

COMPLETE STREET POLICY

Name: Complete Streets Policy and Master Street Plan Amendment related to Bike Plan requirements

Location: Jurisdiction wide

Request: Approve a Complete Streets Policy for Little Rock and Amend the Master Street Plan to help implement that policy.

Source: Staff

PROPOSAL / REQUEST:

To approve a Complete Streets Policy for Little Rock, this policy indicates that streets should be constructed and maintained such that all forms of transportation may safely and freely use the streets of Little Rock – pedestrian, non-motorized and motorized. To help implement this proposed policy a second item is presented to modify the Master Street Plan as it relates to dedication, construction, and marking for Bike Paths, Lanes and Routes within Little Rock.

ANALYSIS:

The Bike Friendly Community Committee of Little Rock approached the City of Little Rock about adopting a Complete Streets Policy. This group of volunteers reviewed similar policies and recommendations from some national organizations to write a policy they wanted the City of Little Rock to adopt. After some discussions with Staff in early 2013, a resolution of intent to adopt a Complete Streets Policy- was approved by the Little Rock Board of Directors in April 2013 – Resolution No. 13675. This resolution instructed Staff to develop a Policy over the next year, so that the Board could adopt it.

The City Manager's Office first brought together staff from Parks & Recreation, Public Works and Planning Departments to discuss the issue. Individuals from various interest groups –health, aging, bicycle, public transit, and development community, were invited to participate and meetings were held in late 2013 and early 2014. The intent of the group was to develop a 'Policy Statement' for the Board of Directors and to look at changes that might need to be made in Little Rock to help implement that Policy.

The goal for the group was to develop a consensus that could be used as a guide to the City and development community for a road system that would be safe and available for all types of transportation. The City's roads should be safe and usable for pedestrians, non-motorized vehicles, and motorized vehicles. Several members of the group provided examples of ordinances and resolutions from other communities in Arkansas and around the country. The group also reviewed how roadways were built and maintained in Little Rock as well as the current regulations related to this.

COMPLETE STREET POLICY (Cont.)

The core policy is that the City will develop a safe, reliable, efficient, integrated and connected multimodal transportation system that will promote access and mobility for all users, and will ensure that the safety and convenience of all users of the transportation system are accommodated, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, users of public transportation, emergency responders, freight haulers, people of all ages and abilities, and adjacent land users. The Complete Streets Policy starts with this and then states that the city shall incorporate complete streets infrastructure into existing public streets to create a comprehensive, integrated, and connected transportation network that balances access, mobility and safety needs of all users of all ages and abilities and the needs of adjacent land users, thus providing a fully connected, integrated network that provides transportation options throughout the City whenever feasible.

The second issue was seeing if Little Rock's existing development criteria and regulations assure that the goal of Complete Streets can be met. It was felt by the committee looking at the issue that generally the existing regulations (ordinances) do encourage much of what is required for by the Complete Streets Policy. That is, there are pedestrian and vehicle requirements with the various classes of roads within Little Rock. One area found lacking was the requirements related to bicycle facilities.

Several changes to the Master Street Plan – Bike Plan section are proposed to assure that bicycles are treated as a valid mode of transportation and with safety in mind. These changes require both public and private development to include bicycle facilities where appropriate at Class III and Class II levels (Bike Routes and Lanes). The Plan would continue to require only public projects to provide Class I level bike facilities (Bike Paths).

Staff has prepared two ordinances that we believe will establish a Policy and then help to implement that Policy. The Complete Streets Policy states that the City of Little Rock's goal is a safe, reliable, efficient, integrated and connected multimodal transportation system for all modes and individuals. It does state some conditions under which a particular project would not be expected to fully meet the intent of Complete Streets. The second ordinance is intended to improve facilities and safety for bicyclists and include bicycles as a valid part of the transportation system.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS:

Notices were sent to the City contact list for ordinance amendments. This list includes engineers, developers and neighborhood organizations. Staff has received no contacts as a result of the mailing.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends approval of the Complete Streets Policy and of the Master Street Plan amendment as it relates to bicycle facilities.

COMPLETE STREET POLICY (Cont.)

PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:

(JUNE 12, 2014)

Tony Bozynski, Director of Planning & Development reviewed the process used to work on this effort. He also indicated that the Board had instructed Staff to development the Policy Statement. Since the City Manager's Office had been instructed by the Board of Directors to develop the Complete Streets Policy, Mr. Bozynski turned the meeting over to Mr. Bryan Day, Assistant City Manager. Mr. Day indicated that over the last decade or so, various communities around the country have been adopting similar 'Policies'. The purpose is to address all modes of transportation –walking, biking, vehicular, and others. Even the Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department has begun looking at such a Policy.

There are two ordinances; the first is the Complete Streets Policy. Mr. Day reviewed Section 1 of the ordinance and explained the reasoning for the wording. We have tried to include the best practices from other Policy statements around the country. Section II indicates that all projects would be subject to this Policy not just public projects. Section IV indicates the national documents the City will use to help assure best practices are used. Section V indicates what exceptions might be used. But Mr. Day assured the Commission that this means in the future on all projects 'Complete Streets' principles will be considered.

The committee also reviewed the related ordinances and found some changes needed in the Bike Plan – the second ordinance. Mr. Day indicated that for Class I Bike Paths (separate paths) the majority would need to be completed by the public sector.

Mr. Day indicated that these items will go to the Board of Directors in July. Commissioner Nunnley asked about multi-module versus intra-module. Commissioner Berry explained what each was. Mr. Day indicated the City Manager and Director of Public Works would be responsible to assure the Policy is followed. Mr. Berry indicated this type of Policy was good business and helped attract new businesses and younger workers.

Mason Ellis spoke in support. He indicated that the ability to walk and bike to work and home was a factor in his decision on where to settle. Mr. Ellis expressed appreciation for all the work on this effort.

Commissioner Dillon moved the approval and Commissioner Nunnley seconded. By a vote of 9 for, 0 against and 2 absent the motion was approved.