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Complete Streets as part of new MoDOT funding

Complete streets encourage more walking and bicycling, improve community health, make our cities more livable and economically competitive, ease congestion, help children and the elderly, are good for air quality and the environment.

What are Complete Streets

Complete Streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street.

Complete Streets are essential for children and older Americans, as well as people who use wheelchairs, have vision impairments, or simply cannot afford a car.

Complete Streets are supported by a broad coalition, including AARP, the disability community, transit operators, bicycle, pedestrian, and running groups, the American Planning Association, and the Institute of Transportation Engineers.

The lack of walking and bicycling facilities puts Missouri at an economic disadvantage

In 2000, the US Department of Transportation advised states receiving federal funds that "bicycling and walking facilities will be incorporated into all transportation projects unless exceptional circumstances exist." Almost half of states follow this guidance but MoDOT does not. In the future, stronger federal pressure to follow this guidance is likely.

The call for more walkable, livable, and accessible communities, has seen bicycling and walking emerge as an "indicator species" for the health and well-being of a community. High quality, high tech, high paying businesses and their employees expect their communities to be bicycle and pedestrian friendly. The lack of these facilities puts Missouri at a competitive disadvantage.

Complete Streets make fiscal sense

Integrating sidewalks, bike lanes, transit amenities, and safe crossings into the initial design of a project spares the expense of retrofits later. Jeff Morales, the Director of Caltrans when the state of California adopted its complete streets policy in 2001, said, "By fully considering the needs of all non-motorized travelers (pedestrians, bicyclists, and persons with disabilities) early in the life of a project, the costs associated with including facilities for these travelers are minimized."

MoDOT's funding crisis is an opportunity

MoDOT roads go through every Missouri city. Because MoDOT roads are so bicycle and pedestrian un-friendly, they form the biggest barriers to safe walking, bicycling, and transit use in most cities.

The poor state of Missouri's transportation system creates the opportunity to rebuild to Complete Street standards as the problems are addressed. Missourians are more likely to support funding for transportation projects that will make their cities more livable, walkable, and economically competitive.

Our recommendation: New funding for MoDOT should include Complete Streets standards so that this significant economic outlay will benefit all Missourians.

Pent-up demand

Americans want to bicycle and walk more. Recent opinion polls found that 52 percent of Americans want to bicycle more, and 55% would prefer to drive less and walk more.

The reason most often given for not walking and bicycling more is "no safe place". Studies show that communities with better walking and bicycling infrastructure do, indeed, have much more walking and bicycling.

Complete Streets unite communities rather than dividing them.

Rural areas

Rural areas and small towns have a very low amount of walking and bicycling. This is because so few streets and roads in these areas consider the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists. The lack of safe walking and bicycling facilities has a measurable negative impact on the health of Missouri's rural population.

A complete street in a rural area will look quite different from a complete street in a highly urban area. But both are designed to balance safety and convenience for everyone using the road.

Complete Streets policies are reasonable and flexible

A typical Complete Streets policy, such as the one recommended by the USDOT, includes these elements:

1. Bicycle and pedestrian ways shall be established in new construction and reconstruction projects in all urbanized areas unless one or more of three conditions are met:
 - bicyclists and pedestrians are prohibited by law from using the roadway.
 - the cost of establishing bikeways or walkways would be excessively disproportionate
 - where sparsity of population or other factors indicate an absence of need.
2. In rural areas, accommodation is very simple--typically no more than a paved shoulder on roads with a certain amount of daily traffic.
3. All facilities should be designed to meet the needs of those with disabilities.
4. Planning and design of transportation projects should take these factors into account:
 - plan projects for the long-term; anticipate likely future demand for bicycling and walking facilities
 - address the need for bicyclists and pedestrians to cross corridors as well as travel along them
 - get exceptions approved at a senior level
 - design facilities to the best currently available standards and guidelines

For More Information

To learn more, contact Missouri Bicycle Federation Executive Director Brent Hugh, 816-695-6736 or director@mobikefed.org