

## SEDA-COG MPO

# COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

*The SEDA–Council of Governments (SEDA-COG) Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a regional planning organization charged with developing plans that lead to an integrated intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods in an eight-county region in Central Pennsylvania that spans rural landscapes, small cities, and town centers.*

## VISION

SEDA-COG’s vision for Complete Streets is an integrated transportation system that supports safe and efficient movement by accommodating all travel modes that are appropriate for each community’s development and activity patterns. A Complete Streets approach will improve connectivity, enhance accessibility, and make walking, bicycling, riding public transportation, and travel by horse and buggy and other authorized wheeled devices easier and more convenient. This policy is intended to formalize the planning, design, operation, and maintenance of streets so they are safe for all ages and abilities and provide a multimodal transportation network.

## DEFINITION

“Complete Streets” refers to a design approach that ensures the safe and adequate accommodation of all users of the transportation system, including pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation users, children, older individuals, people with disabilities, motorists, and freight vehicles. A Complete Streets approach supports roadway designs that dedicate space for all modes and ensures the right-of-way is safe and accessible for all, regardless of age, ability, or mode. Complete Streets are context-sensitive solutions that engage and reflect the community, with an emphasis on walkability and other forms of active and alternative transportation, and encourage public transportation options.

Providing inclusive transportation infrastructure and accommodating options that are safe, comfortable, convenient, and affordable will expand mobility and quality of life and better serve the travel needs of the region’s residents and visitors, especially for traditionally underserved populations identified in the [SEDA-COG MPO Title VI Program Appendix S.3](#), and listed below, and the Plain Sect population.

- Minority populations (Hispanic/Latino and/or non-white)
- Low-Income populations (in-poverty)
- Senior populations (65 years and older)
- Disabled populations
- Populations with limited English proficiency (LEP)
- Populations with no personal vehicle available (zero-vehicle households)
- Populations of female-headed households with children

## GOALS

This Complete Streets Policy provides direction to the SEDA-COG MPO and its partner agencies (i.e., municipal leaders and PennDOT) to advance Complete Streets concepts and context-sensitive roadway designs throughout the region. The goals of this policy are:

1. To **safely accommodate the needs of all users** with facilities that minimize conflict between modes (as available), including designated facilities and amenities for pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, horse-and-buggy travelers, motorists, freight, and emergency response vehicles.
2. To **create a comprehensive, integrated, and interconnected transportation system** that enhances convenient active transportation connections within communities and between local destinations.
3. To **support context-sensitive Complete Streets designs** that align with the local environment and development patterns while meeting the safety needs of all users.
4. To **incorporate Complete Streets concepts and principles into SEDA-COG MPO planning and projects**, at all stages from project selection to design to evaluation, and throughout ongoing maintenance and operations.
5. To **promote more walkable, livable communities**.
6. To **provide equitable, affordable, and reliable transportation options** based on the needs of the populations being served, particularly the needs of traditionally underserved populations.

## COMPLETE STREETS PRINCIPLES

This section outlines how the SEDA-COG MPO and area municipal leaders and partners shall encourage Complete Streets, and outlines the intent of Complete Streets programs and policies.

- **Community-centered approaches:** SEDA-COG MPO and its partners shall provide community education and engagement opportunities to discuss safe street designs and behaviors, and to encourage shifts to active and public transportation options. SEDA-COG MPO staff shall regularly participate in professional development and training events on Complete Streets principles offered by regulatory agencies and transportation-related associations.
- **Integration with other plans and policies:** Complete Streets strategies shall be integrated with other plans and policies, such as transportation plans, land use plans, and public health plans. This integration will ensure that Complete Streets implementation is aligned with broader community goals and priorities.
- **Learn from peer and national guidance:** Complete Streets solutions shall rely on peer and national guidance when applicable, such as from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). This guidance can help ensure that the SEDA-COG MPO region's Complete Streets are based on best practices and proven strategies. In addition to guidance documents, SEDA-COG shall support the sharing of best practices for implementation with municipalities.
- **Data-driven decisions:** Complete Streets design shall be data-driven and use evidence-based tools and methods. This includes using data such as vehicle and pedestrian counts to inform street design decisions, conducting community engagement to understand user needs, and using tools and resources such as FHWA's *Complete Streets Design Implementation Guide* or NACTO's *Urban Street Design Guide*.

- **Context-specific design:** Complete Streets design shall be context-specific and consider the needs and characteristics of the surrounding community. The design shall reflect the local street environment, including factors such as traffic volumes, development patterns, and land use.
- **Multimodal networks:** Complete Streets shall provide safe and accessible connections for all modes of transportation, including walking, bicycling, riding transit, traveling by horse and buggy, and driving vehicles or other authorized wheeled devices. This includes features such as sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks, transit stops, and traffic-calming measures.
- **Connectivity and comfort as key metrics:** Complete Streets shall prioritize connectivity and comfort (or lack of stress when traveling) for all users, regardless of their mode of transportation.
- **Maintenance and sustainability:** Ongoing operations and maintenance needs shall be considered early in the planning process and supported throughout the street's (or other facility's) lifecycle. This includes seasonal maintenance (such as snow removal in the winter and vegetation management and sweeping in warmer months).
- **Standards and supportive tools:** SEDA-COG MPO shall make a Complete Streets Checklist and resources available to transportation project sponsors to aid in their project development.

## APPLICABILITY AND EXCEPTIONS

Determining appropriate Complete Streets elements depends on the specific project type and community context. This section outlines an approach for SEDA-COG MPO and municipal leaders to evaluate projects and integrate Complete Streets considerations as well as exceptions.

### Community Context

Complete Streets are not a “one-size-fits-all” solution, but are context-sensitive improvements that best fit the specific needs of a street or community. Recognizing the variety of communities, land uses, and landscapes across the SEDA-COG MPO region, this policy organizes its requirements and approach to design based on a tiered categorization of the surrounding community context.



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#### Urban and Downtown Areas

*E.g., Bloomsburg, Danville, Sunbury, Lewisburg, Shamokin, Lewistown, Lock Haven*

Transportation networks are often most complex in downtown cores, making Complete Streets and dedicated space for all modes an important safety need. Most facilities in this category will be on-road; reorganizing lane widths and functions may be a means of accommodating all modes.

Special considerations for urban and downtown areas focus on reclaiming or redesigning lanes for multimodal uses (e.g., through road diets). Protected or buffered delineation between modes is a prioritized option when applicable. Physical infrastructure needs such as crosswalks and signals, bike lanes, transit shelters, and adequate shoulders or shared-lane signage for frequently traveled buggy routes, are coupled with needs for design elements such as lighting and wayfinding (signage).



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### **Commercial Corridors and Residential Neighborhoods**

*E.g., Scott Township; Mahoning Township; Point Township; Shamokin Dam; East Buffalo Township*

The SEDA-COG MPO region features many communities with a combination of predominantly commercial corridors and low-density residential development; other uses may also be present. Complete Streets projects for these areas focus on improvements to make walking, biking, rolling, and riding transit more comfortable and convenient, and more competitive with driving—both within each context and between them. On routes frequently used by horse-and-buggy travelers, Complete Streets includes safety accommodations for that mode.

Special considerations for these areas may include improving connectivity between key destinations with on- or off-road facilities, reducing conflict at intersections and driveways, and expanding facilities and amenities for non-motorized users.

### **Rural Areas**

Rural roadways typically have lower traffic volumes and higher speeds than denser areas. Complete Streets projects focus on off-road facilities and connectors to destinations.

Special considerations for rural areas may include designs to address safety and access in Plain Sect communities (related to horse-and-buggy travel) and adjacent to schools.



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## **Applicability**

This Complete Streets Policy applies to new construction, reconstruction, and resurfacing activities that will use state or federal funds through the SEDA-COG MPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for any phase of project implementation, including study, design, right-of-way acquisition, construction, or operations. Examples of the types of projects that must adhere to this Complete Streets Policy are listed below.

1. Projects that use federal funding from competitively managed or discretionary programs, such as Transportation Alternatives Program. Note: The 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) requires all MPOs to allocate 2.5 percent of planning funding on activities that support Complete Streets.
2. Projects that use state funding from competitively managed or discretionary programs, including Multimodal Transportation Fund projects.
3. New roadway projects and roadway widening projects.
4. Roadway reconstruction and resurfacing projects.
5. New bridge, bridge rehabilitation, and bridge replacement projects.
6. Projects that specifically interact with the active transportation network, including off-road trails and public transit services.

Sponsors of applicable projects shall prepare and submit the SEDA-COG MPO's Complete Streets Checklist prior to listing the project on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to ensure that the scope, schedule, and cost estimate can respond to the approved Checklist.

## Exceptions

Complete Streets improvements may not be practical for all projects.

Exceptions to the Complete Streets policy may be considered in the following situations, however project sponsors must ensure the safety of all permitted roadway users:

1. On corridors where specific users are prohibited, such as Interstate highways or pedestrian malls.
2. Where the cost of accommodation is excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use, which is defined by the FHWA at the time of the adoption of this policy as exceeding 20 percent of the cost of the larger project.<sup>1</sup>
3. Where there is no need to accommodate all modes, and the absence of current and future (25-year horizon) need are publicly documented.
4. Public transit accommodation is not necessary where there is no existing or planned transit service.
5. Where routine maintenance of the transportation network does not change the roadway geometry or operations, such as mowing, sweeping, or spot pavement repair.
6. Where there is an existing or proposed parallel facility with sufficient accommodations, or it is more feasible and/or less costly to locate the proposed accommodations on an alternate route. Compared to the original route, the alternative shall not increase travel distance for pedestrians by more than ¼ mile and/or for bicyclists by more than 1 mile.

Exceptions may be requested and will be approved or denied as outlined below.

1. The project sponsor shall submit a Complete Streets Exception Form to the SEDA-COG Transportation Program Director. The Complete Streets Exception Form shall be available on the SEDA-COG MPO website. Supporting data must be provided for all exceptions.
2. Complete Streets Exception Forms shall be reviewed by the SEDA-COG Transportation Program Director, the MPO Board member representing the county in which the project is located, and the applicable PennDOT District Planner, or their designees. Reviews shall occur on a rolling basis and shall result in a decision to give public notice for the exception or to decline the exception; a decline may include a request for additional information.
3. When a Complete Streets Exception is being considered for a particular project, public notice, including a description of the project and the reason for the exception, shall be given for at least 30 days through the SEDA-COG website.
  - a. If the project's public involvement program includes activities during that period, the request for Complete Streets Policy Exception should be incorporated.

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<sup>1</sup> Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel: A Recommended Approach, FHWA, [https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferjourney1/library/pdf/Pb\\_memoDesign%20Guidance.pdf](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferjourney1/library/pdf/Pb_memoDesign%20Guidance.pdf)

- b. The Middle Susquehanna Active Transportation Committee should be notified and given the opportunity to offer an advisory opinion before an exception is granted.
4. Exceptions under consideration shall be included as part of a project's public involvement program to the greatest extent possible.
5. The SEDA-COG Transportation Program Director, the MPO Board member, and the applicable PennDOT District Planner shall review all public comments and make a final decision.
6. All Complete Streets Exceptions shall be approved by the SEDA-COG Transportation Program Director, the MPO Board member representing the county in which the project is located, and the applicable PennDOT District Planner or their designees.
7. Exceptions and their related discussions shall be documented and the justification for each exception shall be summarized in a report and made available to the public through the SEDA-COG website.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The SEDA-COG MPO shall lead implementation of this Complete Streets Policy. Activities include but are not limited to the following:

- Assess the transportation network for gaps, stresses, or other opportunities for potential Complete Streets improvements and designs. This includes monitoring Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (BLTS) as proposed in the Middle Susquehanna Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, along with supporting Road Safety Audits and Local Road Safety Plans.
- Share best practices and resources to support integration of Complete Streets concepts in project planning and implementation.
- Collaborate with PennDOT, neighboring MPOs, and member counties to ensure the principles and practices of Complete Streets are embedded within their planning, design, construction, and maintenance activities.
- Evaluate submitted Complete Streets Checklist.
- Evaluate submitted Complete Streets Exceptions Forms and supporting data.
- Monitor project development, design, and construction, as resources permit.
- Support municipalities in Complete Streets-related applications for funding or technical assistance (e.g., PennDOT Connects Technical Assistance, PennDOT Local Technical Assistance Program, or USDOT Safe Streets and Roads for All planning grants).
- Track and report on Complete Streets performance measures included in this policy, including unintended consequences of Complete Streets projects and potential mitigations (e.g., policy or process modifications).

### **Complete Streets Checklist**

The SEDA-COG MPO Complete Street Checklist provides a tool to guide project sponsors and the SEDA-COG MPO in evaluating projects and integrating Complete Streets elements. The checklist inventories existing conditions and proposed Complete Streets elements and records the MPO's concurrence or recommendations regarding Complete Streets elements for Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

projects in its region. An approved checklist will provide evidence of the MPO's due diligence in implementing its Complete Streets Policy.

**Preparation of the Checklist or Exception Form:** Project sponsors, whether PennDOT, a county, or a municipality shall prepare either a Complete Streets checklist, or an Exception Form, and submit to the Transportation Program Director for evaluation.

**Timing of Checklist Submissions:** For PennDOT-led projects, PennDOT shall submit a checklist prior to listing the project on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to ensure that the scope, schedule, and cost estimate can respond to the evaluated checklist. For locally sponsored projects, the checklist shall also be submitted prior to listing the project on the TIP.

**Evaluation of Checklist:** The SEDA-COG Transportation Program Director (or designee), the MPO Board County Voting Member for the project location, and the applicable PennDOT District Planner shall evaluate the submitted checklist. If the majority concur with the proposed Complete Streets elements, they shall approve the checklist and distribute the approved checklist to the project sponsor and municipality. If the reviewers recommend additional or alternative Complete Streets elements, they shall offer to meet with the project sponsor and municipality to resolve comments or concerns. Upon resolution, an MPO staff member shall distribute the approved checklist to the project sponsor and municipality.

## PERFORMANCE MEASURES

The SEDA-COG MPO shall monitor and document the following Complete Streets performance measures every two years. A dashboard or other online tool should be used to track and publicize the performance data. The results shall be reported at MPO Board meetings and publicized online.

- Miles of pedestrian facilities (ADA-compliant sidewalks and paths).
- Miles of shared use (pedestrian, bicycle) facilities.
- Access to jobs by mode, as percentage of job trips by mode (Source: American Community Survey: Table S0802: Means of Transportation to Work by Selected Characteristics).
- Number of Complete Streets training sessions taken by MPO staff.
- Number of municipalities that have adopted a Complete Streets Policy.
- Number and percentage of fixed-route transit stops accessible via sidewalks and curb ramps (Source: Transit Providers for fixed-route data; online aerial imagery for sidewalk and curb ramp locations).
- Number of projects that serve disadvantaged communities as identified by the [US DOT Equitable Transportation Community \(ETC\) Explorer](#), which incorporates 5 of the 7 traditionally underserved populations identified in the [SEDA-COG MPO Title VI Program Appendix S.3](#).

## EVALUATION

The SEDA-COG MPO shall, at a minimum, evaluate this policy in conjunction with the Long-Range Transportation Plan update cycles. This evaluation may include recommendations for amendments to the Complete Streets Policy and subsequently be considered for adoption by the MPO Board using its current procedures.