Hot Springs, AR:
Complete Streets Technical Assistance
Report and Suggested Next Steps
Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities Program

To: Jean Wallace, Parks and Trails Director, City of Hot Springs
From: Craig Williams and Michael Dannemiller, National Complete Streets Coalition
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Key issues addressed during the workshop

- Current policies and processes that guide decision-making
- Adoption of Complete Streets policy at the local level
- Barriers to Complete Streets implementation in Hot Springs
- Comparison of current draft policy elements to best practices of Complete Streets policy elements
- Updating current procedures, manuals and standards
- Performance measures
- Next steps toward implementation
- Cost-effective Complete Streets improvements
- Challenges balancing user needs

Targeted policies, ideas and strategies discussed

- Revisions to Hot Springs’ draft Complete Streets policy into a stronger and more effective Complete Streets policy
- Barriers that currently present challenges to implementing Complete Streets (see Appendix A)
- Integrating Complete Streets principles into resurfacing projects, annual budget allocations and other cost-effective opportunities.
- Performance measure development
- Waivers exempting important Complete Streets project elements
- Sidewalk connection plan
- Review and resolution of conflicting ordinances
Actions to address policies, ideas and strategies

Update and adopt draft Complete Streets policy.

Hot Springs’ draft Complete Streets policy is great step toward a strong Complete Streets policy. The draft policy statement could and should be strengthened in line with best practices in Complete Streets policy development, as discussed during the workshop.

For example, Hot Springs’ draft policy should include language on:

**Connectivity.** The following language was suggested during the workshop: “Hot Springs should provide a connected integrated network that serves all of our users. Complete streets connectivity will be integrated into the policies, planning and design over all public and private facilities including the construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, repair and maintenance of transportation facilities on streets and within redevelopment areas.”

**Design.** Hot Springs would like to see the design manual amended to include the low impact design standards, the AASHTO Green Book, the Guide for (bicycle facilities) planning and design, the ITE Urban Thoroughfares, the NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide, the US Access Board’s Public Rights-of-Way guidelines and the MUTCD.

**Context.** Identify and define the different elements of the city so it is understood that the designs for particular projects will be context-sensitive—considering adjacent land-use and local needs; incorporating the most up-to-date and widely accepted standards for a particular setting; and considering traffic volume, speed and projected demand. Each project is to be considerable separate and as a part of the connected network to determine the level and the type of treatment necessary to define the street is being complete.

**Implementation.** Hot Springs’ policy should include language about the need to perform a streets assessment to determine existing conditions and gaps and to establish a prioritization system that includes traffic crashes, schools, economic development, tourism, social equality and connectivity.

Hot Springs’ policy should also:

- Include more specificity that “all users” includes pedestrians, bicyclists and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses and automobiles.
- Apply to both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, maintenance and operations, and apply to the entire right-of-way.
- Include specific language on when exceptions are allowed.
- Establish performance measures.

A helpful document for others reviewing your draft policy is included here: http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/changing-policy/policy-elements
**Address cost issues.**

Hot Springs can achieve projects that conform with Complete Streets principles by further integrating this approach into how the City prioritizes projects, uses existing funds and identifies opportunities as part of other roadwork (e.g., routine maintenance such as resurfacing, utility upgrades, etc.).

Specifically, Hot Springs can advance Complete Streets implementation by taking advantage of upcoming resurfacing projects or other ongoing efforts. An annual and multi-year Complete Streets Improvements Plan would identify a mix of “low-hanging fruit” projects like sidewalk gap in-fills, resurfacing projects, neighborhood or city-wide wayfinding and major bond-backed projects. The following questions can help guide the identification process:

- Which agency or entity would lead the development of the Complete Streets Improvements Plan?
- How does this plan relate to other plans or processes, such as the capital improvement process?
- Have these improvements been identified as part of other planning efforts, such as small area plans or economic development strategies?

Another way to jumpstart implementation in a cost-effective way is to institute a culture of innovation, where small projects to improve the public right-of-way can be deployed quickly and cheaply—outside a general capital improvements program. Changes with paint, bollards, and planters can be moved or removed easily if the intended goals aren’t achieved.

**Establish performance measures.**

Participants at the workshop identified an extensive list of potential performance measures. The Complete Streets Steering Group should identify which measures can be implemented in the short- and long-term and assign responsibility and a timeline for implementation. The following considerations can help guide Hot Springs’ conversations:

- What does the City collect now for performance measures, if anything?
- Which department/process/plan would implement the measures? In what ways (i.e., for Complete Streets projects, system-wide, etc.)? At which phase(s) of implementation?

**Policy and implementation coordination**

The Steering Group, led by Jean Wallace and others within the City, identified a number of tasks associated with keeping the momentum moving forward:

- Keep the steering committee organized and engaged in future work.
- Refine the Priority Statement into strong policy language.
- Communicate and engage with the public early in the policy development process.
- Balance the needs of various users during corridor planning.
- Identify street typologies (possibly as part of comprehensive planning efforts).
- Effectively manage cost and congestion ramifications.
• Develop performance measures and assign responsibilities
• Identify, review and modifying various City procedures, manuals and standards to ensure “institutionalization” of the Complete Streets process.

As the group approaches these tasks, please consider the following questions:

• Who else can the Steering Group engage in its work to further its goals?
• Are there other local groups who have previously expressed interest in Complete Streets work that could be invited to be part of a task or the group?
• Is existing work associated with any of these tasks already occurring in Hot Springs, and if so, how could the Steering Group or appropriate City department partner with them?

Recommendations for continuing education and training

The National Complete Streets Coalition offers in-depth workshops on Complete Streets policy implementation and design considerations. Workshop descriptions available at www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/get-help/workshops.

The Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals hosts technical trainings via webinar and archives past webinars on its website at www.apbp.org/default.asp?page=Webinars#schedule.

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center also sponsors a series of training and educational webinars at www.walkinginfo.org/training/pbic/webinars.cfm.

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Appendix A: Notes from the workshop

The following are notes from the workshop exercises and the workshop PowerPoint.

Workshop attendees:

- Planners – 4
- Engineers – 2
- Elected – 3
- Citizens – 10
- Transit – 0
- Health – 2
- Advocates – 3
- State – 2
- Bikepaths and trails coordinator – 2
- Emergency management – 2

Defining success:

- How to raise property value, income, jobs
- Expand conversation beyond same six folks
- Advance draft and implement Complete Streets policy
- Tips for implementation (City Engineer)
- DEP – replicate this elsewhere
- Add dimension to transportation projects
- Restore downtown
- Connect communities to downtown
- Enhance walkability
- Major highways are tough to cross!
- Enhance public safety through street design
- Improve health through walking and biking
- Enhance paved biking facilities
- Improve park and city for visitors
- Increase ability to age in place
- Improve connectivity in “East Grand”
- Help this city reveal the jewel it really is

Ideas:

- Sidewalk and sidewalk gap inventory
- Landscaping encroachment
- Walkscore.com to gauge walkability
- Local efforts
  - Walkability: workshop, audit
  - Pop up workshop
Notes about Complete Streets policy language:

- Vision is what you see; mission is what you do
- For users, address:
  - Low impact development
  - Mobility
  - Emergency vehicles
- Implement and list out maintenance for all phases
- Where practical, define limits
- Create a new section for connectivity – public and private?
- Site Plan review, i.e., Walgreens
- Best and latest – all sources (10 categories – all get a section)
- Context sensitive and traffic volume and speed
- Add performance measures and plan to assess 10 percent of streets each year
- Add implementation steps that let Hot Springs “find out what we’ve got”

Concepts ideas, page 1:

- Identify a primary bike facility and start there
- Pipeline right of way – Add a public trail?
- Multi-use easements – Rail right of way through the city?
- Master Trails Plan: incorporate phased implementation and updates
- Land Bank: identify properties for future use
- Regional Trail opportunities and connectivity within Master Plan and State B/P Plan

Page 2:

- Bus Stops (Richard – Intra City):
  - Evaluate them
  - Conduct travel time survey
  - Calculate ridership volume
- Central Avenue:
  - Lead: WCA
  - PDB: <2-year study
  - City/County/State coordination (4-month racing season)
  - Pedestrian overpass
- Road diet on Central Avenue/Park Avenue and loading areas, sidewalks, connectivity
- Information sharing between departments
- School traffic counts

Page 3:

- Decommission:
  - State system
  - Road to city
- Traffic projections and trip estimates
- Private developer: consider coordination and requirements
• Traffic flow ideas:
  o Signal progression
  o Roundabouts
• Bridge replacements
• Bike facilities:
  o Protected lanes
  o Bike lanes
  o Master Plan
  o Update 2001 plans
  o Name bikepaths and trails

Page 4:

• Mountain Express Bus
• Remote parking and bike share programs and bike parking downtown
• Exchange Park:
  o Local access options
  o Erosion issues
• Funding sources and time frames?
• State property connectivity:
  o Flood areas, Park Avenue
  o Within town
  o Out of town
• Promote/require Complete Streets in subdivision code

Page 5:

• Conduct sidewalk/gap inventory (by Street Department, Public Works or MPO)
• Increase access to healthy food: plan for farmers markets
• Provide for education on Complete Streets concepts
• Albert Pike road diet?
• For access management planning, consider:
  o Driveway options
  o Front and back access
  o Neighbors
• Federal Highway (Sandra Otto?)
Appendix B: Complete Streets reference documents and resources

General implementation

Complete Streets Implementation resource hub, including examples of plans, policies and programs that support changing process and procedures, offering training and educational opportunities, reviewing and updating design guidance, and measuring performance.
www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/implementation

Taking Action on Complete Streets: A Toolkit for Implementation, a 2013 report from the National Complete Streets Coalition: http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/implementation

Complete Streets in the Southeast—A Toolkit, from the National Complete Streets Coalition and AARP, features best practices in policy development and implementation from the Southeast United States. It also includes customizable outreach tools, such as letters to the editor and op-eds. www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/complete-streets-southeast-toolkit.pdf

Completing Our Streets: The Transition to Safe and Inclusive Transportation Networks.
www.completingourstreets.com, Barbara McCann’s book on the Complete Streets implementation process, told through the stories of practitioners.

Costs

www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/implementation/cost-concerns


Funding priority systems and programs


New Jersey Complete Streets program, with links to Local Assistance program:
www.state.nj.us/transportation/eng/completestreets/implementation.shtml

Atlanta Regional Commission Livable Centers Initiative. See case study inThe Innovative DOT.
www.smartgrowthamerica.org/the-innovative-dot

Street design and typology examples

Urban Street Design Guidelines. Charlotte, NC.
Implementing Complete Streets: Major and Collector Street Plan. Nashville, TN. 

www.seattle.gov/transportation/rowmanual/manual/

**Road diets**


**Policy development**


The Coalition also provides downloadable PowerPoints that explain Complete Streets as a concept, policy adoption and policy implementation, as well as fact sheets on the benefits of Complete Streets. www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/a-to-z
Craig Williams, Roger Millar, Jean Wallace and Michael Dannemiller.

Small group discussion.

Reporting out ideas generated by the small groups.