy can work to strengthen their policies to ensure they achieve maximum benefits.

Action in two states: New Jersey and Washington

While this year’s report revealed five new Complete Streets policies that scored 80 points or higher, there were low-scoring policies as well. Many of the lower-scoring policies came from New Jersey and Washington. Almost 40% of the policies reviewed came from these states (17/43), with multiple localities adopting nearly identical language and formatting. Policy scores averaged around 50 points for New Jersey and around 25 for Washington. These patterns may be driven by statewide incentives, guidance, and model policy language aimed at encouraging policy adoption. The result was a proliferation of low-scoring policies that do not adequately address many of our policy framework elements.

The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) gives “special consideration” to municipalities that have adopted Complete Streets policies when allocating state and federal transportation funds. That is, New Jersey localities with a Complete Streets policy are more likely to receive transportation dollars.

This approach is reinforced by [Sustainable Jersey](#), a 501(c)(3) organization that offers sustainability training and awards points to localities that adopt a “Complete & Green Streets for All” policy as part of earning a “Sustainable



Photo by [Kamaji Ojino](#) on Pexels

Jersey” certification. To receive full points in the transportation category, communities must adopt a policy that aligns with the New Jersey Department of Transportation’s 2024 policy. However, that [policy](#) scores a 45 based on SGA’s [Complete Streets Policy Framework](#). As a result, communities using it as a benchmark may miss critical components necessary for an effective Complete Streets policy.

Furthermore, jurisdictions that base their policies on NJDOT’s “[model policy](#)” may fall short on many elements. Two New Jersey policies (Asbury Park and Red Bank), made our top 10 list. However, the majority of New Jersey policies scored below 50.

The pattern is similar for Washington state. In 2011, the Washington state legislature passed the [Complete Streets Act](#), which encouraged localities to adopt their own Complete Streets ordinances. The act also establishes a grant program to help local governments pay for Complete Streets projects in their jurisdiction, but the locality must have an adopted Complete Streets ordinance to be eligible. On the Municipal Research and Services Center’s [Complete Streets webpage](#), top Washington policies are highlighted alongside key elements from SGA’s Complete Streets grading framework. And in 2022, the state passed [legislation](#) requiring Complete Streets for all projects over \$500,000 within urbanized areas. Of the four policies passed by Washington jurisdictions in 2023-2024, the highest score was only 30. This continues a trend of low scores from Washington. In the 2023 Best Complete Streets Policies report, there were twenty-four new policies, but almost all of them (19/24) scored below 50.

The increased attention to Complete Streets in states like New Jersey and Washington mirrors the kind of leading and supporting role played by the state of [Massachusetts](#) in recent years. That state saw 90 new policies adopted between 2018 and 2022. However, the highest scoring policy was only 65, and the average score was around 51.

While encouraging local policy adoption is a positive step, the prevalence of low-scoring policies from these efforts is concerning. Clear guidance and alignment with the Complete Streets Framework may help boost efforts among local jurisdictions.

Using the framework to guide and evaluate policy language can ensure that new policies are capable of delivering safer and more connected streets that serve all people. States without a Complete Streets policy can use [our framework](#) to create one, and those that currently have a policy can use the framework to identify areas for improvement.



Complete Streets allow all road users to travel in safety.

Past top policies: Where are they now?

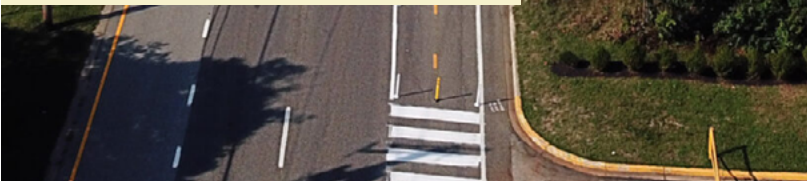
Previous editions of the [Best Complete Streets Policies](#) report have spotlighted the nation’s leading policies, recognizing community achievements, and providing positive examples for other places. Outcomes from some of these former, top-ranked policies several years after adoption reveal compelling evidence of the impacts of Complete Streets policies.

Howard County, Maryland

In 2023, the highest scoring Complete Streets policy and first to receive a perfect score (100/100) was [Howard County, Maryland](#). Howard County’s policy was adopted in 2019 after community organizations, county staff, and elected officials joined forces through their shared vision to make safe transportation for all people a reality. That collaborative spirit has persisted through partnerships with Maryland DOT and local jurisdictions, particularly demonstrated through their participation in [Smart Growth America’s 2024 Complete Streets Leadership Academy](#). This initiative resulted in the installation of a quick-build demonstration project that replaced the rightmost lane on a wide four-lane highway with a multi-use path for pedestrians and bikers. The quick-build joins Howard County’s impressive list of implemented [Complete Streets Infrastructure Improvement Projects](#) that have been given life thanks to their strong policy.



This Howard County [quick-build project](#) turned a car-centric corridor into one that is safer for multiple kinds of road users.



El Paso, Texas

Another city with a high-scoring policy (96/100) from our 2023 report, [El Paso, Texas](#), has made significant strides toward its Complete Streets goals through numerous partner programs. The city’s residents and officials were motivated to create the El Paso Complete Streets Coalition by rising concerns, which were in part due to street designs that limited community members’ ability to reach important destinations such as grocery stores, and medical care without a car or get regular physical activity. The city also created

complementary policies, such as their [2024 Safe Routes to School Action Plan](#), which utilizes Complete Streets Design guidance to improve pedestrian crossings for areas around school zones through [community painting days](#). The El Paso Complete Streets policy stood out for its emphasis on prioritizing underinvested communities by “going to the people,” an emphasis that has guided and shaped the success of the city’s implementation process.



In 2023 the city held community painting days to implement quick-build projects such as this painted curb bump out. | Courtesy of [El Paso Vision Zero](#)



This new project in Des Moines features widened sidewalks, a buffered bike lane, bump outs, improved stormwater management, and a sidewalk ramp. | Courtesy of [City of Des Moines Engineering Department](#).

Des Moines, Iowa

Looking a bit further back to the [2018 Best Complete Streets Policies](#) report, Des Moines, Iowa came in second place for their policy (87/100). Similar to El Paso, Des Moines stood out for its emphasis on historically underserved communities. Since the policy was passed, local leaders focused on areas identified by the city’s metropolitan planning organization, specifically working through schools to expand Complete Streets projects. In 2024, [numerous construction projects](#) broke ground, including a bridge replacement that features bike lanes and sidewalks, riverside trail improvements, and many new sidewalk constructions. Initial project emphasis on highest need areas allowed for Des Moines to get the ball rolling on widespread Complete Streets projects. This strategy may have played a role in the city ranking as the 5th safest city for pedestrians according to Smart Growth America’s 2024 release of [Dangerous by Design](#), a significant improvement from their ranking in the [2021 report](#) as the 24th safest metropolitan area.



Takeaways

The examples of these three cities offer different lessons about following through and implementing Complete Streets. One important commonality is that they all continued the expansion of their road safety efforts by applying for funding. In the past two years, they all received a [Safe Streets and Roads 4 All \(SS4A\)](#) grant, securing federal support for the continuation of Complete Streets programming and implementation. And success can breed success. A strong Complete Streets policy that results in more action through implemented projects and programs can have more success attracting attention and funding support for future endeavours. When policy meets action, communities can build better, safer, and more complete streets.