

Draft Memorandum

Date: May 31, 2022

To: Eliza Jane Whitman PE, Ryan Kim PE, Alvie Betancourt, and Saied Naaseh, City of Carson

From: Adriana Valencia Wences and Miguel Núñez

Subject: Complete Streets and Green Streets Policy for the City of Carson

LA17-2961

Introduction

For decades, the fields of transportation planning and design focused on moving able-bodied adults in automobiles, creating a system that provides reasonably good mobility and convenience for millions of Americans. However, the needs of travelers outside that group, including younger or older people, those with disabilities, and those who travel by transit, bicycle, or foot, have been routinely overlooked. Too many neighborhoods lack safe places to walk or bicycle, and access to key community resources such as parks, shops, grocery stores, and schools is now dependent on access to an automobile. Thousands of people are injured or killed while walking or bicycling every year, in part due to the inhospitable built environment. Buses move down streets slowly and drivers – when not speeding along neighborhood streets – are caught in traffic jams on major arterials during commute hours, and otherwise can travel with relative ease.

The Complete Streets movement aims to develop integrated, connected networks of streets that are safe and accessible for all people, regardless of age, ability, income, ethnicity, or chosen mode of travel. Complete Streets makes active transportation such as walking and bicycling convenient; provide increased access to employment centers, commerce, and educational institutions; and allow for cost-efficient, and potentially more time-efficient, travel.

There are numerous actions that can be made by the Carson City Council to establish Complete Streets policies. Two examples include:



Plans

Complete Streets policies can be found within transportation plans, specific plans, and the General Plan. The City of Carson has been undertaking the update to the City's General Plan, providing an excellent opportunity to engage all sectors of the community. Plans are a good home for basic Complete Streets policies, most often listed among the community's goals for the future, and they can provide implementation guidance by identifying specific corridors to prioritize for multimodal planning and design. Plans must also be well supported by the community and inform the budget process, or else they risk gathering dust. The City's General Plan includes polices focused on complete streets and multimodal strategies that address specific corridors, various travel modes, implementation, and budgetary considerations, and identify areas that entail coordination with other City Departments such as Planning, Law Enforcement, Parks & Recreation, and Public Works.

City Policies

The City Council may also act by adopting a Complete Streets policy as official city policy. A Complete Streets policy can be developed by an internal group of stakeholders, which may include representatives from planning, engineering, public works, economic development, health, and/or elected officials. This process also reflects broader input from residents and community stakeholders through the General Plan process. This policy document is presented to the full Council for discussion and a vote. These policies tend to be lengthier and more detailed than resolutions or ordinances (which are other actions the City Council can take to further Complete Streets), and can build partnerships between agencies, community members, and decision makers in a more robust way than resolutions or ordinances. Like resolutions, such policies are not legally binding; however, the community, political, and agency support for change tends to be high, resulting in a shared, lasting push for implementation of the policy.

A compelling Complete Streets policy includes elements that refine the vision, provide clear direction and intent, are accountable to a community's needs, and grant the flexibility in design and approach necessary to secure an effective process and outcome.

The elements can be divided into four parts:

- 'Pre-policy' work of establishing a compelling vision
- Creating a strong core commitment to providing for all users and modes in all projects
- Rounding out that directive with supporting best practices
- Planning next steps for policy implementation



City of Carson Complete Streets and Green Streets Policy

The following is the recommended policy language for the City of Carson:

Develop as many street projects as possible in an affordable, balanced, responsible, and equitable way that accommodates and encourages travel by motorists, bicyclists, public transit vehicles and their passengers, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities.

Complete Streets may be achieved through single projects or incrementally through a series of smaller improvements or maintenance activities over time. It is the Mayor and City Council's intent that all sources of transportation funding be drawn on to implement Complete Streets. The City of Carson believes that maximum financial flexibility is important to implement Complete Streets principles.

Exceptions

Making a policy work in the real world requires developing a process to handle exceptions to providing for all modes in each project.

Facilities for all users will be considered in the construction, reconstruction, retrofit, repaving, and rehabilitation of City of Carson streets, except under one or more of the following conditions:

- a. An affected roadway prohibits, by law, use by specified users, 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; or*
- b. The costs of providing accommodation are excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use; or*
- c. The existing and planned population, employment densities, traffic volumes, or level of transit service around a particular roadway is documented by the Planning Division or any other relevant Department as so low that future expected users of the roadway will not include pedestrians, public transportation, freight vehicles, or bicyclists.*

Documentation shall be publicly available and exceptions for City projects shall be granted by the accountable person, department, or committee. For private projects (projects on private property or sponsored by a private entity), the owner shall document the exception and approval shall be granted by City Council or the Planning Division.



Establishing a Well-Connected Network

A compelling Complete Streets policy recognizes the need for more than one or two “complete” streets, instead striving for a connected, integrated system that provides transportation options to a resident’s many potential destinations.

To truly enable safe travel, a community must plan for a network to support their movement across all modes.

- a. *The City of Carson will design, operate, and maintain a transportation network that provides a connected network of facilities accommodating all modes of travel.*
- b. *The City of Carson will actively look for opportunities to repurpose rights-of-way to enhance connectivity for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit.*
- c. *The City of Carson will focus non-motorized connectivity improvements to services, schools, parks, civic uses, regional connection and commercial uses.*
- d. *The City of Carson will require large new developments (developments consisting of one or more blocks or creating more than one block) and redevelopment projects to provide interconnected street networks with small blocks.*

Performance Measures

As governments look to become more responsive, transparent, and accountable, performance measures are increasingly important to successful policy development and implementation. The inclusion of systematic collection and the reporting of data into a Complete Streets policy can provide clarity on how a community’s transportation projects are meeting citizens’ needs and elected officials’ goals for the transportation network.

Measure the success of this complete streets policy using the following performance measures:

- e. *Total miles of on-street bicycle facilities defined by streets with clearly marked or signed bicycle accommodation*
- f. *Linear feet of new pedestrian accommodation*
- g. *Number of new curb ramps installed along city streets*
- h. *Number of new street trees planted along city streets*
- i. *Changes in total VMT, per capita VMT for residential and employment uses*
- j. *Transit ridership levels*
- k. *Bicycle and pedestrian volumes*
- l. *Monitor collision patterns and trends*

Green Streets

The City of Carson provides that it shall implement green street best management practices (BMPs) in new and redevelopment street and roadway projects, including Capital Improvement Projects (CIPs).



Green streets are an amenity that provides many benefits including water quality improvement, groundwater replenishment, creation of attractive streetscapes, connection of neighborhoods, creation of parks and wildlife habitats, and pedestrian and bicycle accessibility. Green streets are defined as right-of-way areas that incorporate infiltration and/or biofiltration BMPs to collect, retain, or detain stormwater runoff as well as a design element that creates attractive streetscapes. Green street BMPs may include, but are not limited to, dry-wells, curb-cuts, median modifications, street trees, permeable pavement, bioretention areas, and vegetated swales.

Plan and implement green streets using the following policies:

- a. The City shall review new development redevelopment streets and roadway projects and CIPs conducted within the right-of-way that create or replace 10,000 square feet or more of impervious surface for opportunities to incorporate green street BMPs. This excludes routine maintenance or repair and linear utility projects.*
- b. The City shall consider opportunities to replenish groundwater, create attractive streetscapes, connect neighborhoods, create parks and wildlife habitats, and provide pedestrian and bicycle accessibility through new development and redevelopment streets and roadway projects and CIPs.*
- c. The City's review of CIPs shall result in a prioritized list of CIPs best suited for green street BMPs. Green street BMPs shall be implemented in high priority CIPs.*
- d. The City shall review and update the prioritized list annually,*
- e. The City shall evaluate effectiveness of green street BMPs.*

Implementation

A formal policy commitment to Complete Streets is only the beginning of the process. All types of Complete Streets policies should include discussion of the next steps to take toward implementation; preferably, the policy should state who will develop an implementation plan, and when it will be completed.

The City of Carson views Complete Streets as integral to everyday transportation decision-making practices and processes. To this end:

- a. The Carson Planning Division will incorporate Complete Streets principles into the [General Plan, Specific Plans, Transportation Master Plans such as Transit Plans, Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans, and other appropriate plans] and other manuals, checklists, decision trees, rules, regulations, and programs as appropriate.*
- b. The Planning Division will review current design standards, including subdivision regulations that apply to new roadway construction, to ensure that they reflect the best available design guidelines, and effectively implement Complete Streets.*



- c. *When available, the City shall encourage staff professional development and training on non-motorized transportation issues through attending conferences, classes, seminars, and workshops.*
- d. *City staff shall identify all current and potential future sources of funding for street improvements and recommend improvements to the project selection criteria to support Complete Streets projects.*
- e. *The City shall promote project coordination among city departments and agencies with an interest in the activities that occur within the public right-of-way in order to better use fiscal resources.*
- f. *An annual report will be made to the City Council by the Carson Planning Division showing progress made in implementing this policy.*
- g. *A Complete Streets Advisory Council is hereby created to serve as a resource and a collaborative partner for City elected officials, municipal staff, and [other City Boards, Committees and Commissions].*
 - i. *The Council is to be composed of [odd number] voting members appointed by the Mayor with approval by the City Council who are interested in achieving Complete Streets*
 - ii. *and who want to explore opportunities for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and people with disabilities. Representatives shall be from local organizations and stakeholder constituencies, including transportation professionals, public health, parks, schools, groups representing older adults, people with disabilities, bicyclists, pedestrians, or transit users.*
 - iii. *Establish membership terms – usually two to four years, alternating term limits so that all members are not renewed on the same date.*
 - iv. *The duties of the Council shall include, but not be limited to, examining the needs for bicyclists, transit users, motorists, and pedestrians of all ages and abilities; conducting a baseline study of current practices and accommodations; developing appropriate inter-departmental performance measures including [reference performance measures section]; promoting programs and facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users; and advising appropriate agencies on best practices in Complete Streets implementation.*
 - v. *The Council will meet quarterly, provide a yearly written report to City Council evaluating the City's progress, and advise on implementation.*

The Carson Planning Division shall be designated as the lead department in implementing the Complete Streets Policy, and they shall be assisted in this effort by other City Departments and through coordination with other agencies such as the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and Caltrans.

The Planning Division will evaluate how well the streets and transportation network of the City are serving each category of users and how well they conform to the Complete Streets philosophy. The



Directors of the Planning Division and Public Works are authorized to prepare recommendations for changes to standards, design criteria, planning ordinances or other guidelines that may be needed to further the goal of providing Complete Streets.

The Planning Division is directed to actively solicit and incorporate the guidance of the community and community partners in preparing the evaluation and recommendations.

Additional Elements

Complete Streets policies are rarely developed outside of a community's other interests and activities, such as public health campaigns, safety initiatives, and master planning. You may find it helpful to couple your Complete Streets policy campaign with another popular initiative such as Safe Routes to School, building on existing momentum and community engagement. You may be able to reach a larger audience and establish a broader partnership among key community stakeholders

The following are suggested additional elements to be included by the City of Carson:

- a. Landscaping and amenities are encouraged to provide shade, create buffers, and promote aesthetically welcoming environments within the public right-of way.*
- b. The City of Carson will encourage "green infrastructure" and Low Impact Development (LID) principles on Complete Streets to help manage stormwater runoff and provide landscaping amenities.*
- c. Public Art integrated into the streetscape will be considered to help identify unique areas throughout the City and define the context in which the street exists as identified by community stakeholders.*
- d. Develop a First Last Mile plan to improve walking and biking connection to future and existing transportation hubs*
- e. Implement Safe Routes to School education curricula, events, and messaging for use in student activities at local schools to increase knowledge about transportation planning, safety, pedestrian/bicycle skills, physical health and climate impacts.*
- f. Community engagement will be practiced in collaboration with community-based organizations, with activities ranging from social media posts, walk audits, tabling, in-person pop-up engagement events, workshops, and development of interactive maps.*

Based on a review of local and regional planning documents a map of priority projects and/or corridors is provided below and in Figure 1. The proposed text for the City of Carson Complete Streets Policy can be found in Attachment A.

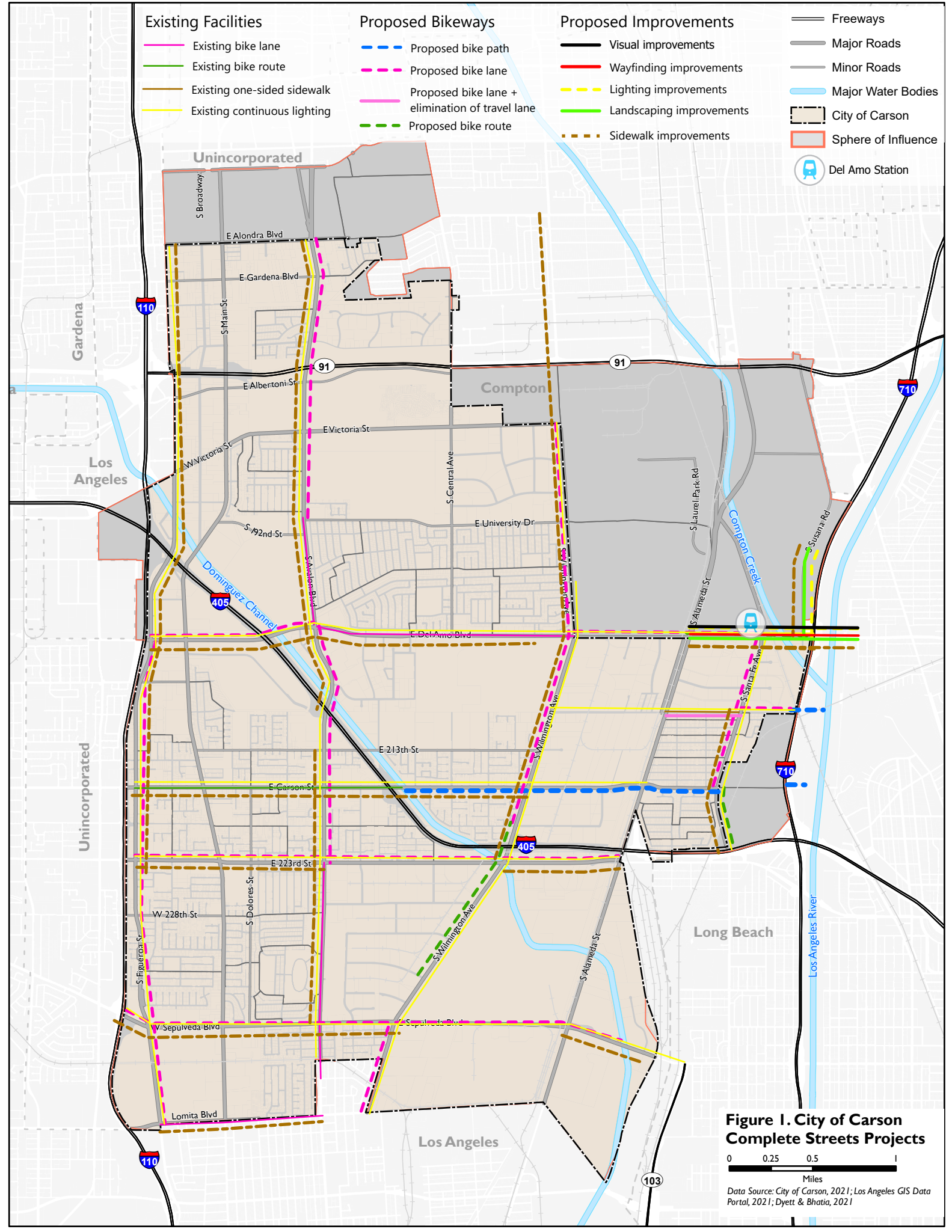


Figure I. City of Carson Complete Streets Projects

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

Data Source: City of Carson, 2021; Los Angeles GIS Data Portal, 2021; Dyett & Bhatia, 2021

ATTACHMENT 1

DRAFT CITY OF CARSON COMPLETE STREETS
AND GREEN STREETS POLICY

Draft City of Carson Complete Streets and Green Streets Policy

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 - ii. *Establish membership terms – usually two to four years, alternating term limits so that all members are not renewed on the same date.*
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Additional components of implementing Complete Streets in the City of Carson should include:

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- b) *The City of Carson will encourage "green infrastructure" and Low Impact Development (LID) principles on Complete Streets to help manage stormwater runoff and provide landscaping amenities.*
- c) *Public Art integrated into the streetscape will be considered to help identify unique areas throughout the City and define the context in which the street exists as identified by community stakeholders.*
- d) *Develop a First Last Mile plan to improve walking and biking connection to future and existing transportation hubs*
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As part of the development of this policy the City of Carson has reviewed local and regional plans for the identification of Complete Streets strategies and specific locations for consideration. This will assist in implementation by building from previous work, aligning local and regional plans that will make local projects more competitive for grant funding, and identifying enhancement areas with demonstrated needs and benefits for Carson stakeholders. The map of priority Complete Streets projects can be found in Figure 1.

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- b) *Linear feet of new pedestrian accommodation*
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