Hennepin County
October 2023

Complete and Green Streets
Policy

What is Complete Streets?

Complete Streets is an approach to roadway design that balances the needs of all roadway users, including people walking, rolling, biking, riding transit, and driving. County Roads are also important for hauling freight and delivering fire, medical and police services. This approach aims to enhance safety and accessibility to better serve residents. By promoting all modes, we can reduce transportation disparities, greenhouse gas emissions and improve health and livability for our residents.

What is Green Streets?

Green Streets is an approach to roadway design that incorporates environmentally sustainable principles and practices to reduce the impacts of urbanization and impervious surfaces on the environment and enhance livability. Green Streets incorporate: vegetation, including trees, shrubs and perennials; amended soils; engineered systems, such as permeable pavement and specialty drainage structures; and rain gardens to slow, filter, and clean stormwater runoff. By capturing rainwater and pollutant runoff at its source, the water can be cleaned prior to discharge into lakes, rivers and wetlands.

Incorporating green elements into roadway design improves air quality and water quality, which, in turn, improves people's health and increases resiliency of people and roads to climate change impacts.

Using Complete and Green Streets to make connections and reduce impacts

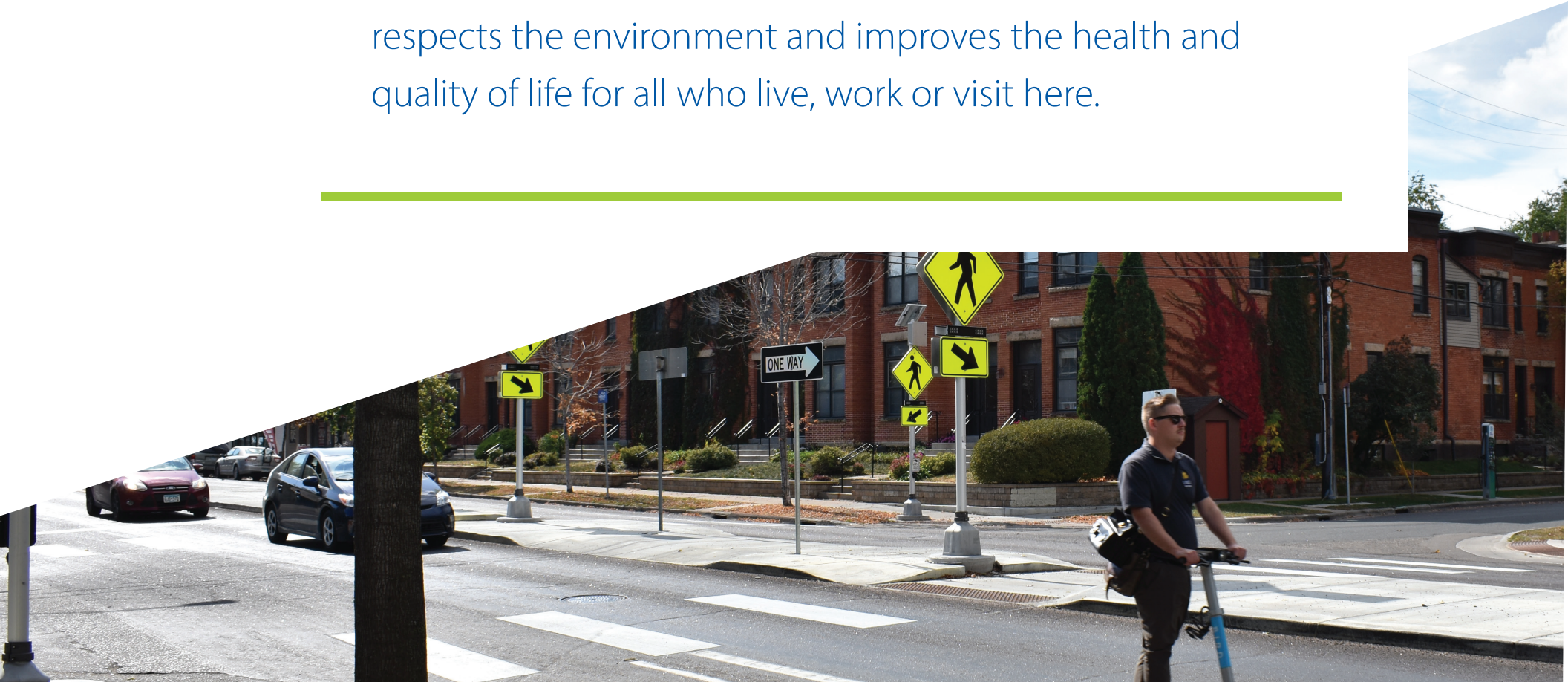
Hennepin County recognizes our public right-of-way as a valuable asset that can connect people to jobs, schools, health care and other important destinations and minimize the impact of land development on the natural environment. Hennepin County further recognizes that people have diverse needs and rely on multiple modes in using our transportation network.

Building Complete Streets increases mobility for people living or traveling along our roadways by prioritizing safety and access to destinations.

Complete and Green Streets goals are to:

- provide transportation options for all people
- reduce greenhouse gas emissions
- increase resiliency of the built environment
- foster positive health outcomes by decreasing the heat island effect, minimizing stormwater and flooding impacts, improving water quality and reducing air pollution and enhancing livability for communities

Our vision is to provide a safe transportation network that offers strong connections through multiple modes, respects the environment and improves the health and quality of life for all who live, work or visit here.



Incorporating county and community priorities

Hennepin County adopted its original Complete Streets Policy in 2009. Since then, design best practices and county priorities have evolved. This updated policy reflects national research, design guidance and aligns with the county's plans and initiatives.

This updated policy reflects a transportation vision that aligns with the county's goals and priorities and guides future projects and funding decisions.

Comprehensive plan

Hennepin County's transportation plan is included as part of the county's comprehensive plan, which is updated every 10 years, and provides guidance for the county's multimodal transportation system. It establishes a subset of long-range plans including the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan, as well as the pedestrian, bicycle and safety plans. The goals identified in the county's comprehensive plan support and align with the Complete and Green Streets Policy.

Disparity Reduction

We can reduce disparities by making changes in transportation. Transportation touches all domains in disparity reduction, particularly employment, education, health and housing. To reduce disparities, we need to use an equity lens while we prioritize transportation improvements. We also need to support community-driven solutions and look to long-term changes to make the biggest impacts on reducing disparities. Building Complete and Green Streets advances the county's work in reducing disparities.

Climate Action Plan

Complete and Green Streets advances the county's climate action goals by providing transportation options that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and incorporating green infrastructure to manage stormwater, improve water quality, decrease urban heat island effects and sequester carbon. The county's Climate Action Plan outlines strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to the changing climate, including reducing vehicle miles traveled, advocating for and supporting transit and expanding multimodal facilities. The plan also outlines goals to adapt to a warmer and wetter climate, increase the resilience of the built environment and protect natural resources.

ADA Transition Plan

Complete Streets enhances accessibility throughout our transportation system. The county's ADA Transition Plan outlines a path toward providing accessible facilities for all people traveling along or across our roadways. The county continues to invest in upgrading the county's pedestrian curb ramps and other infrastructure to improve accessibility for all people walking, rolling, biking and riding transit – especially for people with disabilities.

Safety Action Plan

Incorporating Complete and Green Streets design aligns with the county's goals to reduce crashes and enhance safety along our roadways. We are Minnesota's most populous county, which means we need to be systematic in how we address safety. Therefore, we are moving forward with a Safe System Approach. The county's Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) program, modeled on the statewide initiative, is a county-led comprehensive program demonstrating the county's commitment to reducing fatal and life-changing crashes for all transportation users. TZD integrates five E's to maximize the program's effectiveness: education, enforcement, engineering, engagement and emergency services.

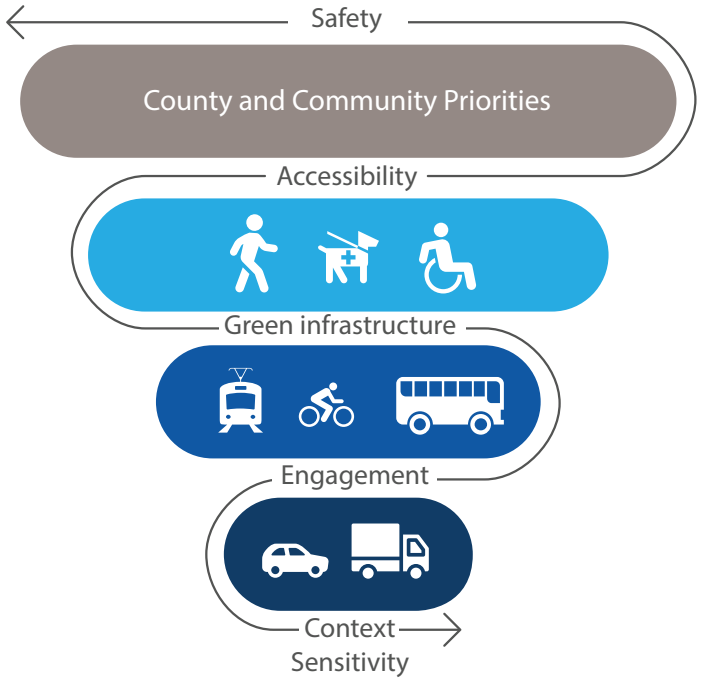
Context sensitivity

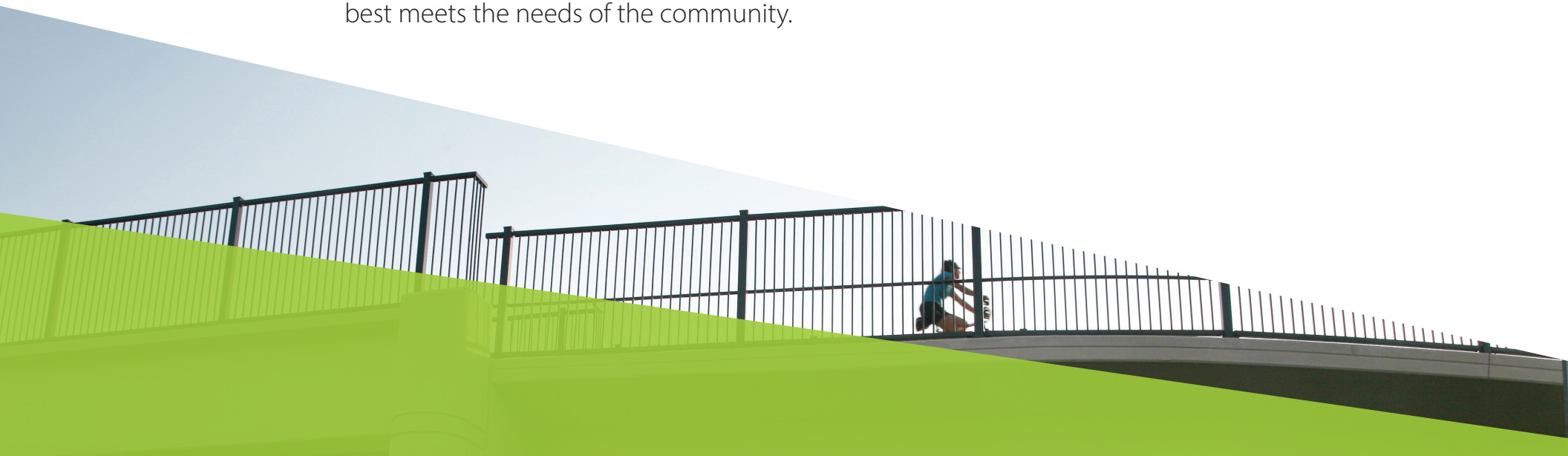
Building a roadway and using the entire right-of-way within the context is important. It means meeting unique community needs in a flexible way in order to fit its physical and geographical setting. It strives to preserve scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources, while maintaining safety and mobility. Hennepin County has a wide diversity of land uses and communities with high density urban, growing suburbs and rural farm areas. Because of this diversity, the county's implementation of Complete and Green Streets will look different depending on location within the county.

Modal priority framework

In alignment with the county's transportation vision, goals and initiatives, context sensitivity, and community priorities, we have established a modal priority framework to guide decisions along the county's transportation network.

The approach for this framework is underpinned in county and community values. The tiers of transportation modes, shown right, illustrate the priority of travel mode throughout the county. This framework is a starting place for an iterative project planning and design development process. Key elements of safety, accessibility, green infrastructure, engagement, and context sensitivity guide in developing a solution that best meets the needs of the community.





Policy application

When considering Complete and Green Streets application, it is important to consider the project scope and setting.

Project types and opportunities to make changes

The county plans and implements a wide range of transportation related projects each year to maintain and preserve our system, ranging from pavement preservation to full roadway reconstruction.

Pavement preservation and rehabilitation projects are typically smaller-scale projects that may provide a strategic opportunity to improve accessibility, safety and multimodal facilities along our roadways. Full reconstruction projects are larger-scale efforts that create opportunity to work with the community and project partners to re-envision the corridor, providing more significant system changes. Corridor improvement projects may also be opportunities to enhance, protect and restore adjacent natural resource features, such as wetlands, as well as meet stormwater requirements.

Settings and impact on the natural environment

In applying the Complete and Green Streets Policy, the county fully considers the character of the project area and corridor, the values of the community, and the needs of all users. Designs are context-sensitive and will not look the same in all environments, communities, or development scenarios.

Forestry staff will be engaged during the planning, specification development and implementation stages for projects that have the potential to create opportunity or cause impacts to existing trees to develop tree preservation, protection and replacement strategies.

Guiding principles

Guiding principles were developed to implement Complete and Green Streets Policy considerations. The principles reflect best roadway design practices and county planning priorities and initiatives, and will help the county achieve its goals related to disparity reduction, climate action, and safety.

The following Complete and Green Streets guiding principles will influence the planning, design, implementation and maintenance processes for all transportation projects. Provided are example policy considerations to show how these principles can be considered and applied.

Guiding principle	Example policy considerations
Reduce disparities, with an emphasis on transportation	Design roadways to provide safe transportation access and modal options
	Prioritize facilities for walking, rolling, biking and riding transit according to the modal priority framework within this policy
	Engage with residents and stakeholders in a way that is transparent, inclusive and allows for meaningful involvement
	Design roadways to reduce air pollution, flooding and heat island effects in alignment with the Climate Action Plan

Guiding principle	Example policy considerations
Reduce transportation related greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants	Implement infrastructure that supports strategies to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), such as encouraging walking, biking, rolling and transit use - reducing the need for single-occupancy vehicle trips
	Implement strategies to reduce carbon and greenhouse gas emissions, including continued use of recycled materials, etc.
	Capture carbon with plants and landscaping (trees, shrubs, perennials, native plantings) and soil amendments (e.g. compost and biochar)
Increase environmental resilience	Design, implement and maintain the use of natural and built green infrastructure to store, reuse and infiltrate stormwater, thereby improving water quality and reducing the quantity of water entering surface waters
	Reduce wetland impacts and strive to restore and create wetlands in the county
	Evaluate all projects in the planning stage for potential tree planting opportunities and risks of impacts to existing trees; develop tree preservation, protection and replacement strategies in support of the goal of no net loss of trees
Improve transportation safety	Design infrastructure to reduce fatal and serious injury crashes for all modes of travel
	Design roadways that promote safe driving speeds
Leverage technology and partnerships	Work with partners to develop technologies that improve roadway safety, operations, and green infrastructure
	Work with partners to increase modal network connectivity and reduce stormwater pollutant runoff

Performance measures

Performance measures will be used to track and monitor progress in meeting the goals of the Complete and Green Streets Policy. Staff will track and report on key performance metrics annually through a dashboard to measure ongoing progress.

Basis of design

Throughout the project development process, local, state and national guidance are used, including emerging best practices in urban street design, Safe System Approach, and Complete and Green Streets.

Exceptions

Complete and Green Streets will be implemented as part of roadway design based on the project context and established modal priority framework. The following conditions may affect the project design elements:

- topographic, environmental, historic, or natural resource constraints;
- risks that cannot be overcome through design;
- construction and/or maintenance costs relative to the total project cost; and/or
- city council and/or community support

Regulatory requirements

Successful implementation of Complete and Green Streets will require Hennepin County to abide by the regulatory requirements of agency partners. County staff will work with partner agencies to review regulatory requirements and seek variances where needed to account for changes in practices, technology, etc. to achieve goals.

Many features within the right-of-way need to follow various requirements to receive associated funding and/or permits. This includes, but is not limited to, items such as sidewalk/trail, lane, boulevard and median widths, clear zones and stormwater treatment.

Maintenance

Successful policy implementation will be impacted by ongoing operations and maintenance of these assets. Cooperative agreements between the county and our agency partners will define who will own and maintain assets within the county's right-of-way. Cooperative agreements will also include agency roles, responsibilities, funding commitment and maintenance requirements to provide year-round service for all Complete and Green Streets elements.

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