



## America Walks' Position Statement:

### **COMPLETE STREETS**

Creating complete streets for pedestrians requires that we design streets that promote pedestrian use by prioritizing safety and access to destinations and encourage the development of a pleasant environment.

For most of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, road design was predicated on the needs of motorist, with the result that many American cities are now crisscrossed by wide, high-speed arterials and freeways and suburban communities feature road networks that lack sidewalks, crosswalks and other pedestrian infrastructure.

The lack of safe and welcoming places to walk has had a two-fold and self-reinforcing effect: 1) fewer Americans walk; and 2) those that do walk are at great risk of being injured or even killed.

The percentage of commuters walking to work (the most consistent measure of walking rates) has declined from 5.6% in 1980, to just 2.5% in 2005 – a drop of more than 55%. Pedestrian fatalities have declined as well, from 8,070 in 1980, to 4,881 in 2005. But the drop in fatalities (39.5%) has not kept pace with the decline in walking rates. The risk of being killed or injured as a pedestrian, per mile walked, has increased over time.

### **America Walks' Position on Complete Streets:**

America Walks fully endorses the concept of complete streets as a cornerstone of efforts to improve pedestrian safety and enhance the walking environment.

### **Objectives:**

- Make complete streets the underlying principle of transportation engineering and planning in communities across the country.

### **To meet these objectives, America Walks will:**

- Work with existing groups such as the Complete Streets Coalition to promote complete streets.

### **What You Can Do Locally:**

- Join the Complete Streets Coalition.
- Educate your local elected officials about complete streets.

“Complete Streets” is a response to the lack of infrastructure for pedestrians and other non-motorists. The idea is that complete streets are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and bus riders of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a complete street.

While there is no set formula for a complete street, it will typically have some or all of the following elements:

- Sidewalks
- Bike lanes
- Wide shoulders
- Plenty of crosswalks
- Refuge medians
- Bus pullouts
- Special bus lanes
- Raised crosswalks
- Audible pedestrian signals
- Sidewalk bulb-outs

Incorporating bike lanes, wide shoulders, bus pullouts and/or special bus lanes might widen streets. The result could be a street that, while having infrastructure to accommodate more modes, is less safe for pedestrians and therefore not complete. Planners must be careful not to sacrifice pedestrian safety while trying to complete the street.

A growing movement led by the Complete Streets Coalition is taking hold across the country. The City of Chicago recently adopted a complete streets policy, and Sacramento, California has reaffirmed a 2004 agreement to complete the streets. Meanwhile, more than 70 percent of voters in Honolulu, Hawaii supported a ballot measure asking the city’s transportation department to make pedestrians and cyclists a priority in transportation planning.

Rehabilitating decades of myopic, car-centric transportation planning to complete the streets will take the support of all levels of government – national, state, regional, county and local – and the involvement of multiple disciplines and a range of stakeholders.

For more information, visit [www.americawalks.org](http://www.americawalks.org).