

TOWN OF ROTTERDAM COMPLETE STREETS POLICY



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1. Background

The Complete Streets Act was signed into law by the Governor of New York in 2011, and requires state, county, and local agencies to consider the convenience and mobility of all users when developing transportation projects that receive state and federal funding. This law requires that complete streets design guidelines be considered for the planning, design, construction, reconstruction, and rehabilitation of roadways receiving federal or state funding. A Complete Street is generally defined as a roadway that is planned and designed to consider the safe, convenient access, and mobility of a roadway for users of all ages and abilities.

The New York State's Complete Streets Act states the following:

“For all state, county and local transportation projects that are undertaken by the Department or receive both federal and state funding and are subject to Department of Transportation oversight, the department or agency with jurisdiction over such projects shall consider the convenient access and mobility on the road network by all users of all ages, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transportation users through the use of complete street design features in the planning, design, construction, reconstruction and rehabilitation, but not including resurfacing, maintenance, or pavement recycling of such projects.”

The Town of Rotterdam Comprehensive Plan dated December 2022 states the Town should consider adopting Complete Streets Policy to ensure that future road improvements incorporate design features that suit multiple modes of transportation. The Comprehensive Plan includes the following statement:

“Complete Streets design is defined as roadway design features that accommodate and facilitate convenient access and mobility by all users, including current and projected users, particularly pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and individuals of all ages and abilities. Complete streets may also play a role in making a community healthier, reducing environmental impact, and leading to private investment in a corridor. The Town of Rotterdam should consider adopting a Complete Streets Policy to ensure that future road improvements incorporate design features that suit multiple modes of transportation.”

Typical Complete Streets design features include, but are not limited to; sidewalks, bicycle lanes, multi-use paths, paved shoulders suitable for bicycle and pedestrian travel, shared roadway signage, flush and raised crosswalks, pedestrian control signalization, and traffic calming measures that reduce vehicular speeds and thus improve overall safety of the traveling public. Such guidelines are intended to provide convenient access and mobility for all users including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit users. Complete Streets design can include more vegetation to provide shade and a buffer from traffic, and it can include green infrastructure to better manage stormwater. As stated in the New York State Complete Streets Act of 2011, “Complete Streets will contribute to a cleaner, greener transportation system” and “more citizens will achieve the health benefits associated with active forms of transportation while traffic congestion and auto related air pollution will be reduced.”

By incorporating Complete Streets design features in transportation projects, vehicular speeds will be reduced and thus improve overall safety of the traveling public. This Complete Streets Policy (“The Policy”) does not commit the Town from funding any improvements, but when public funding is available for transportation projects in the Town, this Policy will be considered as part of the design development of complete streets. This Policy also applies to all access roads constructed as part of private development projects that connect to publicly owned roadways.

2. Vision

This Policy will encourage the development of a safe, accessible, and connected multi-modal network throughout the Town and thus create more of a balanced transportation system for all users. The Policy encourages, where practicable, that new and updated public and private projects are planned, designed, and operated to enable safe, comfortable, and convenient travel to the greatest extent possible for users of all ages and abilities with respect to all modes of transportation, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders. The Policy will serve all users in the Town equitably, by their mode of travel.

With the implementation of The Policy, overall transportation system will improve safety and health, while encouraging economic activity, community character, livability, equity and enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors. Complete Streets designed roadways offer better transportation options, support an aging population, advance economic development, invest in underserved communities in the Town, and help children get to and from school.

3. Guiding Principles

The guiding principles support long term safety, health, mobility, economic viability, livability, sustainability, environmental protections, equity, and quality of life through street-level improvements to the build environment as follows:

- A. Connected and integrated Complete Streets principles apply to all roadways and all project phases of public and private development projects.
- B. A safe, accessible, and equitable transportation network that balances the needs of a diverse range of users.
- C. Reinforcing collaboration with partners within the local community, schools, and businesses as well as with Schenectady County, New York State, federal agencies, and transit providers to provide appropriate connectivity for all modes of travel.
- D. Promoting programs that improve connectivity to points of community interest such as town parks, grocery stores, libraries, houses of worship and public/private educational institutions. These programs include Safe Routes to Schools, Safe Routes to Parks, and Active Friendly Routes to Everyday Destinations.

4. Land Use and Transportation

The integration of land use and transportation is a critical component to the livability of a community. Complete Streets encourages a comprehensive approach for accommodating alternative travel modes by multiple users, regardless of age, race, economic status, or ability. This results in a balanced transportation system with

pedestrian and bicycle facilities, street trees, pedestrian scaled lighting, and ADA compliant sidewalks which will positively impact the physical health and safety of the community, enhance the environmental quality of our neighborhoods and the economic vitality of the Town. As part of development of projects, Complete Streets design elements must be considered and support the type of street the community desires. The Town shall require specific evidence of all new or revised land use policies, plans, zoning ordinances or equivalent documents, showing how the projects support the Complete Streets Policy.

5. Public Health and Economic Development

Numerous research conducted by various Public Health and Transportation Agencies have concluded that investing in multimodal transportation increases walking and bicycle travel and in turn improves overall public health. In addition, complete streets can improve and maintain the economic vitality of the Town. Streets that include accommodating pedestrian and bicycle travel are welcoming and encourage residents and visitors to frequent the local businesses. The benefits of Complete Streets include better access to safe streets for all, increased opportunity for active transportation, improved individual health, improvements to overall air quality, promotion of equal opportunities, and decreased crashes throughout the Town. This policy promotes and enhances public health and safety, while encouraging economic activity, community character, livability, and equity for people of all ages, abilities, and socioeconomic backgrounds, including children, families, aging populations, and individuals with disabilities. In creating Complete Streets, the Town will prioritize vulnerable users and those residing in federally designated environmental justice areas.

6. Design Standards

The Town of Rotterdam Roadway Design Standards for new construction has been used as the basis for design for new private development projects that involve roadway construction. The roadway design standards is approximately 20 years old and do not in general include construction of infrastructure that accommodates all modes of transportation and should be updated in the near future. As part of future development in the Town, the most recent transportation engineering design standards that include but not limited to the following documents will need to be considered during project development:

- New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) Highway Design Manual.
- NYSDOT Design Guidance for Bicycle Facilities.
- NYSDOT Complete Street Standards.
- Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach.
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).
- Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guideline (PROWAG).
- American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO), A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets.
- AASHTO Guide for the Planning, Designing and Operating Pedestrian Facilities.
- AASHTO Guide for the Planning of Bicycle Facilities.

- Public Right of Way Accessibility Guidelines.
- American Disabilities Act Standards for Accessible Design.
- Capital Region Transportation Council Complete Streets Design Guide.

Town, County, State, and private development projects shall follow the design manuals, standards, and guidelines stated above, as applicable to provide a more complete transportation system on all projects.

One important element that should also be considered for design and implementation is use of green infrastructure such as bioswales, planters, rain gardens, and street trees which can be located within traffic-calming elements like islands, curb extensions, and wider sidewalks. Vegetation in green infrastructure can improve the quality of life of people who live in urban areas. Storm events can lead to undesirable discharge of stormwater runoff that is untreated into waterbodies, which should be avoided on any type of infrastructure project. Watersheds need to be protected by better management of stormwater for new and redevelopment projects.

This section of the Complete Streets Policy shall be updated a minimum of every three years by the Town to ensure that the listing of design standards and guidelines are current.

7. Complete Streets Review Checklist

To provide the Town, public and private entities with a formalized method to plan, design and implement Complete Streets design guidelines, a checklist has been developed by the Town to assist in incorporating Complete Streets design elements on new and redevelopment projects, and is provided in Appendix A of this document.

There are instances where it may not be feasible or practicable to construct multimodal transportation facilities. These instances may include:

- A. The underlying terrain is too steep, or grade separation is too great to achieve compliance with current design standards.
- B. The right of way is not available to constructing the facilities.
- C. Underground structures cannot be moved or adjusted to properly construct the facilities.
- D. Adjacent developed facilities are not able to achieve the maximum allowable running slope of sidewalk near roads with steep grades.
- E. Locations where stormwater collection and treatment cannot be accommodated due to limited space.
- F. Locations where there is inadequate space to construct the facilities.
- G. Projects that are considered minor maintenance activities such as pavement repairs, resurfacing, and recycling of pavement of existing road surfaces.
- H. Emergency repair projects.

8. Safety

During development, each project is to consider traffic calming features that could reduce vehicular speeds and provide a safer environment for all transportation users. One important consideration is having adequate sight distance at intersections and linear sight lines along the roadways. Items that should be discouraged along a

roadway include high fences, trees, walls, bushes, or shrubberies that obstruct the view of oncoming traffic. Non-automotive modes of transportation including bicycling, walking, and public transportation shall be included in transportation planning of projects and making sure that a safe environment is provided for these modes of transportation.

9. Implementation

The Town will apply The Policy on all projects that involve transportation facilities. This includes projects involving new construction, reconstruction, retrofits, rehabilitation, or changes in the allocation of pavement space on an existing roadway, as well as those that involve new privately built roads and easements intended for public use. Complete Streets elements may be achieved through single projects or incrementally through a series of smaller improvements over time. The design of new, rehabilitated, or reconstructed facilities should anticipate likely demand for bicycling, walking, transit, and motorist use and should not preclude the provision of future improvements.

The Policy is intended to serve as a usable tool for implementation of Complete Streets features for new construction and rehabilitation of existing transportation facilities that are funded by public and private entities. The design guidelines previously stated are intended to provide uniform design of various transportation facilities for future consideration and construction for incorporating Complete Streets elements. For public projects, The Complete Streets review process includes:

- Step 1: Project Planning – define project goals and objectives and how Complete Streets elements can be incorporated into the design.
- Step 2: Complete Streets Checklist – Complete the checklist to include identifying which elements can be considered for implementation. Consider potential impacts to the environment by performing an initial environmental screening of the project. In addition, consideration should be given to any potential right of way impacts.
- Step3: Preliminary Design – Prepare preliminary design plans to include the complete street design elements previously identified for possible inclusion to the project. The preliminary design shall follow the design guidelines and all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. If a project is using federal and/or state funding, all requirements established by the funding agencies shall be followed.
- Step 4: Environmental Review and Compliance – All state and local requirements, including the State Environmental Quality Review regulations shall be followed to include all supporting documentation during the environmental review. All permits and/or approvals will be obtained prior to the start of construction.
- Step 5: Coordination – The Town will coordinate with all involved agencies and the public and obtain their input throughout the design process.
- Step 6: Final Design and Construction: Prepare final design plans, specifications and construction bid documents, obtain formal construction bids, and select the lowest qualified contractor to perform the work. Inspectors will be assigned to the project to confirm that construction complies with the plans and specifications.

For privately sponsored projects, the town staff or a representative of the town is to review the plans and supporting documents and include utilizing the complete streets checklist.

10. Coordination

The Town of Rotterdam looks forward to working with public and private entities to ensure that projects incorporate safe and effective Complete Streets design elements. As part of the coordination, the town will encourage all entities to utilize the design criteria stated herein on all projects. Justification needs to be provided as to why the Complete Streets design features cannot be included or implemented as part of the project. The Town will review the justification and formal approval must be granted before complete streets elements are not implemented.

During project development, the Town will promote interdepartmental coordination between public health, planning, engineering, public works, the Town Board, and Supervisors office to ensure consistent application of this policy and encourage the most responsible and efficient use of resources for activities within the public right-of-way.