

**Hennepin County**  
**Complete Streets Task Force Minutes**  
**March 21, 2011 2 - 4 PM**  
**Hennepin County Government Center**  
**A23 Conference Room**  
**300 South 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Minneapolis MN 55487**

**Attendees:** James Andrew, Jill Boogren, Scott Bradley, Jack Broz, Dave Carlson Sandy Colvin Roy, Gail Dorfman, Steve Elkins, Katie Hatt, Kathi Hemken, Margot Imdieke Cross, Linda Loomis, Richard Johnson, Tom Johnson, Peter McLaughlin, Karen Nikolai, Marthand Nookala, Tom Oestrich, Rose Ryan, Peter Spuit, Mark Stenglein, Barb Thoman.

## **1. Overarching county vision and desires for Complete Streets**

---

Commissioner Dorfman welcomed the group. Hennepin County adopted its Complete Streets policy in July 2009 and has been working on implementation. It became obvious that Hennepin County couldn't implement Complete Streets in a vacuum, and it didn't make sense to work alone. A task force provides a venue to work together to jointly plan, fund, design, and build complete streets. Hennepin County desires to work together with state and local agencies to make Complete Streets a reality. The 46<sup>th</sup> Street Bus Rapid Transit station in Minneapolis is an example of the challenges. The station is surrounded by county, city, and state roads, with people on both sides of 35W who want to safely access the station.

The Complete Streets Task Force will meet bi-monthly. Our goals include to identify funding and demonstration projects, and work with Mn/DOT as Mn/DOT works on complete streets.

## **2. Complete Streets: brief history, background, trends and examples**

---

### **Barb Thoman, Executive Director, Transit for Livable Communities**

Transit for Livable communities is a member of the MN Complete Streets Coalition. The coalition includes the disability community, healthy kids initiatives, Blue Cross / Blue Shield, the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, and many others. The group's interests are very diverse because of the wide range of complete streets benefits. The coalition goal was to get a Complete Streets policy at the state level. State legislation required a Mn/DOT Complete Streets study. The study determined that Complete Streets were feasible and in line with Context Sensitive Solutions. The study recommended the adoption of a state Complete Streets policy. Currently, Mn/DOT has both an internal and external Complete Streets Advisory group.

Twenty states and over 100 local governments have Complete Streets policies, including St. Paul and Rochester. Small and large cities across the nation are passing Complete Streets Policies. Complete Streets designs can be found in many cities. Montréal has created a network of on-street, two-directional bikeways connecting with their off-street trails. The bikeways are highly used by Bixi bikes, similar to our Nice Ride bikes. Montreal clears its sidewalks in winter and opens some of its streets to pedestrians every Friday during the summer. New York City has reallocated street space for pedestrians and bicyclists. Chicago has added planters, street furniture, is trying to make downtown more pedestrian friendly, and thinking about pedestrian space differently than in the past.

In Minnesota, Complete Streets coalition members from Park Rapids and Bemidji have joined because of frustration over widening streets. There isn't a design for complete streets – it's a *process*. We need to get people involved to figure out which corridors should be priorities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit. Complete Streets may require different meeting facilitation skills to get input and start a project off on the right foot. We need flexibility in design standards and funding. We have self-imposed restrictions that we may need to reconsider.

**Jack Broz, Transportation Group Leader, HR Green**

Complete Streets is a process and a big change for the engineering community. Most of our design standards are from the interstate era: wider, flatter, straighter roads. On many roads, vehicle space is overdesigned and speeding is a common issue. In an urban setting, narrow lanes slow people down, improve safety, and reduce costs. Change needs to happen in maintenance, planning, design, construction, and operations.

A Complete Streets process starts with a community problem statement, then adding a regulatory and technical problem statement. The goal is to develop a project with a better balance. We also need to think about routes and destinations: can you leave the bus and walk through the parking lot? Do routes connect to schools, parks, and commercial destinations? The Met Council could take a greater leadership role in identifying regionally significant bicycle and pedestrian networks.

Richfield examples of Complete Streets projects:

- Met Council sewer project:
  - Narrowed streets and saved 30% in reconstruction costs
  - Bike lane is a wide gutter pan and continues through intersections to let vehicles know they are crossing the bike lane
- Portland Avenue:
  - Road diet on a street with 10,000 ADT
  - Created a 6 foot shoulder, providing snow storage and buffering the sidewalk from traffic.

### **3. Status of Complete Streets in Hennepin County**

---

**Tom Johnson, Hennepin County Transportation Planning Division Manager**

**Complete Streets Inventory:** For all Hennepin County roads, information was collected about the presence of sidewalks, community destinations, speed limits, and functional classes.

**ADA Transition Plan:** The plan lists barriers to accessibility and creates a strategy for removing these barriers and putting Hennepin in compliance with the law. The draft plan is to spend \$1 million annually for 7-10 years. The Transportation Department has hosted four public meetings and has received training from Mn/DOT on curb ramps and ADA.

**4-to-3 conversions:** The Transportation Department is getting more experience with 4-to-3 conversions and can more easily implement conversions. Most have urban shoulders, but the department is becoming more comfortable with dedicated bike lanes on 4-to-3 conversions. In Bloomington, there are many road diet opportunities because many roads were designed for higher volumes than exist today.

**Integrating Complete Streets into Transportation:** Cities, Hennepin County, and the public are thinking more about Complete Streets. All Transportation Department engineers have received CSS training. Because of slower growth in census and traffic numbers, the department can approach design differently. Potential CIP projects are scored on safety, pavement condition, capacity, and Complete Streets. Complete Streets are given 1/3 of the weight in scoring CIP projects.

#### **4. Review of the taskforce charge, expected outcomes and timeline**

---

##### **Task Force charge:**

- Identifying funding opportunities, such as a TIGER grant for multimodal infrastructure investments
- Consistent implementation, looking at transportation and land use
- Demonstration projects
- State aid standards process. The reconsideration of standards is on a slow track at the moment, but will move as fast as it is pushed
- Working consistently with other transportation agencies as they plan, design and construct projects in Hennepin County
- Other opportunities: TOD, Transitway corridors, Sustainable Communities Grant

##### **What information and discussions does the group want?**

- Creating a model for coordinated, collaborative planning and implementation across jurisdictions.
- Community based design: invite the community to the table early in the process, provide up to date information on project websites
- Create a catalogue of Complete Streets examples to share with elected officials, staff, and the public
- Potential funding sources:
  - Bike Walk Twin Cities fall funding allocation: capital projects, planning studies, and demonstration projects
  - TIGER grant for planning and infrastructure investments
- Communications around Complete Streets:
  - Elected officials and staff: Present examples and be clear that Complete Streets is a process, not just one design
  - Community members: Present examples of Complete Streets to community members
- Maintenance and operations: year-round Complete Streets
- Update the Hennepin County Bicycle Transportation Plan
- Change the entire system to get Complete Streets results, rather than working on a project basis
- Look at targets, goals, and outcomes to find mutually supportive outcomes across modes
- Establish criteria to measure success

##### **Detailed Comments:**

**Scott Bradley:** highlight a few things from the Mn/DOT Complete Streets feasibility study: the critical importance of planning and coordination to set the tone for Complete Streets. We do need to plan for all modes and multimodal networks. In our more urban areas – how we allocate space is

more significant than the capital cost. The cost related to operations and maintenance as more of an issue.

**Katie Hatt:** can this work do anything to tee up projects for Bike Walk Twin Cities grants?

**Barb Thoman:** Capital projects, planning studies, and demonstration/Complete Streets projects will be candidates for the fall round of funding.

**Sandy Colvin Roy:** Complete Streets language was used in the Access Minneapolis plan, but with all the tensions about moving around in cities, it would be helpful to add to the understanding about Complete Streets. It could help to clarify that there isn't just one model for Complete Streets. If it's a process, we could use lots of options of what's being done elsewhere that can be in the catalogue for a community to consider in the beginning of the discussion.

**Peter Spuit:** In conversations about aging and infrastructure, so much of the conversation is and needs to be about maintenance and operations – paint quality, surface quality, access to accessible transit, cost and feasibility of maintenance and operations for Complete Streets improvements

**Gail Dorfman:** Good point. As a group we need to figure out what it means to have Complete Streets year-round, including operations and maintenance.

**Jill Boogren:** We need to show all the options – the more examples, the easier the conversation. We should get as much as possible on the web for projects and build input into the process. Use community based design and invite people in sooner for better projects. Task force could help shift the conversation to how can we do this and get some more creative problem solving in the mix.

**Gail Dorfman:** Are there enough CS projects that are models that we could start to collect to show as real examples?

**Barb Thoman:** There is a range of projects that we can look at. Downtown St. Peter converted a wide state highway into a Complete Streets design. Cty Rd 41 in Chaska is another example

**Jack Broz:** How do you reconnect the Midtown Greenway and Lake Street. There are some streets that may be complete, but may be missing a piece. We can look at a lot of case studies in town.

**Sandy:** What's wrong with examples from Europe?

**Jack Broz:** Legal accountability is different in Europe, leading to different designs. Europe emphasizes personal accountability and liability more than we do here.

**Gail Dorfman:** Are Complete Streets culturally specific?

**Scott Bradley:** There are growing success stories at project/segment levels. What is lacking is a model for how do you work collaboratively in looking at a network and across jurisdictions. Grand Rapids is using a multijurisdictional collaborative framework and gathering feedback to improve the model. We could develop a model for how we think and work collaboratively.

**Peter McLaughlin:** In a meeting with bike advocates, people around the table agreed that county roads serve a different purpose than other roads because they carry more traffic. Completeness of the street varies – Lake Street and the Midtown Greenway are examples. The County bike plan was done a long time ago and could be updated.

**Dave Carlson:** Individual communities can still thwart projects if not in favor of CS – how can we improve how we interact with communities? We tend towards an all or none approach: if something doesn't work for the whole segment, often nothing is done. Interested in network approach.

**Gail Dorfman:** Who is doing public communication around Complete Streets? Aside from Blue Cross and Blue Shield, no one really is.

**Kathi Hemken:** We need to be careful that we are not speaking to the choir. We need to get input really early, instead of making more work at the end of the project.

**Peter McLaughlin:** We need to “create a new black box” and get new results. Right now we're working on a project basis, but we need to change the system.

**Barb Thoman:** St. Paul got a TIGER grant to do Complete Streets planning and created a citizens transportation committee to review and prioritize projects.

**Gail Dorfman:** How many cities have citizen transportation commissions? Transportation generates a lot of citizen concerns.

**Linda Loomis:** Golden Valley has a sidewalk commission.

**Scott Bradley:** We don't always go in to see what happens before and after a project. On Excelsior Boulevard, crashes decreased by 60% after reconstruction. The St. Peter project wasn't initiated as Complete Streets project, but pedestrian safety was an important objective. We need to look at targets, goals, and outcomes: there are a lot of mutually supportive things that can happen. Need to aspire to and look for these things on how we allocate space.

**Gail Dorfman:** How do we measure success – what criteria do we use?

## **5. Next Meeting Dates**

---

Hennepin County staff will propose dates for bi-monthly meetings in May, July, September, November, January, and March.

END OF MEETING