

SCENARIO 4: COMPLETE STREETS

Human Need: For the past 50 years or more, the primary focus of most transportation systems in the Greater Yellowstone region has been uniquely focused on accommodating the private motor vehicle. It was during this half century that rail access for National Park visits was lost, and strip malls into gateway communities have sprung up. Wider roads with access to vast parking lots have been hallmarks of this approach to mobility. Often new town streets have been constructed lacking accessible sidewalks, without space reserved for transit stops, and major land developments have failed to set aside pathway and greenway corridors. At the same time, regional land use decisions have favored segregation of civic and commercial uses from residential uses, and approved hundreds of low-density neighborhoods scattered miles from the daily needs of their residents.

Description of Service: A "Complete Street" is safe, comfortable, and convenient for travel by automobile, foot, bicycle, and transit. We know how to build good streets in America, and fortunately there are some good examples in the Greater Yellowstone – they are the streets where commerce thrives and tourists take photos to bring home. A Complete Streets approach to community building starts with a progressive policy that ensures that the entire right of way is planned, designed, and operated to provide safe access for all users.

Complete Streets policies provide for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, motorists, and travelers of all ages and abilities. Such policies will create a complete network of roads that serve all users, and serve to *change the transportation planning practice* by integrating the needs of all road users into every project and plan. For example, a Complete Streets Policy changes intersection design so that pedestrians can safely cross the street; changes road reconstruction so that rural bicycling can be safely included, and changes transit so that transit stops are routinely considered along potential transit corridors.

Everybody benefits from Complete Streets. Studies show 55% of Americans would rather drive less and walk more, and that transit is now growing faster than driving. And consider that one-third of Americans don't drive – they are too young, too old (21% of Americans over 65 do not drive), or some simply may not own a car. Safety benefits are substantial: sidewalks reduce pedestrian crash rates by 88%, and better intersections can reduce pedestrian risk by 28%. Complete Streets improve mobility for disabled people and reduce the need for paratransit.

Health benefits of Complete Streets will be significant, since 60% of adults are at risk for diseases associated with inactivity, like obesity, diabetes and other chronic diseases. Residents are more likely to walk in a neighborhood with sidewalks, and towns with more bike lanes have higher bike commuting levels. The region's priceless natural environment benefits as well – less need to widen roads, and less carbon, air, and noise pollution is generated if more people walk, bike, and bus. This reduces traffic congestion in turn. Complete Streets create healthy economic activity – well-designed multi-modal streets enhance community life, increase home values and help support tourism economies.

Actions:

- Establish a Complete Streets Policy in each town, county, state, and federal agency jurisdiction in the Greater Yellowstone. These can be legislative, ordinance, internal department policies, comprehensive plans, or resolutions by political bodies. Ready examples are available from many communities in America that have adopted Complete Streets Policies, and Congress is considering legislation to include Complete Streets in the new Federal Transportation Act.
- Review and revise the design manuals so they consider all the needs, not just motor vehicles.
- Recognize there are many types of Complete Streets, town streets and rural road needs may vary; commercial areas will require consideration that business needs are served.
- Improve transportation decision-making; consider what the street should do, does it benefit all modes equitably, does it benefit the community, does it reduce crashes, does it reduce travel demand? If so, it's a good thing!
- Implementation is critical. An effective policy should prompt these changes: Retrain planners and engineers; Restructure procedures; Rewrite design manuals; Retool measures to track outcomes.
- Seek greater funding support from transportation and government agencies to invest in Complete Streets.