

Built Environment

Community of Practice

BACKGROUND

Built environments that support active living lead to healthier communities. Physical activity is associated with decreased obesity and reduced risk for several chronic diseases, including arthritis and heart disease. The concept of 'Complete Streets' is one of many important strategies relating to how land is used in our communities to support active and healthy living. Local (at the municipal level) Complete Streets policies encourage the creation and operation of road networks that support physical activity by enacting change at the policy level. Implementing a Complete Streets policy ensures that roads are designed for all users by supporting activities such as safe walking and biking. Enactment of a Complete Streets policy indicates that a community is committed to building and maintaining road networks in ways that support public health and safety. As such, Massachusetts residents who live in communities with Complete Streets policies will have increased opportunities to be physically active.

OBJECTIVE BY 2017

At least 5% of Massachusetts cities and towns will have a Complete Streets policy.

PRIORITY STRATEGIES

- Developing technical assistance strategies for municipalities and other stakeholders to encourage Complete Streets policy adoption.
- Reaching out to municipalities across the state to better understand the barriers to adopting Complete Streets policies.
- Conducting a statewide inventory of municipalities to determine how many have adopted and how they have implemented a Complete Streets policy.
- Supporting Complete Streets implementation by providing best practices and resources on other healthy community design strategies that compliment and back Complete Streets principles.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Development of the Massachusetts Healthy Community Design Toolkit: Leveraging Positive Change (including updates to the toolkit to incorporate healthy aging guideline).
- In two years the state has gone from 1 community with a Complete Streets policy (or relevant guidelines, ordinance, procedures) to 10.
- CoP members have provided technical assistance to communities ranging from presentations to fully developed bike/ped plans, drafting of policy language, etc.
- Working with the Massachusetts Council on Aging the CoP helped develop a "healthy aging through healthy community design" program supporting 7 communities to engage in pilot projects (most of which include complete streets related activities).
- In 2014 the Complete Streets Certification Program was announced by MassDOT (the result of successful passage of language in the Transportation Bond Bill).

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TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS FOR 2014-2015

- Building grassroots support for Complete Streets policies
- Making the case for how Complete Streets policies help improve the quality of life in communities
- Gathering experiences from other communities on traffic impacts and costs associated with adoption of Complete Streets policies.
- Developing Policy to Plans to Projects: Practical ways to effectively implement Complete Streets policies.
- Incorporating Complete Streets into larger land-use related decision making processes (e.g. housing, zoning, etc.)

CoP Members

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