

**TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH ENDORSING THE  
ADOPTION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPLETE STREETS POLICIES  
BY MUNICIPALITIES IN PIERCE COUNTY**

**WHEREAS** “Complete Streets” are defined as roadways that enable safe and convenient access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motor vehicle drivers of all ages and abilities; and

**WHEREAS** Complete Streets policies are implemented when transportation agencies routinely design, construct, operate, and maintain the transportation network to improve travel conditions for bicyclists, pedestrians, transit and freight in a manner consistent with, and supportive of, the surrounding community; and

**WHEREAS** transportation improvements that are recognized as contributing to Complete Streets include: narrow vehicular travel lanes, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, wide shoulders, raised medians, raised crosswalks, audible pedestrian signals, sidewalk bulb-outs, street and sidewalk lighting, sidewalk curb cuts in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, street furniture, transit pullouts, transit lanes, street trees and landscaping; and

**WHEREAS** Complete Streets may be achieved through single projects or incrementally through a series of smaller improvements or maintenance activities over time; and

**WHEREAS**, streets constitute a large portion of public space and should be corridors for all modes of transportation, including pedestrians, bicycles, and transit; and

**WHEREAS**, streets that support and invite multiple uses, including safe, active, and ample space for pedestrians, bicycles, and transit, are more conducive to the public life and efficient movement of people than streets designed primarily to move automobiles; and

**WHEREAS** the American Public Health Association, National Association of City and County Health Officials, Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, and the Institute of Medicine, have formally recognized linkages between the built environment and human health and call on public health officials to engage in local and regional land use and transportation planning and policy making processes; and

**WHEREAS** the United States Congress, National Association of Local Boards of Health, and the Washington Climate Advisory Team specifically recommend Complete Street policies as a strategy to increase pedestrian and bicycle travel modes and to reduce the negative impacts associated with climate change; and

**WHEREAS** other jurisdictions and agencies nationwide have adopted Complete Streets legislation including the United States Department of Transportation, numerous state transportation agencies, and cities including San Francisco, Sacramento, San Diego, Boulder, Chicago, Seattle, Kirkland, Redmond and Portland; and

**WHEREAS** a 2007 Washington State Department of Transportation survey found that a lack of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, such as sidewalks and bicycle lanes, is a primary reason why Washington residents do not walk or bicycle more frequently; and

**WHEREAS** many of the existing roadways where Pierce County residents walk and bicycle are incomplete and unsafe. These streets lack sidewalks or crosswalks, have lanes too narrow to share with bicyclists, and make no accommodation for transit riders or for people with disabilities; and

**WHEREAS** recent trends indicate that Pierce County will experience increased traffic congestion and travel times as the population increases and the number of commuters to employment centers within the County increases; and

**WHEREAS** there are practical limits to the expansion of roadways in order to satisfy travel demands, and promoting pedestrian, bicycle and transit travel reduce negative environmental impacts, promote healthy living and are less costly to the commuter; and

**WHEREAS** decisions about transportation systems may contribute to:

**1. Physical inactivity and obesity:**

- Each additional hour spent driving is associated with a 6% increase in the likelihood of obesity, while each additional kilometer walked is associated with a 5% reduction in this likelihood.
- Transit users and people with safe places to walk within 10 minutes of their homes are more likely to meet the Surgeon General’s recommendations for minimum daily exercise.
- The Task Force on Community Preventive Services strongly recommends creating or improving access to places such as sidewalks and trails and improving street lighting, installing traffic calming measures (e.g., speed humps, traffic circles), improving safety of street crossings, and enhancing street landscaping as effective strategies to increase physical activity.

**2. Unintentional injury:**

- Motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death among people between the ages of one and twenty-four and increases in the number of vehicle miles traveled and vehicle hours traveled increase the risk of injury or death;
- Roadways designed predominately for automobiles with multiple lanes, high speeds, lack of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, long distances between intersections or crosswalks, and many large commercial establishments, pose an increased risk of injury or death for pedestrians and cyclists

**3. Decreased air quality:**

- Transportation contributes 45% of all green house gas emissions in Washington State;
- Asthma and other respiratory conditions may be triggered or exacerbated by poor air quality;

**4. Decreased water quality:**

- Runoff of oil and gasoline pollutes waterways, and is exacerbated when the amount of impervious surface, such as roadways and large parking lots, is increased.

5. **Social inequities:**

- Almost one-third of Americans do not drive. Streets that do not accommodate alternative transportation options disproportionately impact vulnerable populations such as children, low-income, elderly, and disabled residents, resulting in reduced access to jobs and needed services.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Tacoma-Pierce County Board of Health in order to ensure the promotion of the health of our communities, urges decision makers in all Pierce County municipalities to adopt and implement Complete Streets policies and practices that:

- Specify that ‘all users’ includes pedestrians, bicyclists, transit vehicles and users, and motorists, of all ages and abilities;
- Create a comprehensive, integrated, connected transportation network;
- Address all roads within its jurisdiction;
- Apply policies to both new and retrofit projects, including planning, design, maintenance, and operation, for the entire right of way;
- Make any exceptions for the exclusion of pedestrian and bicycle facilities specific, set a clear procedure that requires high-level approval of exceptions, and provide documented supporting data that indicates the basis for the decision;
- Direct the use of the latest and best design standards;
- Recognize the need for flexibility and direct that Complete Streets solutions fit in with context of the community; and
- Establish performance standards with measurable outcomes.