



TOWN OF GROTON COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

Adopted August 26, 2022

Complete Streets are streets designed and operated to enable safe use and support mobility for all users. Those include people of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they are travelling as drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transportation riders. The concept of Complete Streets encompasses many approaches to planning, designing, and operating roadways and rights of way with all users in mind to make the transportation network safer and more efficient. Complete Street policies are set at the state, regional, and local levels and supported by roadway design guidelines.

Complete Streets approaches vary based on community context. They may address a wide range of elements, such as sidewalks, bicycle lanes, bus lanes, public transportation stops, crossing opportunities, median islands, accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions, modified vehicle travel lanes, streetscape, and landscape treatments. They can promote walking and bicycling by providing safer places to achieve physical activity through transportation. (Source: US DOT)

I. VISION, GOALS & PRINCIPLES

VISION

To improve the road rights-of-way of the Town of Groton, making them safer and more accessible for people of all ages, race, ethnicity, income, and physical ability, as well as all modes of transportation including pedestrians, people with mobility challenges, bicyclists, motorists, commercial vehicles, and emergency vehicles.

GOALS

1. New construction projects and reconstruction/retrofit projects shall incorporate wherever possible and warranted, the needs of all modes of transportation and all users of the road network. Focus on specific roadways and districts with existing demand and/or future potential for increased biking and walking. Projects such as road reconstruction, intersection improvements, and routes to schools and parks represent significant opportunities for Complete Streets improvements.
2. On an as-needed basis, incorporate Complete Street improvements in routine repairs and roadway maintenance. This may include crosswalk repainting, signage, lighting, sidewalk, and curb ramp repair. These minor activities may be addressed by staff review and not subject to Complete Streets Committee review.
3. Promote the benefits of Complete Streets to the public, municipal staff, commissions, committees, elected officials, and representatives from political subdivisions in Groton.
4. Establish a standing Complete Streets Advisory group/committee composed of community stakeholders with municipal staff support.

5. Establish a consistent and reliable chain of communication with the Connecticut Department of Transportation (CTDOT) state and District 2. Inform CTDOT of the Town's commitment to Complete Streets and encourage CTDOT to apply Complete Streets improvements on state rights-of-way within the Town.

PRINCIPLES

Application of Complete Streets policy is not a one size fits all process. Some streets are more adaptable to change than others. The following principles shall guide the planning and implementation of all Complete Street improvements:

1. All Users and All Modes: All users and all modes of transport should benefit from Complete Streets improvements wherever possible.
2. All Projects and Phases: All transportation projects shall consider Complete Streets improvements – from new construction to maintenance. It is anticipated that most Complete Streets improvements will be planned and completed concurrently with other scheduled roadway projects, but some Complete Streets improvements may be implemented independently. All road/sidewalk Capital Improvement Projects (CIP), whether funded by capital projects, grants, or other revenue sources shall conform to the Policy. Priority or special consideration shall be given to locations near schools, parks, along busy corridors as may be further defined by the Groton Community Connectivity Study.
3. Network Connectivity: Complete Streets policy should encourage a network understanding/approach to the town's transportation system.
4. State Law: Public Act 09-154 states: "From funds received by the department or any municipality for the construction, restoration, rehabilitation or relocation of highways, roads or streets, a reasonable amount shall be expended to provide facilities for all users, including, but not limited to, bikeways and sidewalks with appropriate curb cuts and ramps."
5. Jurisdiction: This policy applies to all Town of Groton-owned streets and lands within the public right-of-way (ROW). All Complete Streets improvements must be coordinated between relevant Town departments. Projects that require board or commission approval, which propose improvements within the public right of way, shall also adhere to this policy. Owners of private roads, and those owned by political subdivisions within the Town, are highly encouraged to adhere to this policy. This policy does not apply to the City of Groton; however, coordination with the City, especially where Town/City Right-of-Ways or trails converge, is highly desirable and will be mutually beneficial.
6. Design: Standards and guidelines shall refer to latest editions of guidance documents published by American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), American Planning Association (APA), National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), and the U.S. Access Board.
7. Context Sensitivity: Land use context and flexibility shall be considered relative to potential Complete Streets improvements. The overall goal of this approach is to preserve and enhance scenic, aesthetic, historical and environmental resources while improving or maintaining safety,

mobility, and infrastructure conditions. Biking and walking improvements have been shown to enhance property values and stimulate positive economic development.

8. Exceptions: The Town of Groton commits to applying Complete Streets principles at the outset of all transportation and roadway improvement projects. Exceptions may be made when geographic, right-of-way, funding, or other reasonable constraints render Complete Streets improvements unworkable or unnecessary. Exceptions shall be made according to clear criteria and authorization stipulated within this policy under Section VI.
9. Implementation: Successful implementation of the Complete Streets Policy depends upon close collaboration across the Town's various commissions, committees, and staff. Also essential is early and often public outreach regarding proposed Complete Streets improvements.

II. USERS AND MODES

The Groton transportation system shall be designed and operated in ways that improve the safety, comfort and convenience of pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit users, assistive mobility device users, motorists, emergency management services, freight providers, and users of other common modes of transportation.

When there are conflicting needs among users and modes, the following prioritization will apply:

1. Safety is the highest priority, followed by mobility.
2. Among modes, pedestrian needs shall receive priority, followed by the next most vulnerable user in each case.
3. Strive for balance among all modes involved in each case. It is recognized that all modes cannot receive state of the art accommodation within every right-of-way, but the overall goal is that all users of varying ability can safely and conveniently use the transportation network within a variety of routes and connections.

III. PROCEDURES

The Town of Groton commits to incorporating Complete Streets principles at the outset of all transportation improvement projects. Each project shall be approached as an opportunity to improve the safety and accessibility of the street/ROW for all users. The Town shall approach all projects as an opportunity to create safer and more accessible streets for all users. Projects may include, but not be limited to, subdivisions, new development, new construction, and privately funded projects required by Town and State roadway, zoning, and land use requirements.

Improvements through planning, programming, design, and ROW acquisition shall be considered. Examples of such projects may be specific such as sidewalks and crosswalks, or general such as traffic calming, enhanced traffic enforcement, and 'Road Diets' (e.g., reducing a 4-lane road to two travel lanes, a central turn lane if needed, and bike lanes). Priority or special consideration shall be given to locations/improvements as may be identified in the Community Connectivity Study.

Maintenance activities alone are not subject to Complete Streets Committee review, nor should they prompt Complete Streets modification except those modifications that may be necessary to satisfy legal mandates such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, or to correct a reported hazard. Provisions for safe access or detours shall be made for pedestrians and bicyclists during maintenance activities.

IV. JURISDICTION & NETWORK CONNECTIVITY

This Policy shall apply to all Town owned streets and land within public ROWs. Owners of privately owned streets such as Groton Long Point and Mumford Cove shall also be encouraged to adhere to the policy.

Additionally, the State of Connecticut controls several principal transportation corridors that traverse the town including Routes, 1, 12, 117, 215, 184, 614, 27, and 649. The Town shall encourage CTDOT to plan and implement Complete Streets improvements within these ROWs. Wherever possible, the Town's Complete Street policy shall be considered, especially where a state ROW provides Complete Streets network connectivity identified in the Town's Community Connectivity Study and Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD). A copy of this policy shall be transmitted to CTDOT Complete Streets Standing Committee, and CTDOT Region 2.

Public and private utility companies operate within Town and State ROWs. Their planning, construction, and major maintenance can create both opportunities and barriers to Complete Streets improvements. The Town shall attempt to coordinate with the utility companies to ensure that utility projects and Complete Streets improvements are compatible wherever possible. Public and private utilities should be encouraged to coordinate with the Town.

The Groton School District encourages students to walk to school and has established standards that stipulate the distance a student can be expected to walk if sidewalks and safe crossings are provided. The Town shall coordinate when opportunities arise for Complete Streets improvements to provide safe routes to schools including sidewalks, road crossings, and multi-use routes that encourage walking and bicycling to school. Where schools occur adjacent to State routes, coordination with CTDOT is encouraged.

The Town shall also coordinate Complete Streets planning and construction with Southeast Area Transit (SEAT), Southeast CT Council of Governments (SECCOG), and adjacent municipalities to facilitate network connectivity and effective application of resources.

NETWORK CONNECTIVITY

The Town's Community Connectivity Study shall identify gaps in the sidewalk and trail network and opportunities for new connections that upon completion will improve connectivity and facilitate completion of a Complete Streets network. Ideally there should be non-motorized pathways (sidewalks, bike lanes and trails) to get to key areas in Groton including neighborhoods, parks, commercial/mixed use areas, and schools.

V. DESIGN GUIDANCE & PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

Standards:

All Complete Streets improvements within public ROWs shall conform to the following standards. Of the following list, AASHTO and MUTCD are considered the definitive references for changes within road ROW's. Because Complete Streets design is an evolving field, the latest edition of these standards shall be referenced for design guidance:

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO)

- A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets
- Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities
- Guide for the Planning, Design and Operations of Pedestrian Facilities
- (Latest edition of all above)

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

- Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD – latest edition)
- PEDSAFE: Pedestrian Safety Guide and Countermeasures Selection System

Town of Groton Road and Drainage standards

Connecticut DOT Highway Design Manual (latest edition)

Additional Guidelines and Best Practice:

American Planning Association (APA)

- Complete Streets: Best Policy and Implementation Practices
- U.S. Traffic Calming Manual

Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE)

- Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach

National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)

- Urban Bikeway Design Guide
- Urban Street Design Guide

U.S. Access Board

- ADA and ABA Accessibility Guidelines for the Public Rights-of-Way
- Public Rights-of-Way Access Advisory Committee (PROWAAC)

VI. INCLUSION & EXCEPTIONS

The Town of Groton commits to applying Complete Streets principles at the outset of all transportation improvement projects. Each project shall be approached as an opportunity to improve the safety and accessibility of the street/right of way for all users in all areas of the town where improvements are warranted.

Exceptions shall be made if the following criteria render Complete Streets improvements unworkable:

1. Where specific users are prohibited by law from using the ROW (i.e., pedestrians and bicyclists within a limited access highway).
2. Cost is disproportionate to the current need or projected future need for Complete Streets improvements, or funding has been removed or unavailable for a proposed road improvement project.
3. There is an absence of current and future need (i.e., a rural road that carries low Average Daily Traffic (ADT) and is remote from neighborhoods, parks, schools, or points of interest).
4. Emergency repairs within Town ROWs (pre-existing Complete Streets elements impacted by these repairs must be restored to their original condition).

Protocol - Exceptions shall be granted according to the following:

Decisions regarding exceptions shall be decided by the Town Manager and Chief of Police (Local Traffic Authority) in consultation with Directors of Public Works and Planning, a designated Complete Streets Advisory group/committee member (Planning Commissioner or stakeholder) and considering public input. A determination of exception will conform to one or more of the four allowable exceptions listed above.

VII. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

REPORTING TO TOWN COUNCIL

The application of Complete Streets will be a process that requires regular evaluation to determine progress and effectiveness. Tracking of improvements will provide valuable data for future grant applications and public relations. To facilitate that regular evaluation, the Director of Public Works shall provide a written report to the Town Council on an annual basis on the progress and effectiveness of the Complete Streets policy, and any exceptions granted from the Complete Streets policy.

Within the Annual Report to the Town Council, the performance measures that will be evaluated include, but are not limited, to the following:

1. Miles of bicycle lanes, routes, or trails built, characterized by width and type
2. Number of bicycle parking facilities installed
3. Number of traffic calming facilities built or improved
4. Number of traffic control signs/signals installed or improved
5. Lineal feet of sidewalks repaired and replaced
6. Lineal feet of new sidewalks built
7. Number of crosswalks built or improved
8. Number of ADA accommodations built or improved (curb ramps, etc)
9. Number of transit accessibility improvements built or improved
10. Number of street trees planted and/or removed
11. Number of exceptions requested, and number approved
12. User data - bicycle, pedestrian, transit, and traffic counts
13. Bicycle and pedestrian accident data
14. Total dollar amount spent on Complete Streets Improvements

VIII. COMPLETE STREETS ADVISORY GROUP/COMMITTEE

The Groton Town Council shall form a Complete Streets Advisory Group/Committee for technical review of projects with membership from the stakeholders and with staff support from key officials whose responsibilities are reasonably related to Complete Street interests. This standing committee shall be responsible for providing guidance for the implementation of Complete Streets throughout the community. The purpose of the Complete Streets Advisory Committee Group is to:

1. Provide input on public projects to further the Town of Groton Complete Streets policy and make recommendations on transportation projects as related to pedestrian and bicycle issues in the Town.
2. Advise the Town Manager, Public Works, Police, Parks and Recreation, and Planning & Development departments regarding pedestrian and bicycle issues.
3. Review and make recommendations on short and long-range transportation plans as related to pedestrian and bicycle issues.
4. Review and recommend transportation project prioritization and funding as related to pedestrian and bicycle issues.
5. Assist in the development and implementation of the Town of Groton Community Connectivity Study and monitor and promote its implementation.
6. Assist and advise the Groton Planning & Zoning commission with respect to pedestrian and bicycle facilities and parking.
7. Assist in the implementation of the Transportation component of the Plan of Conservation and Development.
8. Coordinate with adjacent municipal, and other regional public entities such as the Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments to promote creation of networked pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

END