Complete Streets Smart Growth America Report Summary

December 1, 2021

OVERVIEW

Complete Streets is a road design concept that aims to accommodate multiple modes of travel including walking, biking, driving and public transit. The goal is to make streets safer and provide equal access to transportation facilities for all residents in the community regardless of income, age or disability status.

The term, Complete Streets, was first used in 2003 by David Goldberg of Smart Growth America (SGA). The idea grew out of a collaborative effort by SGA, America Bikes, AARP, APTA and other non-profits to include bicycle and pedestrian-centric provisions in the SAFETEA-LU federal transportation bill.[1]

The research literature on Complete Streets is extensive, including mostly academic research papers using case study methodologies. A literature search for U.S.-based documents covering the period January 2010 to September 2021 yielded one hundred and thirty-one relevant citations with abstracts. Citations were screened to remove results that did not include the term Complete Streets in the problem statement.

This review presents, in summary form, the results of a report published by the National Complete Streets Coalition, a program within Smart Growth America, which evaluated 37 projects in 31 cities across the country.[2] This report is typical of most of the existing literature and highlights, in an easy-to-understand-way, how Complete Streets policies are being implemented at the local level. It also attempts to evaluate the outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers identified and surveyed 100 Complete Streets projects across the country. Based on valid data collected from these surveys, the sample was narrowed to 37 projects. Those with inadequate or incomplete data were not included in the analysis.

Data on project costs by jurisdiction were collected where available and the researchers conducted a before and after analysis using relevant performance metrics:

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[1] From McCann, B. (2010, December 3). Happy Anniversary, Complete Streets! *Smart Growth America.* https://smartgrowthamerica.org/happy-anniversary-complete-streets/

[2] Anderson, G., Searfoss, L., (2015). *Safer Streets, Safer Economies: Complete Streets Project Outcomes from across the Country*. Smart Growth America National Complete Streets Coalition. http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/safer-streets-stronger-economies.pdf

- Collisions
- Automobile, pedestrians, bicycle and transit counts
- Employment
- Number of businesses
- Property values
- Private investment

Most communities did not collect this data as part of their business practices and, among the ones that did, different data collection methodologies were sometimes used. The data were obtained from local transportation and economic development agencies.

FINDINGS

Project Costs

Cost data were obtained for 28 of the 37 Complete Streets projects and ranged from roughly $40,000 thousand in Columbia, Missouri to $200.0 million in Cleveland, Ohio [See Table 1].

Table 1

	Jurisdiction (Project)	Project Cost ($mil)
1	Ohio, Cleveland (Euclid Avenue)	200.00
2	Illinois, Normal (Uptown District)	47.40
3	Minnesota, Minneapolis (Franklin Avenue)	28.00
4	New York, Hamburg (Route 62)	23.00
5	California, Lancaster (West Lancaster Blvd)	11.60
6	Missouri, Lee's Summit (Third Street)	10.50
7	North Carolina, Raleigh (Hillsborough Street)	7.50
8	California, Novato(Grant Avenue)	7.20
9	Nevada, Reno (Wells Avenue)	4.50
10	Louisiana, New Orleans (South Carrollton Avenue)	3.40
11	Missouri, Grand View (Main Street)	3.10
12	Oregon, Eugene (Alder Street)	2.30
13	Louisiana, New Orleans (Decatur Street)	1.50
14	Louisiana, New Orleans (Esplanade Avenue)	1.90
15	New York, New York (Columbus Avenue)	0.63
16	North Carolina, Charlotte (East Boulevard)	0.55
17	California, Berkley/Albany (Marin Avenue)	0.52
18	Illinois, Urbana (Philo Road)	0.50

	Jurisdiction (Project)	Project Cost ($mil)
19	Missouri, Columbia (Providence & Stewart Rd)	0.40
20	DC: Washington (15th Street NW)	0.37
21	North Carolina, W Jefferson (Downtown Streetscape)	0.30
22	Washington, Seattle (Stone Way N)	0.30
23	Iowa, Des Moines (Ingersoll Avenue)	0.29
24	Washington, Seattle (Nickerson Street)	0.24
25	Oregon, Portland (NE Multnomah Street)	0.10
26	New Mexico, Albuquerque (Central Avenue)	0.07
27	Washington, Seattle (NE 125th Street)	0.06
28	Missouri, Columbia (Windsor & Ash Streets)	0.04
	Total	**356.25**

Project Treatments

Of the 37 projects, adding bike lanes was the most common treatment (23), followed by changing the number of traffic lanes (17), and improving pedestrian sidewalks and crosswalks (16) [See Table 2].

Collision Outcomes

- About 70 percent of projects saw a reduction in the number of collisions (ranging from 5 percent to 90 percent, representing roughly $18.1 million in total collision costs (medical costs and property damage) avoided.

Multimodal Travel

- For the nine projects that had before-and-after data on foot, bike and vehicular traffic, the study found that three showed increases in trips by all modes. In three projects, the data showed a decrease in the number of car trips, while the total number of bike and pedestrian trips increased. Results were mixed in the remaining three projects.

- For projects that only collected data on foot traffic, trips increased in 12 of 13 projects.

- For projects that only collected data on bicycle traffic, trips grew in 22 of 23 projects.

- For projects with only automobile counts, 19 of 23 projects carried fewer automobiles.

- Of the 37 projects, only seven reported before and after transit ridership data. Of these, six saw increased ridership.

Economic Outcomes

Of the 37 projects, seven communities saw increases in employment; six experienced net new business increases; eight reported rises in adjacent property values and five realized additional private investment after Complete Streets projects were adopted.

CONCLUSION

The authors conclude that Complete Streets projects may result in safer streets, encourage more pedestrian and bicycle trips, and incur relatively low costs to implement. They also affirm that, while the results were promising, firm conclusions cannot be made on the economic benefits of this concept such as the creation of new businesses, higher property values and increased employment given the small sample and limited data available.

The report concludes by offering five recommendations on how communities can implement Complete Streets:

1) Adopt strong plans to achieve Complete Streets policies by obtaining buy-in from transportation officials and measure results of the projects.
2) Review and update existing standards to realize the vision.
3) Leverage existing data from multiple local, regional and state agencies to evaluate Complete Streets projects.
4) Measure the performance in ways that account for all users of the system and links outcomes to broader societal goals.
5) Engage the community during the planning and design phases by seeking input on what success would look like.

Table 2

Jurisdiction (Project)	Add dedicated bike lanes	Add landscaping/ streetscaping	Install bike racks	Build new traffic circles and turn lanes	Add pedestrian & bicycle crosswalks	Install wheelchair ramps	Build bus shelters/transit centers	Widen sidewalks & marked new crosswalks	Add lighting and street trees	Reduce or Add traffic lanes
Arizona, Tempe (College Avenue)	X	X							X	
California, Berkley/Albany (Marin Avenue)										
California, Lancaster (West Lancaster Blvd)		X						X	X	X
California, Long Beach (Broadway & 3rd Avenue)	X									X
California, Novato (Grant Avenue)		X	X	X				X		
DC: Washington (15th Street NW	X									
DC: Washington (16th /U St/NH Ave NW				X				X		
Florida, Orlando (Edgewater Drive)	X				X					
Illinois, Chicago (Kinzie Street)	X									X
Illinois, Urbana (Philo Road)		X								
Illinois, Normal (Uptown District)				X			X	X		
Iowa, Des Moines (Ingersoll Avenue)		X								
Iowa, Dubuque (Millwork District)		X			X			X		X
Louisiana, New Orleans (South Carrollton Avenue)	X	X						X		

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Louisiana, New Orleans (Esplanade Avenue)										X
Louisiana, New Orleans (Decatur Street)	X		X		X					
Massachusetts, Cambridge (Porter Square)	X				X			X		
Minnesota, Minneapolis (Franklin Avenue)	X									X
Missouri, Columbia (Providence & Stewart Rd)				X				X	X	
Missouri, Columbia (Windsor & Ash Streets)	X									
Missouri, Grand View (Main Street)		X			X			X		
Missouri, Lee's Summit (Third Street)								X	X	
Nevada, Reno (Wells Avenue)	X							X		X
New Mexico, Albuquerque (Central Avenue)	X									X
New York, Hamburg (Route 62)	X	X		X	X				X	X
New York, New York (Columbus Avenue)	X				X				X	X
North Carolina, Charlotte (East Boulevard)	X	X			X	X				X
North Carolina, Charlotte (Selwyn Avenue)	X			X						X

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North Carolina, Raleigh (Hillsborough Street)			X		X			X		X
North Carolina, W Jefferson (Downtown Streetscape)		X						X		
Ohio, Cleveland (Euclid Avenue)	X						X	X	X	
Oregon, Eugene (Alder Street)	X							X		
Oregon, Portland (NE Multnomah Street)	X									X
Pennsylvania, Philadelphia (Spruce & Pine Street)	X									
Washington, Seattle (Nickerson Street)	X			X	X					X
Washington, Seattle (NE 125th Street)	X			X	X					X
Washington, Seattle (Stone Way N)	X			X				X		X
Tally	**23**	**11**	**2**	**9**	**10**	**1**	**2**	**16**	**7**	**17**