

Otter Tail County Complete Streets Policy

This policy was adopted by Resolution No. 2023-08 by the Otter Tail County Board of Commissioners on January 24, 2023.

1. Definitions

- a. Complete Street: A complete street accommodates a variety of mode types, balancing the needs of users of all ages and abilities. What makes a street “complete” is context-dependent, and will vary based on the location, surrounding land use, current and projected roadway use, and traffic volumes.
- b. Street: Throughout this document, the term “street” refers to any road that is within Otter Tail County’s jurisdiction. This includes roadways commonly referred to as “highways” or “roads” throughout the county.
- c. Underserved and Vulnerable Populations: People within Otter Tail County that have not historically been engaged in processes, are overburdened on several levels, or have limited transportation options. This includes, but is not limited to, minority populations, low-income residents, people with disabilities, or communities with insufficient multimodal infrastructure.

2. Purpose and Vision

- a. Purpose: The Complete Streets Policy defines requirements for county roadway projects, provides best practices and context-specific design recommendations, and clarifies procedures for project planning, implementation, and evaluation. Implementation of this policy will ensure Otter Tail residents have access to safe, convenient, reliable, and accessible transportation – balancing the needs of all while prioritizing underserved, overburdened and vulnerable communities.
- b. Vision: Otter Tail County will create a safe, equitable, and connected transportation system for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists that provides balanced transportation options for residents of all ages and abilities, and that supports and enriches the communities of Otter Tail County.

3. Jurisdiction

- a. This policy applies to construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, and pavement maintenance projects on any county-owned roadways within Otter Tail County (excluding project types identified in 4b: Exceptions). The county will collaborate and coordinate with local municipalities and agencies as appropriate.
- b. Additionally, any construction or repair projects on county roadways that infringe on the right of way or sidewalk must provide safe and efficient temporary infrastructure for all modes throughout construction.

4. Procedures

- a. Commitment in all Projects and Phases
 - i. The Otter Tail County Highway Department will review all roadway construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, and pavement maintenance projects to ensure compliance with this policy. All projects that fit these criteria must complete the Pre-Project Checklist found in Appendix A and submit to the County Engineer or Assistant County Engineer for approval.
 - 1. Compliance will be required in all project phases, including but not limited to: Project planning, studies, reports, construction, and implementation.
 - 2. Compliance is defined as meeting the requirements set forth in the Pre-Project Checklist (see Appendix A).
 - ii. The Otter Tail County Highway Department will provide an annual report to the County Board that includes performance measures and annual change of these metrics. Details on this report can be found in Section 6: Performance Measures and Evaluation.
- b. Exceptions
 - i. A project may be exempt from the Complete Streets Policy under one or more of the following conditions:
 - 1. Lack of space within the right-of-way to accommodate additional infrastructure
 - 2. Cost is excessively disproportionate to benefit, need, or probable use
 - 3. Inclusion or expansion of multimodal infrastructure would increase public safety risk
 - 4. Routine maintenance of the network that does not change the roadway geometry or operation (mowing, spot repair, etc.)
 - 5. Documented lack of current or future pedestrian and/or bicycle use
 - 6. A reasonable equivalent along the same corridor is already being planned
 - 7. Emergency repairs that require immediate response
 - a. Provide temporary accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists
 - b. If repair becomes long-term project, the Complete Streets Policy will apply
 - 8. Projects that do not impact multimodal users (pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, or motorists) such as storm sewers or landscape work
 - 9. Transit accommodations are not required where there is a documented lack of existing or planned routes
- c. Project Selection Criteria
 - i. In addition to the County Highway Department's established project selection criteria (tiered preservation system, established performance targets, county pavement management system, and available/projected funding), the county will utilize the following Complete Streets criteria when prioritizing projects:

1. Closes an identified gap in the multimodal system
2. Improves safety for all users
3. Improves transportation access for underserved, overburdened and vulnerable communities
4. Number of pedestrians and bicyclists that currently or are projected to use the roadway

5. Complete Streets Guidelines

- a. Land Use and Context Sensitivity
 - i. Any new (or revised) transportation plans must specify how the document will support the Complete Streets vision.
 - ii. Project decisions related to Complete Streets implementation should consider the surrounding context, including land use, natural features such as wetlands and lakes, community characteristics such as income and vulnerability, and likely changes identified in relevant plans or studies.
- b. Example Design Elements
 - i. Choosing the appropriate multimodal infrastructure is highly dependent on the project's context. Otter Tail County recommends the following resources as guides:
 1. [MnDOT's "Complete Streets from Policy to Project" Report](#)
 2. U.S. Department of [Transportation's Complete Streets Resource Guide](#)
 - ii. Additional guidance on specific design elements can be found in Appendix B: Complete Streets Toolkit

6. Evaluation and Performance Measures

- a. Evaluation
 - i. The Otter Tail County Highway Department, in collaboration with other county and city departments and agencies, will release an annual Complete Streets report. This report will include the performance measures listed below in 6b. and the county's progress towards these metrics.
 - ii. A Complete Streets Project Audit will occur for all applicable projects within Otter Tail County. This project audit will be documented as part of the project development process.
 1. The project audit will include a completed Pre-Project Checklist, along with any required documentation

b. Performance Measures may include the following metrics:

METRIC	LAST YEAR	THIS YEAR	CHANGE
Linear feet of new or reconstructed sidewalk			
Miles of new or restriped on-street bicycle facilities			
Number of new or reconstructed curb ramps			
Number of new or repainted crosswalks			
Percentage completion of bicycle and pedestrian networks (as defined by county and city plans)			
Specify plan the gap is identified in:			
Number of crashes by mode:			
<i>Motorist</i>			
<i>Pedestrian/Bicyclist</i>			
Number of injuries by mode:			
<i>Motorist</i>			
<i>Pedestrian/Bicyclist</i>			
Number of fatalities by mode:			
<i>Motorist</i>			
<i>Pedestrian/Bicyclist</i>			
Mode shift to walking, bicycling, or transit			
Percentage of children walking, biking, or taking transit to school			
Percentage of satisfied or very satisfied users by mode			
<i>Pedestrian</i>			
<i>Bicyclist</i>			
<i>Transit</i>			
Miles of county roadways with shoulders of 5' or greater			
Percentage of tourists who utilize pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure			

Supplemental Materials:

Appendix A: Pre-Project Checklist

Appendix B: Complete Streets Toolkit

Appendix C: Implementation Guide

Appendix D: Otter Tail County Examples

Appendix A: Pre-Project Checklist

Please use this worksheet as a guide to the Complete Streets Policy. For any questions, please contact the Otter Tail County Engineer at highway@co.ottertail.mn.us or at 218-998-8470.

Project Name	
Date	
Location (Road name, start, and end points)	
Roadway Jurisdiction	
Primary Contact Name	
Primary Contact Phone	
Primary Contact Email	

Does the Otter Tail County Complete Streets Policy apply to the project?

1. **Are the roadways involved in the project owned by Otter Tail County?**
 - ☐ If Yes, continue to #2
 - ☐ If No, this policy does not apply to the project
2. **Does the project include new construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, or pavement maintenance?**
 - ☐ If Yes, continue to #3
 - ☐ If No, this policy does not apply to the project (*Note: If the project infringes upon the right-of-way or sidewalk, temporary accommodations for multimodal users should be provided*)

If you answered yes to **only one** of questions 1 and 2, the Complete Streets Policy **does not** apply to your project.

If you answered yes to questions 1 **and** 2, the Complete Streets Policy **does** apply to your project. Please proceed to question #3 on the following page.

Complete Streets Policy Compliance

3. How are pedestrian needs along this roadway being met? (Must choose one)

- ☐ There is a lack of current or future pedestrian use along this roadway (provide documentation)
- ☐ Existing conditions are meeting pedestrian needs (provide documentation)
- ☐ Pedestrian needs will be met by improvements in this project (describe improvements)

- ☐ We request an exception (provide documentation)

4. What are current pedestrian counts within the project area?

5. How are bicyclist needs along this roadway being met? (Must choose one)

- ☐ There is a lack of current or future bicyclist use along this roadway (provide documentation)
- ☐ Existing conditions are meeting bicyclist needs (provide documentation)
- ☐ Bicyclist needs will be met by improvements in this project (describe improvements)

- ☐ We request an exception (provide documentation)

6. What are current bicyclist counts within the project area?

7. (Optional) Are there other user groups (such as transit, agricultural equipment, ATVs, etc.) who will benefit because of this project?

If you have indicated there is a lack of multimodal use, existing conditions are meeting needs, or are requesting an exception, please attach documentation.

Date Completed		
Compliance	<input type="checkbox"/> Compliant	Notes:
	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Compliant	
Reviewed by:		

Appendix B: Complete Streets Toolkit

This document was created to guide project managers as they navigate applying the Complete Streets Policy to their project. For any questions, please contact the Otter Tail County Engineer at highway@co.ottertail.mn.us or at 218-998-8470.

STEP 1 DETERMINE ELIGIBILITY

Does your project need to comply with the Complete Streets Policy? Use the “Pre-Project Checklist” to find out! If it does, the following steps will help determine which tools are best suited for your project.

STEP 2 EVALUATE THE CONTEXT

A Complete Street will look different for each project, as what makes the street “complete” will change. In areas with no pedestrian or bicycle use, the street/roadway may already be complete without adding or including multimodal facilities. However, it is also important to understand if there are hurdles to multimodal use which the project can help remove. This can be determined by evaluating the context – below are some key contextual factors to consider. These factors are meant to help guide you, and prompt questions to help you understand site-specific needs:



TRAFFIC SPEED

The speed of vehicular traffic along the roadway will help determine what types of multimodal facilities could be implemented. For high-speed roadways, assess whether there is existing multimodal traffic and the safety of these users. Could further separation between modes improve safety conditions? Are multimodal users avoiding this roadway because of safety concerns? On low-speed roadways, consider how different users are sharing the street. Could an on-street bicycle lane help connect the larger bicycle network?



SURROUNDING LAND USE AND DENSITY

The activity occurring alongside the road will help guide what types of facilities may be needed. In dense areas with a variety of land uses, it is likely more pedestrians and bicyclists will want to utilize the street. Consider the specific land uses around your project, as uses such as shopping, education, and healthcare may have higher demand for multimodal facilities. Consider the changes in traffic throughout the seasons, will tourist traffic change the needs of the roadway? Helpful information includes:

- [Otter Tail County Land Use GIS Web Map](#)



FUTURE LAND USE AND DENSITY

Be sure to consider these same questions about land use and density with an eye to the future. What do current plans or zoning regulations say about your project area? Will density or land use be changing significantly, and will that impact how your roadway can serve different user types? It may be helpful to review:

- [Otter Tail County Long-Range Strategic Plan](#)



EXISTING MULTIMODAL FACILITIES

One of the key factors to providing a complete street is understanding how the current multimodal network is functioning. Consider how many pedestrians, bicyclists, or vehicles utilize your roadway and what improvements may help increase safety and comfort for all users.



CONNECTIONS TO MULTIMODAL NETWORKS

It is also helpful to look at your project in the broader context and note if the roadway could help close multimodal gaps or connect to other existing infrastructure. Utilize existing county and city bicycle or trail plans to see where gaps currently exist and where future infrastructure is planned. Some plans to review include:

- [Otter Tail County Trail Master Plan](#)
- [Perham to Pelican Rapids Regional Trail Master Plan \(Heart of the Lakes Trail\)](#)
- [Otter Tail County Transportation Plan](#)



RELATION TO LOCAL PLANS

Many communities within Otter Tail County have adopted Complete Streets policies or resolutions. Be sure to check your local municipality to ensure compliance with their regulations. At this time, the following municipalities have implemented Complete Streets procedures:

- Battle Lake (Policy)
- Fergus Falls (Policy)
- Parks Prairie (Resolution)
- Ottertail (Resolution)
- Vergas (Resolution)

Also be sure to check for local Safe Routes to School plans, as implementation of those plans may impact the multimodal system and needs.

STEP 3 UNDERSTAND USERS

Another factor in designing a Complete Street is understanding what types of users are on the road, how they are utilizing the street, how these are projected in the future, and how that may change because of your project. The table below summarizes some key data points to consider, and potential data sources:






PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLIST DATA	VEHICULAR DATA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current pedestrian volumes: MnDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Counter Web Map • West Central Initiative: Anyone in the nine-county area can reserve the counter • Bicycle and pedestrian traffic counting resources: MnDOT Resources and Training • Additional MnDOT Pedestrian and Bicycle Data Resources • MnDOT Portable Counter Borrowing Program 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current and future vehicular volumes: Otter Tail County Transportation Plan • Current crash and safety statistics: Otter Tail County Transportation Plan • Current and projected traffic volumes: MnDOT Traffic Mapping Application • Crash and safety metrics: County Roadway Safety Plan

STEP 4 SELECT TOOLS

There are many tools available to design a complete street. This vast list can be narrowed down by using the information gathered from steps one through three, and with an understanding of what users will be prioritized, and what their needs may be. It is important to note that different user types will likely have varying perspectives on how useful a specific tool is. In addition to any community engagement that occurs with your project, you may also use the research presented in the tables below as a reference.¹






These tables generally summarize the sentiment of each user group towards a specific complete streets tool². It is not all-encompassing and is meant to act only as a guide and facilitator for discussion. General sentiment is indicated by:

 Neutral
  Negative
  Mixed
  Positive

	 PEDESTRIANS	 BICYCLISTS	 DRIVERS	 TRANSIT DRIVERS*	 RESIDENTS
Planting strip	Positive	Positive	Positive		Positive
Wide sidewalk	Positive				Positive
Bike lane	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
On-street parking	Positive	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed	Positive
Trees and landscaping	Positive	Positive	Positive	Mixed	Positive
Solid surfaces (no grates, potholes, etc.)	Positive			Positive	Positive
No sidewalk obstacles (street furniture, utility poles, etc.)	Positive				
Limited access points for vehicles	Positive	Positive	Mixed	Positive	Mixed
Vertical curbs between vehicles and pedestrians/bicyclists	Positive	Positive			
Pedestrian scale lighting	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Mixed
Street lighting	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Mixed
Street furnishings (out of pedestrian walkway)	Positive	Positive		Positive	Mixed
Bus shelters	Positive			Positive	Mixed
Sheltered outdoor areas	Positive				Positive
Short blocks	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive	Positive
Mid-block crossings	Mixed	Mixed	Negative	Mixed	Positive

¹ City of Charlotte "[Urban Street Design Guidelines](#)"

² Some of these tools are not exclusively within County jurisdiction, and may need to be implemented in partnership with other municipalities

	 PEDESTRIANS	 BICYCLISTS	 DRIVERS	 TRANSIT DRIVERS*	 RESIDENTS
Pedestrian refuge islands					
Medians					
Curb extensions					
Pedestrian countdown signals					
Street narrowing					
Decrease curb radii at intersections					
Bike boxes					
Edge line					
Pavement markings					
Traffic calming					
Separation from on-street parking					
Bike-sensitive signals at intersections					
Roundabouts					
Clear zones					

**Note that Transit at this time includes non-fixed routes such as dial-a-ride services.*

Appendix C: Implementation Guide*

The goals of the Complete Streets Policy are categorized into **Implementation Goals** and **Policy Goals**. Implementation goals are guides to ensure the Policy is included in all relevant plans, is well-known by internal county staff and community members, and is regularly monitored for its impact. Policy Goals are aspirational statements the county would like to achieve with its complete streets policy. Specific metrics have been identified to help determine the county's progress towards these goals.

IMPLEMENTATION GOALS

SHORT-TERM (0-2 YEARS)	
GOAL	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Educate county staff and community members on new Complete Streets policy	Highway, Communications & Public Relations, Parks & Trails
Produce first Complete Streets Annual Report	County Engineer or Assistant County Engineer
Identify opportunities to update existing procedures, plans, and policies to better support the Complete Streets Vision	Highway, Economic Development, GIS, Housing, Land & Resource Management, Parks & Trails
Collect data on existing pedestrian and bicycle volumes	Highway, Parks & Trails
Identify potential partnerships with county departments, city staff, and local agencies that will support the Complete Streets Vision	All
MID-TERM (2-5 YEARS)	
GOAL	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Revise existing procedures, plans, and policies to support the Complete Streets Vision	Highway, Economic Development, GIS, Housing, Land & Resource Management, Parks & Trails
Provide and update design guides that accommodate all modes	Highway, Parks & Trails
Provide on-going training for relevant county staff on the implementation of this policy	Highway, Parks & Trails
Maintain an updated county-wide count of pedestrian and bicycle volumes	Highway, Parks & Trails
Partner with strategic departments, city staff, and agencies to implement the Complete Streets Policy	All
LONG-TERM (5+ YEARS)	
GOAL	RESPONSIBLE PARTY
Create a Complete Streets committee to manage implementation	Highway, Economic Development, GIS, Housing, Land & Resource Management, Parks & Trails

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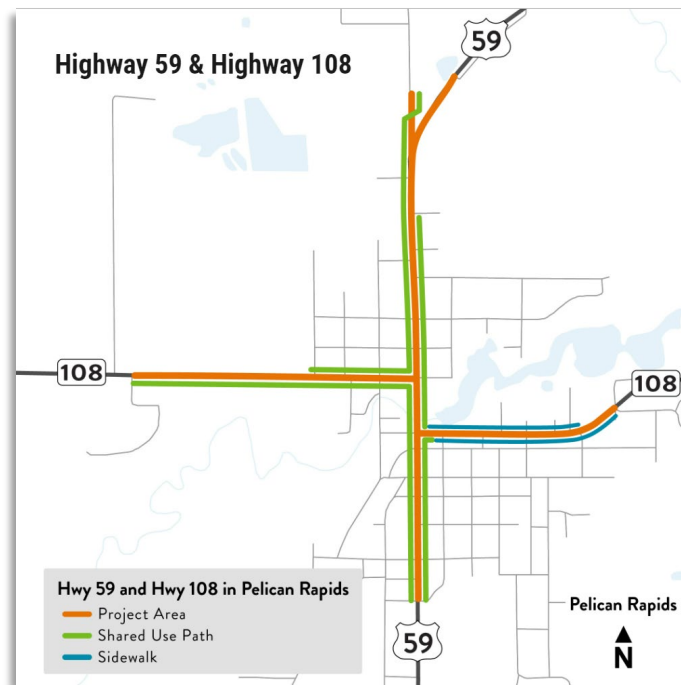
POLICY GOALS

GOALS	
GOAL	METRIC
Expand the pedestrian network within Otter Tail County	Linear feet of new or reconstructed sidewalk
Expand the bicycle network within Otter Tail County	Miles of new or restriped on-street bicycle facilities
Improve accessibility of pedestrian infrastructure	Number of new or reconstructed curb ramps
Improve pedestrian safety	Number of new or repainted crosswalks
Create a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly streetscape	Number of new street trees OR percentage of streets with tree canopy
Close gaps in pedestrian and bicycle networks	Percentage completion of bicycle and pedestrian networks (as defined by county and city plans) <i>Specify plan:</i>
Improve safety for all modes	Number of crashes by mode: <i>Motorist</i> <i>Pedestrian/Bicyclist</i>
	Number of injuries by mode: <i>Motorist</i> <i>Pedestrian/Bicyclist</i>
	Number of fatalities by mode: <i>Motorist</i> <i>Pedestrian/Bicyclist</i>
Increase commuting by walking, biking, or transit	Percentage mode shift to walking, bicycling, or transit
Decrease number of children traveling to school in single-occupancy vehicles	Percentage of children walking, biking, or taking transit to school
Provide a high-quality multimodal system	Percentage of satisfied or very satisfied users by mode: <i>Pedestrian</i> <i>Bicyclist</i> <i>Transit</i>
Improve pedestrian and bicycle access on County Highways	Miles of county roadways with shoulders of 5' or greater
Promote multimodal transportation in tourism	Percentage of tourists who utilize pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure
Increase multimodal regional connectivity	Miles of pedestrian and/or bicycle paths that connect to adjacent communities

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Appendix D: Otter Tail County Examples

Highway 59 & Highway 108: Shared Use Path and Sidewalk Implementation

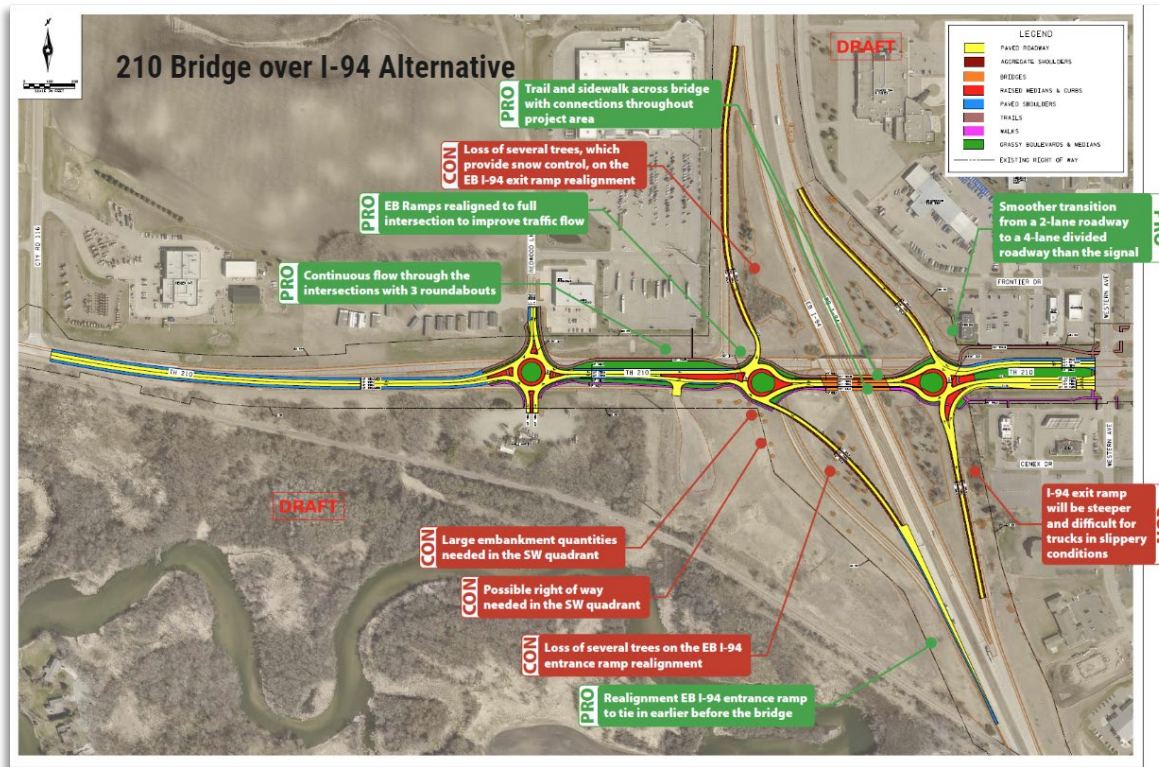


Mock Roundabout & Road diet: MnDOT implemented in Pelican Rapids to allow all users to test navigating



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210 Bridge over I-94 Alternative: Incorporates pedestrian-friendly roundabouts



Battle Lake Road Improvements: Widened pedestrian space, buffered on-street parking, fewer travel lanes



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Pelican Rapids Road Design: Conceptual design for pedestrian and bicycle friendly roadway



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