Cleveland Heights Transportation Advisory Committee Recommendation for Complete Streets

Introduction

The Cleveland Heights Transportation Advisory Committee recommends to the City Council of the City of Cleveland Heights that it adopt Complete Streets legislation. The City could realize the many benefits of complete streets (see below) by writing a strong policy that provides for a balanced transportation system while promoting equitably the needs of pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, seniors, children, the disabled, businesses and institutions - including delivery vehicles - as well as motorists.

Background

The Cleveland Heights City Council formed the Transportation Advisory Committee in 2014 and showed its enthusiasm by including City staff members including the Planning Director, Police Chief, Service Director and Development Officer to partner with the Committee in its deliberation. Further, Council appointed one of its members, Councilwoman Mary Dunbar, liaison to the Committee. The Committee has activated a conversation about making Cleveland Heights a leader in offering equitable, low-carbon transportation options. The goal of the TAC is to help the city find optimal solutions that will enhance its inherent density and mixed-use development and support community goals such as promoting sustainability and making the roadway more attractive and safer for all modes of transportation. In addition, an economic development component is inherent in these goals. The TAC has met throughout the year to discuss, for example, the policies, plans and practices that will lead to a more bike and transit friendly environment and to bolster walking as a daily option.

Early on, the TAC met with individual staff members from Cuyahoga County Planning Department regarding its Complete Streets Toolkit. The TAC heard a presentation about the County’s plan to adopt the toolkit and share it with municipalities. The TAC appreciates the County’s work in this regard.

Complete Streets legislation and policy has been adopted in more than 600 jurisdictions across the United States, including small to mid-size suburbs, as of 2014. Complete Streets are defined this way by the National Complete Streets Coalition:
Complete Streets policies formalize a community's intent to plan, design, operate, and maintain streets so they are safe for all users of all ages and abilities. Policies direct decision-makers to consistently fund, plan for, design, and construct community streets to accommodate all anticipated users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, public transportation users, motorists, and freight vehicles.

Evidence that complete streets are meeting a broad range of community goals -- from reducing accidents to creating a stronger sense of place -- can be found in the Coalition's annual Complete Streets report card and in recent studies.* In general, the benefits from complete streets include the following:

**Benefits of Cleveland Heights adopting Complete Streets**

The TAC firmly holds that Cleveland Heights will realize multiple benefits in adopting Complete Streets, including:

- **Enhance access to essential services for all populations**, including those who don’t own a motor vehicle, people with limited mobility and residents who are car free by choice.
- **Transportation options strengthen and upgrade commercial districts** to serve as regional draws and enhance surrounding residential areas.
- **Support of a vibrant community** by encouraging pedestrian and bike activity between neighborhoods, schools, and the city’s commercial districts.
- **Promotion of active lifestyle** choices of residents, and thus, supports better health.
- **Reduce congestion** caused by car trips (an estimated 40% of car trips cover distances of only 2 miles or less. Complete Streets encourage people to try other modes, if the infrastructure exists).
- **Reduce wear and tear** on roads caused by car trips, thus saving the city money on pothole repair and resurfacing.
- **Alignment with community values**, such as acting locally to meet the challenges of climate change (bikes and walking are carbon-free forms of transportation).
- **Set the stage for improved outcomes / quality control in contract bids for streets**
- **The city could expand its tax base and opportunities to attract Millennials**, a cohort that has reduced their vehicle miles traveled by 23% in the past five years.
• **Control** the look and feel of streets regardless of the jurisdiction (federal, state or local road)
• Supports and enhances current land-use patterns

**Specific Recommendations**

1. The city of Cleveland Heights should **legislate** Complete Streets in order to formalize planning practices that are already in use by the city. Examples of Complete Streets elements include the Cedar-Lee District’s Lee Road curb bump-outs, bicycle racks, benches, and the streetscape improvements that are planned for 2015, including raised median refuge islands, rectangular rapid flashing beacons, pedestrian scaled lighting, a bike repair stand, landscaped bioretention areas, ADA parking and drop-off areas, traffic signal detectors that are bicycle-friendly and an enhanced Lee Road bus shelter at Heights High. City Councils in Baltimore and Cleveland have found that legislation is more effective than a resolution.**

2. The city of Cleveland Heights should build from the National Complete Streets Coalition’s guidelines for writing a flexible but effective policy. The ten steps to writing an effective policy are included with this document as Appendix A.

3. The city of Cleveland Heights should seek to adopt a Complete Streets ordinance and policy that performs at the highest level as defined by the National Complete Streets annual report card.

4. The city should connect its complete streets policy with annual reviews including a system of performance measures.

5. The city should consider forming a Complete Streets Technical Advisory Committee to steer the development and implementation of its policy objectives. TAC could serve this function.

6. The City of Cleveland Heights should adopt a Complete Streets Design Manual that assists in the implementation of its policy. Goals of a design manual include integrating complete streets into existing operations, i.e. modifying bid documents for road contractors. The city may consider adopting existing guidelines such as the National Associations of City Transportation Officials Urban Street Design Guide.***

7. The city of Cleveland Heights should utilize the Cuyahoga County Complete Streets Toolkit. If necessary, the city should adopt the section on Street Typologies that the
county incorporated from the city of Cleveland. Cleveland Heights could adopt Street Typologies as a foundational document for applying Complete Streets on every street according to their context and use.

Conclusion

Cleveland Heights Transportation Advisory Committee Recommendation to Cleveland Heights City Council

**Whereas**, Cleveland Heights has historically been a very walkable and green community;

**Whereas**, recent demographic and real estate trends point to people moving to walkable, bikeable, and transit-accessible neighborhoods;

**Whereas**, reducing the sole reliance on the automobile can help to improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while connecting residents to local business districts, libraries, and other recreational services the city offers;

**Whereas**, recent data on obesity and public health identifies a relationship between land use, automobile dependency, and poor health, which can and has been improved for communities exercising the principles of complete streets;

**Whereas**, Cleveland Heights has been working on a Safe Routes to School Travel Plan and NOACA funded Transportation for Livable Communities Studies to improve bicycle and transit connectivity between Cleveland Heights and University Circle;

**Whereas**, Complete Streets are now a policy in more than 600 jurisdictions across the United States, including small and large suburbs, cities such as Cleveland and counties like Cuyahoga

**Whereas**, Cleveland Heights formed a Transportation Advisory Committee in 2014 in order to share ideas and promote Cleveland Heights transportation projects, policies and practices, and recommend improvements.

**Whereas**, Complete Streets and other transportation issues have been highlighted in the City’s 2011 Strategic Plan.

**Whereas**, the city has updated its zoning code to include specifications on bike friendly infrastructure in the city’s commercial districts and residential new building i.e. long term bike parking required as well as land use considerations such as parking in the rear of developments. and design requirements such as density ratios.

**Whereas**, Complete Streets has a proven track record of delivering on community goals i.e. to improve transportation options, encourage economic development, community
health, connectivity to vital services, (schools, libraries, shopping), enhance the land use/transportation connection and meet the challenges of climate change.

**Be it resolved that** The Cleveland Heights Transportation Advisory Committee recommends to the Cleveland Heights City Council adopt legislation in order to make Complete Streets a stated policy and practice. Complete Streets guidelines will be incorporated into the planning, designing, constructing, operating and maintaining appropriate facilities which will serve pedestrians, transit vehicles and riders, children, the elderly and people with disabilities. Complete Streets guidelines will be used in all new construction and retrofit or reconstruction projects subject to the exceptions contained herein.

Respectfully submitted,

Cleveland Heights Transportation Advisory Committee

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** From former Cleveland Planning Director and Cleveland Heights resident Bob Brown who presented to the TAC on the city of Cleveland’s complete streets ordinance.

***The National Complete Streets Coalition notes that jurisdictions often adapt existing design manuals, such as the design manual from the city of Chicago, to their local conditions. The city of Cleveland used the Chicago Complete Streets guidelines as an interim step while it develops its own Streetscape Design Manual. Cleveland’s goal is to bake complete streets into the initial 30% design of all road contract work).