

Brookline Complete Streets Policy Development Overview

draft March 23, 2015

What are Complete Streets?

In January, 2015, Brookline's Board of Selectmen formed the town's Complete Streets Study Committee, charging it with formulating a Complete Streets policy. Complete Streets policies consider the needs of the entire populace, with emphasis on walking, bicycling, intermodal transit, traffic calming, and walkable urban economic development.

Why does Brookline need Complete Streets?

People traveling by foot, bike, and motor vehicle, whether for private, public, or commercial purposes, share our public roads and sidewalks. Increased walking, bicycling, and public transit use offers the potential for greater safety, happiness and public health, cleaner air, reduced traffic congestion, more livable neighborhoods, and reduced carbon emissions and other forms of pollution.

Adopting a Complete Streets policy will enable Brookline to establish guidelines for community and transportation development and operations that align with contemporary planning standards and further increase Brookline's desirability as a place to live, work and play.

Where we are now?

Brookline is known for its walkability. Much of the town is transit-rich, and many trips begin and end with a walk. A March, 2015, report gave Coolidge Corner a Gold in a national ranking of Walkable Urban Places. People are drawn to Brookline's vibrant street life, with its dense downtown and walkable streets. Our town's compactness and prime location make walking and bicycling practical transportation choices for in-town shopping and errands, children getting to and from school, and, along with transit, for commuting to and from Boston, Cambridge and other nearby communities. While our streets facilitate independence for people of all ages, they could serve us much better. Most notably, our streets and sidewalks are not equally safe for all users.

Addressing an urgent need

The committee will formulate Brookline's Complete Streets Policy consistent with current guidance of the National Complete Streets Coalition, which launched the United States Complete Streets initiative in 2004. It will draw from policies adopted successfully around Massachusetts and the U.S. The policy will satisfy Chapter 90I, Section 1(c)(ii) of Massachusetts General Laws, required for certification under the state's Complete Streets program and making the town eligible for state Complete Streets funding, and address specific concerns identified in the committee's charter. The policy will be developed through an inclusive public process incorporating input from a wide range of stakeholders.

The policy will clearly identify core policy commitments. It will cover applicable street users and modes, scope of projects addressed, pedestrian and bicycle networks, and explicit policy exceptions. It will identify best practice elements, transport network connectivity, breadth of agencies and facilities covered, sources of design guidance, importance of neighborhood context and implementation of performance measures. Finally, it will identify implementation responsibilities and accountability.

As identified in the committee's charter, the policy will be consistent with the objectives for development of residential and commercial areas identified in Brookline's comprehensive plan. The policy will also be consistent with Brookline's Open Space Plan, including maintenance of street trees that contribute to its urban forest, encouraging development of mini-parks along public rights of way, and improving access to town parks. The policy will also be consistent with town policies to advance the participation of people of all ages and abilities in community life.

Vision

In Brookline, everyone who uses our streets matters, including those who walk, use a wheelchair, bicycle, or use public transit or motor vehicles, for private, public or commercial purposes. The town will encourage means of transportation that minimize pollution and use public space efficiently in accordance with its compact structure, its public space constraints, and the following core strengths and values, which shall be maintained and enhanced: convenient movement, safe accessibility, and opportunities for participation in a full set of community activities for people of all ages and abilities:

- convenient and safe access to schools, public places, and commercial establishments for people using all forms of transportation,
- beautiful public spaces that are pleasant to move about, be in, and encourage social engagement,
- economic vitality of local businesses,
- transportation choices that reduce carbon emissions and other adverse environmental impacts,
- active, healthy lifestyles