

RESOLUTION NO. 2013-210
**RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING A "COMPLETE STREETS" POLICY FOR
THE BOROUGH OF METUCHEN**

WHEREAS, for decades the Borough of Metuchen has been planning and pursuing implementation of strategies to become a more liveable community, striving for a well-balanced and connected transportation system allowing for safe walking and biking and efficient public transit; and

WHEREAS, Complete Streets is a fairly new term, but encompasses many of the established characteristics and recent improvements that distinguish Metuchen as a special community, such as:

- The provision of sidewalks on the majority of Borough streets along with shade trees that provide separation between pedestrians and moving vehicles;
- Pedestrian-scale Main Street streetlamps and benches throughout the downtown area;
- A centrally-located train station situated within walking and biking distance of almost every resident in the community;
- The reduction of the width of Main Street with bump-outs to slow traffic and shorten pedestrian crossing distances along with pedestrian activated crosswalk signals
- Unique “signature” transit shelters that provide seating, protection from the elements and a sense of dignity for bus riders;
- Traffic calming improvements along multiple blocks of South Main Street, including corner bump-outs to shorten pedestrian crossing distances, a gateway island and a raised speed table;
- Newly created or transformed existing streets within town center redevelopment projects such as Franklin Square on Middlesex Avenue and Central Square and Suburban Square on Central Avenue, which incorporate reduced-speed streets, sidewalks lined with shade trees and Main Street streetlamps, and public spaces;
- Several blocks transformed with new sidewalks, shade trees and pedestrian-scale street lamps along State Highway Route 27 in the redeveloped Southwest Gateway District;
- Decades of strict adherence by the Planning and Zoning Boards to Land Development Ordinance design standards that require buildings, not parking lots, to front upon sidewalks in order to appropriately line the edges of pedestrian-friendly streetscapes;
- Most recently, an experiment that introduced pedestrian crossing signal flags to enhance safety by helping to make motorists more aware of pedestrian crossings at several dangerous locations; and

WHEREAS, the Borough has plans to incorporate concepts of “shared space” in the design of the proposed public plaza at the corner of New and Pearl Streets and to convert the next leg of the Lehigh Valley Railroad into an extension of the Middlesex

Greenway to provide access to the Dismal Swamp, both of which are examples of Complete Street philosophy of the highest order;

WHEREAS, Complete Streets are encompassed in policies and strategies that the Borough has been planning and implementing for decades and has already achieved significant accomplishments by incorporating pedestrian safety and traffic calming measures when public streets are improved and such is part of a comprehensive long-term strategy to increase pedestrian safety in response to several high-profile accidents in recent years, as well as a sound financial investment that provides long-term savings, in that a transportation budget can incorporate Complete Streets projects without requiring significant additional funding; and

WHEREAS, the Alan M. Voorhees Transportation Center at Rutgers University released a report titled “Economic Impacts of Active Transportation (Bicycling and Walking) in New Jersey”, and found that investment in active transportation-related infrastructure and spending at active transportation-related businesses and events contributed \$500 million in economic activity in NJ in one year;

WHEREAS, creating Complete Streets also reduces infrastructure costs by requiring far less pavement per user compared to increasing road capacity for vehicles alone; this saves money at the onset of the project and reduces maintenance costs over the long-term; and

WHEREAS, Metuchen is designated as a NJ Transit Village and Town Center, and the 2007-2011 American Community Survey estimates that 19% of Metuchen residents take public transit to work and 2% walk to work, and they need the public right-of-way to better serve them by safe places to walk, bicycle, or board the bus, and by designing the streets to better accommodate them; and

WHEREAS, the New Jersey Department of Transportation adopted its own complete streets policy and plans to implement it through the planning, design, construction, maintenance and operation of new and retrofit transportation facilities within public rights of way that are federally or state funded, including projects processed or administered through the Department’s Capital Program;

WHEREAS, it is recognized that any policy must be flexible and reflect that all streets are different, including some streets or corridors in the Borough which may not fully satisfy a complete streets environment, but that the transportation system overall will balance the needs of all users and support a comprehensive network of complete streets;

WHEREAS, the Metuchen Borough Council recognizes and fully supports this initiative and wishes to reinforce its commitment to creating a comprehensive, integrated, connected street network that accommodates all road users of all ages and all abilities and for all trips, tying together past efforts and unique Borough features such as the downtown business district, the Middlesex Greenway and its transit facilities;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the Council of the Borough of Metuchen that it hereby authorizes and adopts a Complete Street Policy as follows:

BOROUGH OF METUCHEN COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

I. Purpose of Complete Streets Policy

The Complete Streets Policy of Metuchen is a guide to the planning, design, construction, maintenance and operation of new and retrofit transportation facilities within the public rights of way, including projects processed or administered through the Borough's Capital Program.

II. Definition of Complete Streets

"Complete Streets" means streets that are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, in that pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and public transportation users of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a street.

III. Benefits of Complete Streets

The benefits of Complete Streets are many and varied, such as: a) improving safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, children, older citizens, non-drivers and the mobility challenged as well as those that cannot afford a car or chose to live car free; b) providing connections to bicycling and walking trip generators such as employment, education, residential, recreation, retail centers and public facilities, thus promoting healthy lifestyles; c) reducing traffic congestion and reliance on carbon fuels, reducing greenhouse gas emissions; d) cutting costs by incorporation of sidewalks, bicycle facilities, safe crossings and transit amenities into the initial design of a project, sparing the expense of future retrofits.

IV. Complete Streets Policy

The Complete Streets policy will enable the Borough to develop a safe, reliable, efficient, integrated and connected multimodal transportation system that will promote access, mobility and health for all users, and will ensure that the safety and convenience of all users of the transportation system are accommodated, including pedestrians, bicyclists, users of mass transit, people of all ages and abilities, motorists, emergency responders, freight providers and adjacent land users. However, the Borough recognizes that this policy must be flexible and reflect that all streets are different, including some streets in the Borough which may not fully satisfy a complete streets environment and to the extent possible, the Borough seeks to provide a transportation system overall which will balance the needs of all users and support a comprehensive network of complete streets.

V. Scope of Complete Streets Applicability

1. All Borough-owned transportation facilities in the public right of way including, but not limited to, streets, bridges and all other connecting pathways shall be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained, whenever feasible to do so, so that users of all ages and abilities can travel safely and independently. A focus and priority in implementing this Complete Streets policy should be given to areas of the Borough in proximity to or providing access to schools, public facilities, transit stops, the downtown and neighborhood business districts, and the Middlesex Greenway.
2. Privately constructed streets shall adhere to this policy.
3. The Borough shall seek to foster partnerships with the State of New Jersey, neighboring communities and counties, business and non-profit organizations, and school districts to develop facilities and accommodations that further the Borough's complete streets policy and continue such infrastructure beyond the Borough's borders.
4. To the extent feasible, the Borough shall approach transportation improvements and project phases as an opportunity to create safer, more accessible streets for all users. These phases include, but are not limited to: planning, programming, design, right-of-way acquisition, construction, construction engineering, reconstruction, operation and maintenance. Other changes to transportation facilities on streets and rights-of-way, including capital improvements, re-channelization projects and major maintenance, should also be included on a case by case basis.

VI. Exceptions

Exception to this policy, including for private projects, must be approved by the Borough Engineer at the appropriate phase and be documented with supporting data that indicates that this Policy was taken into consideration and set forth the reasoning behind the Borough Engineer's determination. It is recognized that this policy must be flexible and reflect that all streets are different, including some streets in the Borough which may not fully satisfy a complete streets environment.

Exceptions may be considered for approval when:

1. An affected roadway prohibits, by law, use by specified users (such as an interstate freeways or pedestrian malls), in which case a greater effort shall be made to accommodate those specified users elsewhere, including on roadways that cross or otherwise intersect with the affected roadway;
2. The activities are ordinary maintenance activities designed to keep assets in serviceable condition (e.g. mowing, cleaning, sweeping, spot repair, and surface treatments such as chip seal or interim measures);

3. The Borough Engineer determines that the application of Complete Streets principles is unnecessary, unfeasible, unduly cost prohibitive, or inappropriate because it would be contrary to public safety or unwarranted due to existing conditions as it is recognized that all streets are different, including some streets in the Borough which may not be appropriate for a complete streets environment;

4. When the cost of incorporating new bicycle, pedestrian, and/or public transit facilities is determined to be excessive (defined as greater than 20% of the overall project costs), the need for and/or probable use of the facility shall be considered in making the determination as to the Borough's budget and the Borough's capital improvements program approval process or when project plans and specifications are being prepared, this exception shall apply only to Borough projects, or

5. Other available means or factors indicate an absence of need, including future need, or use of road by non-motorized users is prohibited.

VII. Education, Design Standards, Performance Measures, Implementation and Reporting

The Borough intends to follow accepted or adopted design standards and use the best and latest design standards available including but not limited to: the New Jersey Department of Transportation Roadway Design Manual; National Association of City Transportation Officials Urban Bikeway Design Guide; AASHTO Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities; AASHTO Guide for the Planning, Design and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities; Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

In recognition of context sensitivity, public input and the needs of many users, a flexible, innovative and balanced approach that follows other appropriate design standards may be considered, provided that a comparable level of safety for all users is present.

Upon adoption of this policy the Borough Council shall advise the Borough Engineer and Planner and the Planning Board and the Zoning Board of Adjustment, along with their respective professionals, of the adoption of the Policy and recommend that it be incorporated into its review of all applications for development including zoning exemptions. Additionally, all initial planning and design studies, environmental reviews, and other project reviews for projects requiring funding or approval of the Borough should: (1) evaluate the effect of proposed project on safe travel by all users, and (2) identify measures to mitigate any adverse impacts on such travel.

Within six (6) months of adoption of the Complete Street Policy, the Borough Administrator, Borough Planner, Borough Engineer, Zoning Officer, a representative of the Police Department and the DPW Director shall report to the Borough Council regarding: steps taken to implement this resolution, plans for continued implementation in the coming year, revisions implemented and/or needed to codes, ordinances, rules, plans and procedures, and any desired actions that would need to be taken by the

Borough Council or other Borough departments. Borough departments and professionals, such as Borough Planner, Borough Engineer, Borough Administrator, Zoning Officer, a representative of the Police Department and the DPW Director should review existing zoning, construction, traffic and development ordinances and policies to identify codes, procedures, rules and regulations needing revisions in order to integrate, accommodate, and balance the needs of all users in projects.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this resolution shall remain on file in the Clerk's office.

Dated: October 21, 2013