

Memorandum

Lawrence-Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (L-DC MPO)

TO: Lawrence-Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Commission
David L. Corliss, Lawrence City Manager

FROM: Jessica Mortinger, L-DC MPO Transportation Planner

CC: Scott McCullough, Planning and Development Services Director
Todd Girdler, L-DC MPO Senior Transportation Planner
Marilyn Hull, Livewell Lawrence

DATE: January 26, 2011

RE: Complete Streets

On September 30, 2010 the MPO, in partnership with Livewell Lawrence, hosted a Complete Streets workshop for community stakeholders. It was agreed at this workshop that the MPO and City of Lawrence Planning staff would educate the various commissions and elected bodies on the merits of a Complete Streets policy and take direction from them on how to proceed. This memo summarizes the complete streets principles, the existing City of Lawrence practices in regards to multimodal transportation planning and details the options for moving forward to make Lawrence a Complete Streets city if desired.

Complete Street Principles

“Complete Streets” is a nationally recognized term referring to infrastructure that is designed, operated and maintained to enable safe and convenient access for multimodal transportation.

Complete Streets offers a flexible planning process that yields a context sensitive design when building new and retrofitting existing streets. Complete Streets is not a singularly prescriptive design to fit all roadways. Complete Streets can vary based on context, topography, road function, the speed of traffic, local auto, truck pedestrian and bicycle demand, and available right of way.

There is no one single defined feature of a complete street. It has a variety of components that address the varying travel needs of differing communities and users. Common components include:

- Sidewalks
- Bike lanes (or wide paved shoulders)
- Designated bus lanes or turn outs
- Accessible transit stops and facilities
- Frequent pedestrian crossing opportunities
- Median islands
- Accessible pedestrian signals
- Curb extensions
- Green landscaping design
- Low impact development storm water features (in some cases)

Different intensities of roadways require differing components depending on the travel demands in a city or region. The main goal of a complete street is to balance safety and convenience for all users.

Each component of a complete street design designates the benefits the design can have for a community. Most importantly, a Complete Streets policy ensures that all users are considered in the development and redevelopment of public infrastructure.

There are varying ways to accommodate transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and motor vehicle traffic in a corridor containing Complete Streets. There are inherent conflicts in planning and designing for a variety of modes for public infrastructure. However, through engineering and public education, these conflicts can be minimized. One of the most important factors in user satisfaction comes from the involvement that each type of roadway user has in the creation of infrastructure design plans. Complete Streets supports many of the goals and visions the city wishes to achieve by increasing equity, health, safety, and comfort for all users.

A review of Current City Policies and Documents - How we currently do business.

A variety of planning documents for the City of Lawrence and Douglas County acknowledge multimodal transportation planning in some way and the City has a history of upholding the values of complete streets even if we have not formalized it into a Complete Streets Policy. The major existing policy documents that guide transportation planning and vision making in Lawrence include:

1. Lawrence Development Code
2. Horizon 2020
3. Transportation 2030
4. Lawrence – Douglas County Bicycle Plan
5. Engineering Standards-Existing Cross Section design for Collector Streets

Each document's support for multimodal infrastructure is summarized below.

1. Lawrence Development Code

The Subdivision Code and the Smartcode dictate the design of roadways in greenfield construction.

In the Subdivision Code, there are a number of positive attributes that support Complete Streets principles, including the provision of the following components: bicycle facilities for each use category, pedestrian connections on private property from the public right-of-way, and sidewalks on both sides of new street construction. The Subdivision Code defers to the Thoroughfare diagrams discussed in the Smartcode.

The Smartcode chapter of the Development Code provides standards for construction in development zones. The only reference to street design is in the Smartcode's description of thoroughfare assemblies. While care is given to the level of detail in these diagrams—dedicated bicycle lanes and transit facilities are not addressed; two infrastructure components that support complete streets infrastructure and multimodal transportation.

2. Horizon 2020

Horizon 2020 is the Comprehensive plan for the City of Lawrence and unincorporated Douglas County. It is intended to provide the foundation and framework for development in the future. Section 8 of Horizon 2020 details the goals of the city with regard to transportation planning. Horizon 2020 addresses many of the essential components of a typical Complete Streets policy while also necessitating some revisions to better align Section 8 with optimal Complete Streets concepts.

The first strategy of the transportation plan component states, “In order to continue to improve the viability of pedestrian and bicycle access as an important alternative transportation mode, the City and County will continue to develop and extend its bicycle and pedestrian facilities and public transportation services.” This overall goal is aligned with the principles of multimodal “Complete Streets” transportation planning at its most general scale.

Policy 2.1 emphasizes future development that considers alternative modes of transportation. While this principle addresses the need for alternative forms of transportation, it does not address the need to balance land uses that are compatible with a complete multimodal transportation system.

Policy 2.10 encourages attractive streetscape improvements along rights-of-way to enhance the experience of pedestrians who “pause, wait, meet, and relax.” In addition, effective traffic calming measures are identified to “promote safe and pleasant conditions for motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians, and residents on neighborhood streets.” In this regard, many of the essential components of a Complete Streets policy are already present within this policy.

Goal 4 generalizes the role of transit in the city’s multimodal transportation system. However, it does not adequately address how transit should be incorporated into an aesthetically appealing pedestrian environment. There are some missing connections between policy and goal initiatives in Horizon 2020 and a complete streets policy.

3. Transportation 2030

Transportation 2030 serves as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan for Douglas County. This document projects transportation needs through 2030, and is scheduled for an update in early 2013. Its vision is intended to create a healthy, safe and efficient transportation system that plans for all modes and users. Three of the eight most important transportation issues facing the county are multimodal planning visions including: “increasing bicycle travel opportunities, providing a pedestrian-friendly community and balancing land use, transportation, and environmental Needs.”

Additionally, there are a number of objectives in the document that allude to Complete Streets concepts. For example, *Objective 4.2* supports the promotion of alternative modes of transportation to maintain and improve air quality; *Objective 7.2* encourages the development of a more compact landscape for the benefit of increased pedestrian activity; and *Objective 7.6* recommends that attention be placed on the creation of attractive streetscapes to provide a more aesthetically pleasing environment for pedestrians. Further, *Objectives 8.1 through 9.1* supports the essence of Complete Streets principles, dealing specifically with the design and layout of sidewalks, bicycle lanes and trails, and the continuation of a comprehensive transit system.

In analyzing the effectiveness of Transportation 2030 with regard to Complete Streets concepts, the plan actually provides sufficient support for a multimodal transportation system. Bicycle, pedestrian, and transit accommodations are encouraged throughout the document, both in separate individual chapters devoted to each mode as well as within chapters of other modes.

4. Lawrence – Douglas County Bicycle Plan

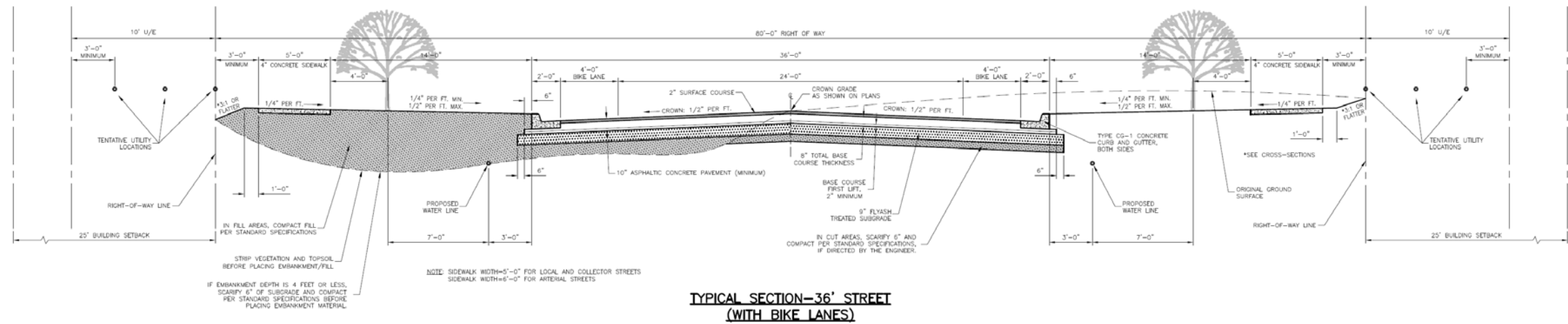
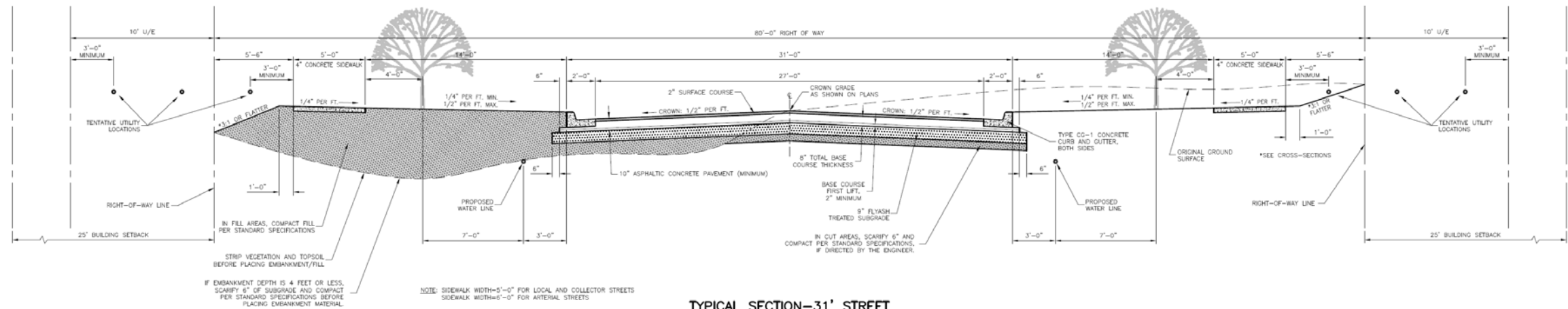
The Lawrence– Douglas County Bicycle Plan recognizes the need for a balanced transportation system. It endorses appropriate recommendations for bicycle facilities in the City of Lawrence; these improvements support Complete Streets policies.

Objective 1 encourages creating logical and practical connectivity for bicycles to areas of interest within the county. Specifically, program activity 7.1.01 calls for the expansion and extension the bikeway system in growth areas to provide system connectivity through planning.

Objective 2 also supports planning for bicycle infrastructure by calling for “consistent design standards for typical situations in consideration of bicyclists and pedestrians.” Program activity, 7.2.03-06 suggests roadway design standards for collector streets, local streets, county roads (with high bicycle traffic) and recommend strategic installation of “Share the Road” signs where it is infeasible to retrofit roadways for multimodal infrastructure. These objectives and activities call for a standardized way of planning for and creating bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure within the community when new transportation investments are made.

5. Existing Cross Section design for Collector Streets

City Engineers have designed a standard for construction that includes sidewalks and bike lanes where appropriate. The city engineering staff is supportive of multimodal infrastructure and currently asks for recommendations for facilities from the Bikeway Plan and the Bicycle Advisory Committee.



NOTE:
WATER LINE WILL BE PLACED ONLY ON ONE SIDE (OPPOSITE SIDE OF THE STORM WATER LINE) OF THE STREET.

DATE	BY	REVISION
03-05-09	LJM	REVISIONS MADE 03-05-09
02-04-09	LJM	REVISIONS MADE 02-04-09
04-15-08	LJM	REPLACES ALL PREVIOUS VERSIONS OF ASPHALTIC CONCRETE STREET DETAILS
STANDARD STREETSCAPE FOR COLLECTOR STREETS		
SHOEB M. UDDIN DAVID L. CORLISS CITY ENGINEER CITY MANAGER		

What can we do?

The major existing policy documents that guide transportation and land use planning and vision making in Lawrence and Douglas County generally support complete streets ideals. However, they lack many connections between visioning and realistic implementation. A complete streets policy would provide Lawrence a vision for the way we choose to build and rebuild our transportation networks. As a first step it would be a commitment to the citizens of Lawrence that the way we do business is one that prevents mode choice discrimination. A policy would provide engineers and planners additional support to integrate the needs of all road users into everyday transportation planning and design practices by gradually creating a complete network of roads that serve all users. A policy will also save money in the long run; retrofit projects always cost more than getting it right the first time.

The National Complete Streets Coalition calls for an ideal complete streets policy to have the following elements:

- Includes a vision for how and why the community wants to complete its streets.
- Specifies that ‘all users’ includes pedestrians, bicyclists and transit passengers of all ages and abilities, as well as trucks, buses and automobiles.
- Encourages street connectivity and aims to create a comprehensive, integrated, connected network for all modes.
- Is adoptable by all agencies to cover all roads.
- Applies to both new and retrofit projects, including design, planning, maintenance, and operations, for the entire right of way.
- Makes any exceptions specific and sets a clear procedure that requires high-level approval of exceptions.
- Directs the use of the latest and best design criteria and guidelines while recognizing the need for flexibility in balancing user needs.
- Directs that complete streets solutions will complement the context of the community.
- Establishes performance standards with measurable outcomes.
- Includes specific next steps for implementation of the policy

A Complete Streets vision would allow city staff to restructure procedures, policies, and programs, rewrite design manuals or standards, and create new performance measures for transportation networks.

Making Lawrence a Community with Complete Streets Values

Lawrence has many options on how to begin the commitment to Complete Streets if determined to be appropriate. These options can be simultaneous or independent depending on the result desired. This commitment to Complete Streets also needs to be a continuing process that includes periodic review of our policies and processes. Complete Streets is a process that requires cooperation between local governments, state & federal governments, local business, land developers, and everyone that has to move from place to place.

Possible ways to build on the communities existing multimodal policies include:

Planning Documents – Include Complete Streets goals and visions in our long range plans, Horizon 2020 and the next Metropolitan Transportation Plan update.

Resolution – Pass a resolution declaring our commitment to Complete Streets. This is a first step in making a commitment; other steps should follow to ensure Complete Streets design principles are being implemented.

Sample Resolution:

- Las Cruces, New Mexico

http://lcmpoweb.las-cruces.org/complete_streets.asp

Ordinances – Pass an ordinance to enact complete Streets goals and visions into city codes and standards.

Sample Ordinances:

- Rochester, Minnesota

http://www.co.olmsted.mn.us/planning/programs_projects/ActiveLiving/Documents/CompleteStreetsResolution.pdf

- Louisville, Kentucky

http://services.louisvilleky.gov/media/complete_streets/complete_streets_ordinance.pdf

Plan Review Checklists - Create checklists that include Complete Street design elements that are preformed during the review of all site plans.

Sample Checklist

- Metropolitan Transportation Commission- San Francisco Bay Area, California

http://www.mtc.ca.gov/planning/bicyclespedestrians/Routine_Accommodation_guidance.pdf

Development Codes and Design Guidelines – Revise and rewrite development codes to ensure we are building for all modes when the context is appropriate to serve as design guidelines.

Sample Design Guidelines

- Roanoke, Virginia

[http://www.roanokeva.gov/85256A8D0062AF37/CurrentBaseLink/C9F23FC2DB68F25E85257762004D86A4/\\$File/STREET_DESIGN_GUIDELINES.pdf](http://www.roanokeva.gov/85256A8D0062AF37/CurrentBaseLink/C9F23FC2DB68F25E85257762004D86A4/$File/STREET_DESIGN_GUIDELINES.pdf)

- Louisville, Kentucky

<http://www.cityofnewhaven.com/TrafficParking/pdfs/CS-Manual-04-05-10.pdf>

Conclusion

While Lawrence upholds many of the values of Complete Streets at this time, a more comprehensive policy with follow up implementation could be worthwhile as the city expands in the future. City and MPO staff stand ready to continue to work on this endeavor if found appropriate by the MPO Policy Board and Lawrence City Commission.

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