



HUNTSVILLE

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12/12/2017

John Robert Smith and Emiko Atherton
Smart Growth America (SGA)
National Complete Streets Coalition 1707 L St. NW, Suite 250
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RE: City of Huntsville Complete Streets Implementation Final Progress Report

John Robert and Emiko:

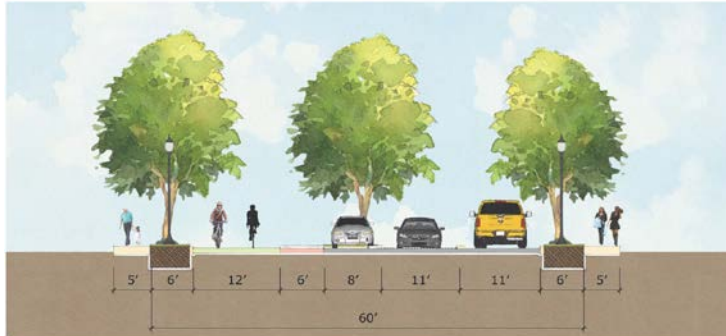
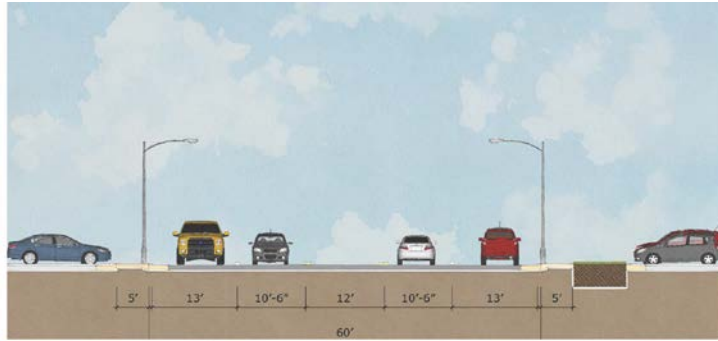
This is the final progress report of the City of Huntsville, AL in the year since city staff received the Smart Growth America Complete Streets Policy Implementation Next Steps Memo.

The last progress update in March, 2017 concluded with the partnership of the BIG Picture staff with UDA to develop the Downtown Master Plan. In June, the Downtown Master Plan was adopted by the City Council, resulting in several transportation alternative initiatives this year. View the meetings and many elements of the plan here: <http://bigpicturehuntsville.com/downtown-master-plan-update/>



[Credit: UDA; Downtown Master Plan: VBC District Before and After]

The Star of Alabama



Clinton Avenue
Proposed Bike and Pedestrian Improvements

[Credit: UDA; Downtown Master Plan: Complete Street Improvement on Clinton Ave]



In August 2017, UDA, Downtown Huntsville, Inc. and BIG Picture hosted a Downtown Cycling meeting to discuss goals for bicycle infrastructure listed in the Downtown Master Plan. The pilot project that caught everyone’s attention was a Complete Streets renovation of Spragins Street to include the city’s first bi-directional bike lane, a wide pedestrian path, and the city’s first bicycle signalization at two intersections.

After the meeting, the city moved rapidly forward on this project. The ribbon cutting will be December 14, 2017. The new complete street connects Big Spring Park with the Historic Train Depot, The Veteran’s Memorial, and the Gateway Greenway on the north side of downtown.

[Spragins Street Complete Street Improvement]

The City of Huntsville continues to make progress towards the two Complete Streets projects, Holmes Ave and Clinton Ave, discussed at the Smart Growth America Complete Streets Workshop in June 2016. 4Site began the design study on Holmes Avenue in June 2017. BIG Picture staff attended the 30% Design meeting in October 2017 and a public meeting on the project design will be held in early 2018.

After Zagster's hugely successful launch in Huntsville in March 2017, the company chose Huntsville as one of the four pilot cities for their new rack-less bike share program to be tested on the ground in 2018. Huntsville's other grassroots bike share program HUBS continues to be success and grow as well.

The City of Huntsville's new partnership with the Land Trust of North Alabama to update the Greenway Master Plan continued to progress this year. Three public meetings on the Greenway Master Plan draft were held in May 2017. Feedback from these meetings and an online survey was incorporated into the final draft, completed in November 2017. The new Greenway Master Plan is on the agenda for adoption at the December 2017 Planning Commission meeting. Greenways in the plan are prioritized on a timeline from 1-5 years and 5-10 years. One of the 1-5 year greenways, the Ditto Landing Greenway, was just selected as the recipient for PeopleForBikes grant funding. See the completed plan here: <http://bigpicturehuntsville.com/greenway-master-plan-update/> .

[Image below: Future Ditto Landing Greenway location along the TN River]



The City of Huntsville's first Complete Streets Policy is finished and scheduled to go before Planning Commission in January 2018 for adoption. The November draft is attached.

The Smart Growth America Complete Streets Policy Implementation Workshop in June 2016 has proven to be a catalyst for real change in attitudes, policymaking, and infrastructure on the ground in the eighteen months since the event was held. Thank you both for your support and assistance.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Dennis Madsen in blue ink.

Dennis Madsen
Director Urban and Long Range Planning

City of Huntsville AL

Complete Streets Policy

I. Definition and Overview

Complete Streets are streets that are **designed, constructed and operated** with consideration to both use and context. They are **sized appropriately** to their surroundings, and they **safely accommodate** all modes appropriate to their role in the broader transportation network. Pedestrians, bicyclists, cars, transit, and freight are all taken into account during design, and are integrated as appropriate during implementation.

This Complete Streets Policy includes:

- The **purpose** for undertaking a Complete Streets effort;
- A **vision** for what the policy can accomplish;
- The **goals** for realizing the policy;
- A review of the **scope and applicability** for the policy;
- A plan **for implementation**;
- A review of resources for **best practices**;
- An outline of **performance measures and reporting** to ensure efficacy of the policy.

II. Background and Purpose

The BIG Picture Huntsville is the City of Huntsville's comprehensive planning effort. One of the BIG Picture Principles is to create a transportation network that is accessible, convenient, and safe for all users. As part of efforts to implement BIG Picture planning goals, the city has been seeking opportunities for financial and technical assistance.

In December of 2015, Smart Growth America (SGA) - through a five-year Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Sustainable Communities - awarded the City of Huntsville a technical assistance workshop to support the development of the City's first Complete Streets Policy.

In June 2016, SGA held a Complete Streets Policy Development Workshop in Huntsville, AL to educate the public about Complete Streets and to bring transportation stakeholders together to begin drafting Huntsville's Complete Streets Policy. In a follow-up "Next Steps Memo" delivered to the City of Huntsville in September 2016, SGA recommended the City of Huntsville draft and adopt the new policy within six months. In November 2016, the City Council adopted a resolution authorizing the Urban Development Department to draft the city's first Complete Streets Policy.

The purpose of this policy is to guide existing decision-making and design processes to ensure that all users (pedestrians, bicyclists, automobiles, and transit) and context (urban and

suburban; neighborhood and corridor; residential and commercial) are considered as a matter of course during the planning, design, construction, funding and operation of the City of Huntsville's transportation network.

III. **Vision**

The City of Huntsville's Vision for this Complete Streets Policy is that all people who are a part of our community will be able to move comfortably, affordably, efficiently, and safely throughout the City, via the modes of their choice, to their desired destinations; and that streets contribute positively to the neighborhoods and districts through which they pass.

The City of Huntsville crafted the vision statement for this policy by considering the two prominent transportation planning efforts of the Huntsville area: The Metropolitan Planning Organization's Year 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the BIG Picture Huntsville's comprehensive planning work. These efforts represent both a policy-based analysis of transportation needs as well as community input regarding what the citizens needed and desired from their future network.

IV. **Goals**

The goals of this Complete Streets Policy are as follows:

1. To establish **new standards of practice** for designing and implementing streets within the City of Huntsville;
2. To improve connectivity for **bicyclists and pedestrians** throughout the city;
3. To provide **alternatives** to those residents that cannot or choose not to drive, particularly seniors and children;
4. To improve and enhance the **public health** and physical fitness of the city's residents;
5. To make the roadway and street environment **safer and more inviting**;
6. To maintain the **fast and efficient movement of commuters**, particularly around major employment centers;
7. To ensure access to **economic opportunity**, particularly for those in poverty;
8. To improve the performance of **new development and redevelopment** by improving the quality of the adjacent infrastructure and human-scale environment;
9. To protect and preserve the **environment** by reducing emission of greenhouse gases, and reducing the consumption of non-renewable energy resources.

V. **Scope and Applicability**

The City of Huntsville shall approach every planned transportation improvement as an **opportunity** to create safer and more accessible streets for all users. These include:

- All new construction and reconstruction projects of all city-owned transportation facilities in the public right-of-way, including but not limited to, streets, bridges, and all other connecting pathways, using Federal, State, or Local funds;
- Resurfacing activities;
- Privately constructed streets and drives, particularly if it is anticipated that they will link public facilities or eventually be remanded to public control.

Applicability will be assessed on a **street-by-street basis**, with consideration for the following criteria:

- Existing configuration;
- Existing and planned future context;
- Role within existing and future network.

The Complete Streets process will be incorporated into **all aspects** of the transportation project development process, including:

- Project identification;
- Scoping procedures;
- Design and engineering approvals;
- Design policies and guidelines;
- Performance measures.

Maintenance activities alone are not Complete Streets improvements, nor should they necessitate Complete Streets consideration except those improvements that may be necessary to satisfy legal mandates such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. To the maximum extent possible, provisions for safe access shall be made for pedestrians and bicyclists during maintenance activities.

Due to its regional impact, implementation of this policy necessitates **collaboration among many regional partners and stakeholders** affected by the implementation. The City shall foster partnerships with the State of Alabama, neighboring communities and counties, businesses and school districts, to develop facilities and accommodations that further the City's Complete Streets policy. The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) should receive particular attention as a means to coordinate implementation of this policy throughout the region.

This policy applies to **all users** of the City of Huntsville's transportation system including:

- Commuters
- School children, buses, parents and staff

- Emergency services
- People living with disabilities
- Utility and maintenance vehicles
- Cyclists
- Motorcycles
- Strollers
- Cars
- Pedestrians
- Transit users and the transit dependent
- Freight and trucking

VI. **Implementation**

True success of any policy is measured in implementation. To ensure the realization of Complete Streets, this policy identifies the anticipated financial mechanisms, the criteria for prioritization, and the applicable means and methods for creating Complete Streets. For new roads and streets, the process is straight-forward. However, for the reconfiguration of existing segments, the following considerations will be made:

Project Identification and Funding

Complete Streets will be a targeted annual discussion during the development of the City's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Beginning in 2017, during the summer prior to each subsequent fiscal year, relevant department heads will gather with the Mayor to suggest or discuss Complete Street projects to be added to the CIP. Prioritization of these projects will also occur at this annual meeting. These may include:

- Any applicable projects in CIP;
- Any applicable segments scheduled for resurfacing/restriping;
- ADA improvements;
- TAP grant projects.

The Planning Department will be responsible for seeking additional grant funding, through Federal and/or non-governmental match programs.

Prioritization Criteria

During the Project Identification process, the following criteria may be used to inform decision-making with regard to which projects should receive a Complete Streets review, and when those projects should occur:

- Segment is scored such that it is scheduled for resurfacing;
- Segment has been determined as eligible for a “road diet”, or similar lane reconfiguration;
- Segment links two or more alternative mode hubs (such as a transit station or greenway trailhead);
- Segment links two or more “destinations”, or serves as the link between a residential area and one or more destinations (school, park or recreation amenity, local shopping, community facility, etc);
- Segment passes through a residential neighborhood or low-density commercial node wherein heightened bike/ped activity is more likely to occur.

This policy will maintain a list of Complete Streets projects, for enactment pending adoption. This list is based on a set the aforementioned prioritization criteria. **It should be understood that the adoption of this measure does not suggest or mandate an immediate or long-term reconfiguration of all streets.** The process will be performed based on the criteria herein, and as funds are available.

When considering a Complete Streets approach, there are a number of tools that can add utility to an existing segment. Among these are:

- Road Diets
- Bike Sharrows
- Protected Bike Lanes
- Bicycle Signalization
- Multi-use paths
- Greenways in general
- Greenways rather than on-street improvements
- Sidewalks
- Curb ramps
- Intersection safety improvements / crosswalks

A Complete Streets approach is most effective when exceptions are minimized. A well-connected network is easier to achieve when exceptions to the program are limited. The following represent baseline considerations for not pursuing a Complete Streets process for a specific segment:

- Pedestrians and bicyclists are prohibited by law from using the facility;
- Proposed work involves only routine maintenance activities designed to keep assets in serviceable condition (mowing, cleaning, sweeping, spot repair, and other interim measures);
- Existence of a parallel or complementary segment that adequately connects the same destinations;
- Existing and/or future adjacent land uses are not conducive to bike/ped infrastructure;

- Severe topographical or ROW constraints.

In any instance of considered exception, need and rationale should be recorded and submitted to the Planning Commission for consideration and ruling.

VII. **Best Practices and Design Guidelines**

Bicycle and pedestrian facilities should be designed in accordance with the most current available standards and practices, including:

- National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE)
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG)
- American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)
- American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)
- Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)

Design consideration should not be limited to the facility itself. A Complete Streets approach should incorporate visually appealing designs, including green space and public art, within transportation projects themselves. To assist in the adoption of the most recent standards and best practices, it is recommended that regular internal reviews are conducted by City Departments to include: Planning, Engineering, Traffic Engineering, Public Works, GIS, and Public Safety, with other departments included as applicable. Whenever possible, the City shall encourage staff participation in professional development activities that inform Complete Streets design and implementation.

VIII. **Performance Measures and Reporting**

The City shall measure the success of this Complete Streets policy using some or all of the following performance measures:

- **User Data:** Bicycle, pedestrian, transit and traffic counts
- **Infrastructure Data:** Total miles of pedestrian accommodation built / dedicated by width and type; Total miles of bike lanes (standard, buffered and protected), bike routes, and shared-use pathways; Percentage of transit stops accessible via sidewalks and bicycle facilities; Number of transit accessibility improvements built; Number of traffic calming facilities built / installed; Number of crosswalks built or improved; Number of traffic control signs/signals installed/upgraded; Total dollar amount spent on Complete Streets improvements;
- **Commute Mode Share Data:** Transit ridership rates; Shift in mode share; Rate of children walking or bicycling to school; Change in Vehicle Miles Traveled

- **Safety Data:** Rate of crashes, injuries, and fatalities by mode;
- **Property and Economic Development Data:** Retail sales in walkable areas; Vacancies; Sale price; Property value; Building permits;
- **Environmental and Public Health Data:** Number of street trees planted; Air quality data;
- **ADA measures:** Number of compliant businesses; Percentage of intersections with ADA accessible curb ramps; Number of ADA accommodations built / installed;
- **Public opinion surveys;**
- **Number of exceptions approved.**

Performance measure review should be on-going, with twice-annually interim reports delivered to Planning Commission and City Council, and published as part of the MPO's Transportation Quarterly Review (TQR). A comprehensive review should be conducted every three years, from the date of adoption, to help inform improvements to the policy, if needed. The review will be posted on-line, shared via social media, and a report will be made to both Planning Commission and City Council. The Planning Department will be responsible for compiling and presenting the report, with input from other City departments as required.