

# **City of Watertown, New York Complete Streets Policy**

-January 17, 2017-

## **Section 1: Vision**

This Complete Streets Policy shall guide the City of Watertown to design, provide and maintain a safe, accessible and well-connected multimodal surface transportation network that meets the needs of all users, regardless of age or ability level, including drivers of automobiles, emergency and freight vehicles, bicyclists, pedestrians, transit users and those with disabilities.

The City will consider all modes equally when making transportation decisions and treat all modes as legitimate users of the City's transportation network. The City's inclusive transportation network will play a crucial role in ensuring the health, safety, economic vitality and quality of life in the City of Watertown.

By implementing Complete Streets principles, the City will foster a more liveable community for all of its residents, especially children, the elderly and the City's disabled population.

## **Section 2: Goals**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that planning and engineering decisions affecting surface transportation in the City of Watertown are made with consideration for the safety and convenience of all users, regardless of their mode of transportation, age or ability level.

Specific goals of this policy include:

1. To ensure safe travel for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users and those with disabilities, in addition to motor vehicle operators.
2. To increase economic activity by making the City's commercial areas more attractive and more accessible to users of all transportation modes and to encourage non-vehicular travel within these areas.
3. To provide safe routes to school and encourage walking and bicycling as safe, healthy and convenient ways for children to travel to and from school.
4. To improve the health and physical fitness of the City's population by encouraging walking and bicycling among its residents, thereby yielding more of the health benefits that these activities provide.
5. To ensure that all sidewalk and street reconstruction projects are designed appropriately for all users prior to undertaking any construction, eliminating the need for costly rebuilds in the future.

### **Section 3: Scope of Applicability**

The City of Watertown shall develop a safe, convenient, integrated and connected multimodal transportation system so that users of all ages and abilities can travel safely and independently. While each and every individual street need not contain accommodations for all modes, the network should enable all users to travel safely via any mode.

The City of Watertown shall approach every transportation improvement and transportation-related project phase as an opportunity to create safer, more accessible streets for all users. These phases include, but are not limited to: planning, programming, design, right-of-way acquisition, construction, construction engineering, reconstruction, operation and maintenance. Other changes to transportation facilities on streets and rights-of way, including capital improvements, maintenance and restriping must also be included.

The City of Watertown realizes that its transportation network should provide consistent access and safe travel for all users within the City and beyond the City's borders. To this end, the City shall, when feasible and appropriate, foster relationships with the State of New York, Jefferson County, neighboring communities, business and school districts to develop facilities and accommodations that further the City's Complete Streets Policy and continue such infrastructure beyond the City's borders.

This policy applies to all publicly and privately funded projects and developments that affect the right-of-way. Privately constructed streets, parking lots and connecting pathways shall also adhere to this policy. The City shall review all private development proposals with reference to the incorporation of Complete Streets principles and general consistency with the Complete Streets Policy.

Review for Complete Streets consistency will be added to the existing Planning and Community Development Department development review process. Planning and Engineering Staff will review any applicable Site Plan, Waiver of Site Plan, Subdivision, Special Use Permit or Zone Change application for general consistency with this policy.

### **Section 4: Exceptions**

Any exception to this policy, including for eligible private projects, must be reviewed by the Complete Streets Committee, and approved by the City Council with supporting documentation that indicates the basis for the decision. Such documentation shall be made publicly available. The Complete Streets Committee will be responsible for performing a thorough review of the project relating to the incorporation of Complete Streets elements and principles, and will forward a recommendation to the City Council.

Exceptions may be considered for approval when:

- An affected roadway prohibits by law, use by pedestrians and bicyclists (such as limited-access highways), in which case a greater effort shall be made to accommodate those specified users elsewhere, including on roadways that cross or otherwise intersect with the affected roadway;
- The activities are minor maintenance activities designed to keep the roadway in serviceable condition (e.g. mowing, cleaning, sweeping, spot repair and surface treatments such as chip seal, painting to brighten existing stripes, or interim measures) and do not change the roadway geometry or operations;
- The costs of providing accommodation for some travel modes is excessively disproportionate to the current need or anticipated future demand for those modes, with due consideration given to future users, latent demand, and the social and economic value of providing a safer and more convenient transportation system for all users;
- There is sufficient documentation that there is no feasible way to accommodate improvements for non-vehicular traffic within a project's scope; or
- There is a documented absence of current and future need.

## **Section 5: Design Standards**

The City of Watertown shall follow and use the best and latest accepted design standards available. These standards include, but are not limited to:

- ITE Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach;
- AASHTO Guide for Planning, Designing and Operating Pedestrian Facilities;
- AASHTO guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities;
- NYSDOT Highway Design Manual;
- FHWA Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices; and
- FHWA Lighting Handbook

In recognition of various contexts, public input and the needs of many users, a flexible, innovative and balanced approach that follows other appropriate design standards may be considered, provided that a comparable level of safety for all users is present. The standards identified above represent the most current standards at the time of this policy's adoption. As new and updated accepted standards emerge, they may be considered for City use.

Points of emphasis for this policy include, but are not limited to, traffic-calming measures, pedestrian sanctuaries and bicycle safety. However, specific design criteria shall not be purely prescriptive, but shall be based on the thoughtful application of engineering, architectural and urban design principles.

## **Section 6: Context Sensitivity**

The City of Watertown shall implement Complete Streets solutions in a manner that is sensitive to the local context and character, aligns transportation and land use goals and recognizes that the needs of users may vary by case, community or corridor.

Context sensitivity to the community's overall surroundings, its current and planned buildings and land uses, and current and expected transportation needs must be a factor in decision-making. Context-sensitive design allows roadway decisions to be more flexible and sensitive to community values, and to better balance economic, social and environmental objectives.

## **Section 7: Implementation**

The City of Watertown shall view Complete Streets as integral to everyday transportation decision-making practices and processes. To this end:

- The Department of Public Works, the Engineering Department, the Planning and Community Development Department and other relevant departments, agencies or committees will incorporate Complete Streets elements and principles into all existing plans, manuals, checklists decision-trees, rules, regulations and programs as appropriate (including, but not limited to the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, Capital Program and other appropriate planning tools);
- The Department of Public Works, the Engineering Department, the Planning and Community Development Department and other relevant departments, agencies or committees will review current design standards, including subdivision regulations that apply to new roadway construction, to ensure that they reflect the best available design standards and guidelines, and effectively implement Complete Streets where feasible;
- When available, the City shall encourage professional development and training for staff on non-motorized transportation issues through attending conferences, classes seminars and workshops;
- 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;
- The City shall promote inter-departmental project coordination among City departments with an interest in the activities that occur within the public right-of-way in order to better use fiscal resources;
- Every Complete Streets project shall include an educational component to ensure that all users of the transportation system understand and can safely utilize Complete Streets project elements.

- The City shall promote cooperation and collaboration between City departments and other external agencies, including NYSDOT, the Watertown Jefferson County Area Transportation Council, the City of Watertown School District, its municipal authorities, adjacent municipalities, private developers, and public and private utilities to develop facilities and accommodations that further the City’s vision of a connected and integrated network.
- Within one year from the adoption of this policy, the City and the Complete Streets Committee shall adopt or create a Complete Streets checklist form to be filled out during a project review to determine compliance with this policy.
- The City shall establish a Complete Streets Committee, which shall consist of the City’s ADA Coordinator, City Engineer, Superintendent of Public Works, Planning and Community Development Director, Chief of Police, or a designee appointed by any of the above department heads from within their respective departments. This committee will meet as needed to conduct project reviews and shall be responsible for preparing an annual progress report.
- During the planning and design phase of any public transportation improvement project, the Complete Streets Committee shall conduct a review of the project relating to the incorporation of Complete Streets elements and principles into the project. The review shall be made with reference to current best practices, as detailed in the design guidelines listed in Section 5, and a recommendation shall be forwarded to the City Council. If the Complete Streets Committee determines a project to be eligible for an exception from this policy, it shall follow the procedure detailed in Section 4 and forward that determination, along with documented evidence to support it, to the City Council for final approval of the exception.

## **Section 8: Reporting**

The application of Complete Streets will be a process that requires regular evaluation to determine progress and effectiveness. To facilitate that regular evaluation, the Complete Streets Committee shall prepare a written annual progress report that measures the success of this Complete Streets Policy and present the report to City Council. The City shall also make this report publicly available. The performance measures that will be evaluated include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Linear feet of new or repaired pedestrian accommodations
- Number of new or repaired curb ramps installed along City streets
- Number of crosswalk and intersection improvements
- Number of transit facilities installed or improved
- Total miles of new bike lanes
- Number of street trees planted
- Number of traffic calming features installed
- Watertown City School District walker data
- A list of approved exceptions to this policy