Complete Streets: Making Our Streets a Safer Place to Walk, Bike, and Travel
July 2014 FYI

Through its LiveWELL Lancaster County and Lighten Up Lancaster County healthy living initiatives, Lancaster General Health is partnering with the Lancaster County Planning Commission and the Lancaster Coalition for Smart Growth to facilitate a countywide discussion on creating healthier communities.

One way of improving community health is to promote active transportation – walking and bicycling – to get from one place to another rather than driving. A key to active transportation is having infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists such as sidewalks, bike racks, and benches. These types of infrastructure are part of a larger concept known as Complete Streets.

Complete Streets provide safe, comfortable, and convenient access for people of all ages and abilities, whether walking, bicycling, riding public transportation, or driving. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. LGH and its partners hosted two events on
Complete Streets during June. These events were made possible through technical assistance provided by **Smart Growth America’s National Complete Streets Coalition**.

On June 4, national experts Roger Henderson of Raleigh, North Carolina and Cynthia Hoyle of Champaign-Urbana, Illinois came to Lancaster and introduced the concept of complete streets at a public forum entitled “Making Our Streets a Safer Place to Walk, Bike and Travel.” The forum included presentations on the elements of complete streets; the work already being done in Lancaster County; and an overview of what is happening nationally. Harriet Parcells, AICP, LCPC Senior Transportation Planner, also talked about actions planned by LCPC to promote and implement complete streets.

On June 5, the experts facilitated a workshop specifically targeted to the municipalities in the central Lancaster County region, but also included participants from several boroughs in the northern part of the county. In all 12 municipalities sent representatives to the workshop.

The focus of the workshop was on development and adoption of complete streets policies at the local level. Complete streets policies ensure that the entire right-of-way is planned, designed, constructed, operated, and maintained to provide safe access for all users.

By developing a complete streets policy, a municipality adopts a comprehensive approach to projects in the street right of way. Streets will be routinely designed and operated so that the entire right of way enables safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. This means that every transportation project will make the street network a better and safer place to walk, bike, and travel.

Roger Henderson and Cynthia Hoyle reviewed the key components of a complete streets policy which include:

- Using the latest and the best design criteria and guidelines while recognizing the need for flexibility in balancing local needs and budgets
- Building a common vision for users of all ages and abilities including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit passengers, trucks, buses, emergency vehicles, and automobiles
- Applying complete streets criteria and guidelines to new and retrofit projects
- Encouraging street connectivity to create a comprehensive, integrated network for all modes of travel
- Establishing performance standards for streets and measuring outcomes

In order to provide an example of a complete street policy which would be applicable to Lancaster County municipalities and make the development and adoption of a policy easier for local officials, LCPC developed and distributed a model policy resolution to the workshop attendees. This resolution can be considered by municipal officials and modified to fit local circumstances and achieve local goals.

**Smart Growth America’s National Complete Streets Coalition experts will be back in September to hold additional workshops for municipalities and consultants on implementation of complete streets policies.**

If you are interested in learning more about complete streets or would like handouts from the sessions please contact Mary LeVasseur melevass@lghealth.org or Beth Schwartz at bakoser@lghealth.org. If you are interested in learning more about the LCPC model policy resolution, please contact Harriet Parcells at HParcells@co.lancaster.pa.us.
(left) Complete streets provide safe access and travel for users of all ages and abilities – children, the physically-challenged, the elderly, pedestrians, bicyclists, etc. When connections are missing, municipalities should fill in the gaps when making road improvements.

(below, L to R) In low-traffic rural areas, bicycles and buggies can be accommodated on roads with wide lanes and/or shoulders.

Existing road shoulders can be striped and marked for bicycle traffic.

Before and After – Making a connection to accommodate pedestrians.

(flower row) A complete street in a small town. Bike lanes are painted for visibility and to define the lane.

Pedestrian safety is key to a complete street. An added benefit to complete streets is the incorporation of green infrastructure – the plantings between the sidewalk and the street – to manage stormwater runoff.

A "complete" street in a highly urban area (L) will look quite different from a "complete" street in a (R) rural area, but both are designed to balance safety and convenience for everyone using the road.
The National Complete Streets Coalition brings together public interest groups such as AARP, the National Association of Realtors, and the American Public Transportation Association, as well as practitioner organizations such as the Institute of Transportation Engineers, the National Association of City Transportation Officials, the American Society of Landscape Architects, the American Planning Association, and the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals. It works for the adoption and effective implementation of Complete Streets policies at the local, state, and federal levels.
What are “Complete Streets?”

Complete streets are streets for everyone. They are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. People of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across streets in a community, regardless of how they are traveling. Complete streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. They allow buses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from train stations.

~ National Complete Streets Coalition