City of Des Moines Complete Streets Policy

The City of Des Moines shall be committed to the implementation of Complete Streets to create a comprehensive transportation network that is safe, equitable, multimodal, complete, and connected. Des Moines’ streets are the City’s largest public space and must be safe and accessible for everyone. The City is updating its Complete Streets policy in order to achieve the goals identified in the City’s comprehensive plan, PlanDSM, and transportation master plan, MoveDSM. These relevant goals include:

- **Goal 1:** Develop a complete multi-modal transportation network for pedestrians, bikes, transit, and automobiles
- **Goal 2:** Develop updated street design standards that allow for and balance the needs of all forms of transportation
- **Goal 3:** Provide opportunities for healthy lifestyles through walking as a primary mode of transportation
- **Goal 5:** Enhance the bicycle network by expanding bicycle facilities that are safe, comfortable, and easily accessible

In creating Complete Streets, the City recognizes equity as a motivation and will prioritize vulnerable users in the Environmental Justice (EJ) areas identified by the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Compared to the broader region, the EJ areas have higher proportions of the following population groups:

- Non-white population
- Carless households
- Persons in poverty
- Single head of household with children
- Persons over 65 years of age
- Limited English proficiency
- Persons with disabilities

In implementing this Policy, Des Moines will strive to mitigate unintended consequences associated with Complete Streets projects, such as involuntary displacement, through community engagement and focusing on context-sensitive solutions.

Every city, state and federally funded transportation project, as well as private development projects impacting the public way or where the public is allowed to travel, shall be approached as an opportunity to create safer, more accessible streets for all users. All new construction and reconstruction/retrofit projects must account for all modes of transportation and all users of the street in all phases. All construction and reconstruction/retrofit projects must also provide accommodations for all modes of transportation to continue to use the road safely and efficiently during any construction or repair work that infringes on the right of way and/or sidewalk where feasible. Project phases include planning, programming, concept design, right-of-way acquisition, construction, construction engineering, reconstruction, and operations as well as any change to transportation facilities within street rights-of-way such as capital improvements, re-channelization projects, and maintenance. Maintenance and
ongoing operations include resurfacing, repaving, restriping, rehabilitation, and other major maintenance.

To this end, the City of Des Moines will:

1. Designate the Transportation Safety Committee “Committee” as the responsible party to review all city projects that affect transportation and are part of the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that fall under this policy’s jurisdiction. All other projects, including Private Development projects, that fall under this policy’s jurisdiction will be reviewed by city staff. All formal exception requests will be reviewed by the Committee in accordance with MoveDSM. The Transportation Safety Committee serves as an advisory body and a collaborative partner for the City’s elected officials, municipal staff, citizens, and other appropriate agencies.

   1.1. The Composition, Appointment, Terms, and Duties of the Committee are indicated in City Code Sections 114-241 and 114-242.
   1.2. The Committee will review all Capital Improvement Projects on an annual basis during the concept design phase. All other projects will be reviewed by city staff.
   1.3. The Committee will recommend approval of projects that meet the goals of this policy. If the project does not meet the goals of this policy, the Committee will refer the project and recommended changes back to the Traffic and Transportation Division. Each project that does not comply with the goals of this policy will require an approved exception from the Committee.
   1.4. The Committee will meet monthly, provide a yearly written report to the City Council evaluating the City’s progress, and advise on implementation.

Facilities for people walking, people biking, people taking transit, and people driving, pursuant to the recommendations and typologies in MoveDSM and DART Forward 2035, shall be established in new construction, reconstruction, re-stripping, and re-surfacing of street and bridge projects within the City of Des Moines unless one or more of three conditions are met:

1.5. Accommodation is not necessary on corridors where specific users are prohibited, such as interstate freeways or pedestrian malls. Exclusion of certain users on particular corridors should not exempt projects from accommodating other permitted users.
1.6. Severe topographic or natural resource restraints.
1.7. The cost of establishing facilities for all users would be excessively disproportionate to the need or exceed budget costs. Excessively disproportionate is defined as exceeding thirty percent of the cost of the larger transportation project. However, the thirty percent threshold is a guideline; in areas where high levels of people walking and people biking are anticipated, the threshold for “excessively disproportionate” could be much higher. In cases where the additional cost is considered excessively disproportionate, the project sponsor may propose an alternate design or will be required to spend thirty percent of the total project cost to improve accommodations for all users.
1.8. This Policy does not apply to emergency repairs and routine maintenance. Routine maintenance includes pavement patching (diamond grinding, concrete panel repair, fog coat, seal coat, chip seal, and slurry seal).
1.9. Where a reasonable and equivalent project along the same corridor is already programmed to provide facilities exempted from the project at hand.
Exception requests shall be reviewed by the Transportation Safety Committee. Documentation of any proposed exceptions shall be made publicly available prior to approval and committee review thru publishing of the Committee’s meeting agenda.

2. The design of Complete Streets shall be context-sensitive and meet the needs of the community and surrounding area while emphasizing safe and accessible travel for all people. All facilities shall be designed in accordance with the best available standards and guidelines, such as:
   - MoveDSM;
   - AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities;
   - AASHTO’s A policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets;
   - SUDAS: State Urban Design and Specifications Manual;
   - Federal Highway Administration’s Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways;
   - ITE Recommended Practice Context Sensitive Solutions in Designing Major Urban Thoroughfares for Walkable Communities;
   - City of Des Moines Zoning Code; and,
   - The International Fire Code.

Effective January 1, 2019, all projects entering the concept design phase will comply with the best available standards and guidelines for Complete Streets design.

3. The City views Complete Streets as integral to everyday transportation options. To this end:
   3.1. The Traffic and Transportation Division, the Community Development Department, the Des Moines Fire Department, the Department of Public Works, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Des Moines Police Department, and the Office of Economic Development will incorporate Complete Streets principles into appropriate plans, manuals, checklists, decision trees, rules, regulations, and programs within three years, and will specify how they will support and be supported by the community’s Complete Streets vision.
   3.2. The Engineering Department and the Department of Public Works will review current design standards, including subdivision regulations that apply to new roadway construction, to ensure that they reflect the best available design guidelines, and effectively implement Complete Streets.
   3.3. City staff shall identify all current and potential future sources of funding for street improvements and recommend improvements to the project selection criteria to support Complete Streets projects.
   3.4. The City shall promote project coordination among the Traffic and Transportation Division, the Engineering Department, the Community Development Department, the Des Moines Fire Department, the Department of Public Works, the Park and Recreation Department, the Des Moines Police Department, the Office of Economic Development, Des Moines Public Schools, Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority, and other departments and agencies with an interest in the activities that occur within the public right-of-way to ensure efficient use of fiscal resources.
   3.5. Complete Streets projects will be prioritized in project selection and funding.
4. The City will establish project development and project selection processes that specify criteria which encourage funding prioritization for Complete Streets implementation by January 1, 2020.
4.1. Project selection criteria will address equity through the prioritization of projects located within or that directly benefit the residents of the identified Environmental Justice zones.
4.2. The City will develop a community engagement plan for public engagement in the project selection, design, and implementation process.
4.3. Complete Streets training and workshops will be held annually in coordination with the Active Transportation Planner and Transportation Safety Committee. The Traffic and Transportation Division, the Community Development Department, the Des Moines Fire Department, the Department of Public Works, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Des Moines Police Department, and the Office of Economic Development shall send at least one representative to each training. Each representative is then responsible for disseminating information learned within the training to their respective departments.

5. The Traffic & Transportation Division will report to the City Council and general public on the progress made in implementing this Policy once per year. The baseline data will be established January 1, 2019 and the annual report will follow the calendar year. The annual report shall be completed and publicly available each January beginning in 2020. During the annual report process, the policy will be reviewed for relevant updates and to incorporate new best practices. The annual report may include:
5.1. Access
   • Percentage of transit stops accessible via sidewalks and curb ramps
   • Total miles of on-street bicycle facilities striped/constructed
   • Total miles of off-street bicycle facilities constructed
   • Linear feet of new sidewalks constructed
   • Number of new curb ramps installed
   • Number of crosswalks added
   • Total miles constructed of the Priority 1 sidewalk gaps identified in MoveDSM
   • Total miles constructed of the core bicycle network gaps identified in MoveDSM
5.2. Safety
   • Number of crashes, injuries, and fatalities by mode
   • Rate of children walking or biking to school
   • Average emergency vehicle response times
   • Percentage of emergent calls for service that the travel time for the first arriving unit was at or below 4 minutes
5.3. Health
   • Percentage of residents identified as obese
5.4. Equity
   • Number of Complete Streets projects within EJ areas
5.5. Other
   • Number of approved and denied exceptions
   • Public input (Ex. Requests for Complete Street Projects Received)
   • Other relevant measures