Making Cents of Complete Streets: Low-Cost, High-Impact Experiences from Idaho

Rocky Mountain Land Use Institute

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Overview

• Smart Growth
• Complete Streets Policies
• Creating Complete Streets Locally
• Idaho’s Statewide Bicycle Plan
• Rural is Different
• Questions
Smart Growth

Smart growth means building urban, suburban and rural communities with housing and transportation choices near jobs, shops and schools.

These strategies support thriving local economies and protect the environment.
What I hear about smart growth

Wengen, Switzerland
Smart growth is ugly.

Riomaggiore, Italy
We have no history with it.
Nobody would want to live there.
It just doesn’t work here.
Shut up and drive!
The way we design and build our communities has enormous consequences.
Complete Streets

Wilkinsburg, PA
We know how to build right
We know how to build right
Yet too many roads still turn out like this:
or this:
or this:
The Solution: Complete Streets Policies
Complete Streets policies

A Complete Streets policy ensures that the entire right of way is planned, designed, operated and maintained to provide safe access for all users.
Many Types: Rural to Urban
Policy adoption accelerates

Number of Complete Streets policies nationwide, 2005–2013
Policies adopted in all types of communities
State Complete Streets policies

www.completestreets.org/atlas
Streets Can Benefit Communities

- Improve safety
- Provide choices
- Better health
- Support economic dev.

- Reduce costs
- Manage congestion
- Smarter growth
- Conserve resources
Complete Streets means:

- A policy approach
- A change to the everyday decision-making processes and systems
- Long-term changes to built environment
Complete Streets doesn’t mean:

• One ‘special’ street project
• A design prescription
• A mandate for immediate retrofit
• A silver bullet; other issues must be addressed:
  – Land use (proximity, mixed-use)
  – Environmental concerns
  – Transportation Demand Management
What about funding?

• Complete streets is about using existing resources differently
• While retrofit funding is important, it is not necessary to get started
• Additional funding is not needed
Think Ahead, Think Smart

- Complete Streets can save money
- Narrower travel lanes require less land, less pavement
- Provide more options = reduce need for widening some intersections
- Do it right the first time, not when forced to later – at a higher price

“If we think we don’t have the time and money to do it right, what makes you think we have the time and money to do it over?”

– Dr. Mark Nicholson
Complete Streets Resources

- Fact sheets, photos, brochures
- Policy tracking & examples
- Information on technical assistance & workshops
- Complete Streets blog and monthly newsletter
- Links to research & publications
- Complete Streets Best Practices
Rural/small town communities are different
The state we live in
Rural demographics

Projected Montana Pop. by Age Groupings

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2005

Graph courtesy of Dr. Larry Swanson, O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West, U. of Montana
Urban levels of traffic
Lack of transportation choice
Lack of housing for workers
Lack of housing for families
Infrastructure capacity
Environmental issues
Economic viability of downtowns
Workforce development
A desire for a vibrant cultural community
A need for lifelong learning and civic involvement
Remember why you live here…
Shaping the future you want
We have the freedom to make informed, humane, and intelligent choices about the kind of world we want to leave for our children and grandchildren. We also have the freedom to make uninformed, selfish, and stupid choices. Which will it be?
- Greg Pahl
Thank you!

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