Steps to Conducting a Complete Streets Assessment

Familiarize yourself with Complete Streets

Read through the Complete Streets Assessment Guidelines. This will give you an idea of what Complete Streets are and what to look for as you conduct your assessments. If you want to know more about the complete streets movement you can visit www.completestreets.org.

Plan

Decide where you are going to walk/drive/bike. Try to print out a map (Google maps, MapQuest etc…) of the area you are going to be assessing. You’ll also need a pen or pencil and a probably a clip board to make filling out the assessments easier.

Conducting Assessments

When conducting assessments you should break the streets into segments at your own discretion, often it is possible to simply go from intersection to intersection, but sometimes you may need to break a street up into smaller assessment areas. Some streets you may also have to do a different assessment form for each side of the same section of street because of differences in conditions.

NOTE: Please try not to group multiple roads/streets onto the same Assessment form. There should be at least ONE ASSESSMENT PER ROAD/STREET

When You’re Done

Go over the assessment after you get back home to make sure you have answered all the questions and add any comments you feel are appropriate. Also make sure the heading is correct and says what street the assessment is for and where specifically you began and ended that particular assessment form. Try to use street names for beginning and ending points if possible as opposed to landmarks.

Step 6 – Options for Improvement

If you’ve finished your assessments and you’re wondering what options there are for improving the accessibility of your roads and streets take a look at the Complete Streets Design Guidance at for some ideas of how streets and roads can be improved through design.

Also, see the Heart Networks Complete Streets for North Country Communities: A Handbook for Advocates and Community Partners for more information on how to utilize your assessment data and how to advocate for Complete Streets in your community.

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Complete Streets Assessment Guidelines

It is the vision of any Complete Streets campaign that streets, roadways, sidewalks and other transportation facilities are safe and accessible for all users at all times. It is important to conduct street, sidewalk and rural road assessments to establish an inventory of existing infrastructure conditions for biking, walking and accessibility in each community. Conducting these assessments in each target community will allow you to identify and prioritize those areas that need improvement.

Below are some guidelines and explanations of what you should be looking for as you complete these Assessments in your community.

**Sidewalks** – to the right is a picture of an ideal sidewalk (Figure 1) in a highly trafficked area (perhaps the main street of your community). The Frontage zone should be at least 2ft wide to leave space for opening doors. The Sidewalk itself should be a minimum of 4ft wide. The Furniture Zone (sometimes called the buffer zone) should be 4ft wide. The Furniture Zone is not required but it provides a barrier between pedestrians and motorists as well as a location for telephone poles, garbage cans etc... (NYSDOT)

Many streets in your community are probably less traveled and will not necessarily have a Furniture Zone or a frontage zone which is OK. However, it is important to still be aware of obstacles in the sidewalk which would make it difficult for someone with a disability to get around, such as telephone poles (i.e. photo 1). Sidewalks should have at least 4ft of navigable space clear of obstacles (NYSDOT). Also note the maintenance of the sidewalk in photo 1. Sidewalks with cracks and holes or covered in dirt will be harder to navigate.

You should also keep an eye out for the slope of the sidewalk (Figure 2). Sidewalks which have a significant slope can be more difficult for someone with a disability to navigate. Additionally they will be more dangerous in the winter.

**Driveways, Crosswalks and Ramps** – Where a sidewalk crosses the street or a driveway there should be a flat, level surface available as well as a ramp if necessary. For driveways there are generally two options, the sidewalk breaks for the driveway or the sidewalk continues over the driveway. When sidewalks break for driveways, a ramp should be used if necessary and the crossing should be flat and level. If the sidewalk continues over the driveway it is important that it is not sloped (see figure 2) where it crosses the driveway.

Photo 2 exhibits many of the desirable elements of a crosswalk. Crosswalks should have curb ramps on both ends. Crosswalks should also be well marked with signage on the side of the road and if necessary in the middle of the road.
If the road is very wide an island might also be appropriate. Also, notice how the curb ramp on the right is extended from the sidewalk and has a concrete post at the end of it. This protects the pedestrian and allows them to see and be seen farther down the road. The painted markings on a crosswalk should also be clear and distinct and the crosswalk surface should be smooth and level. If it is a busy intersection the crosswalk may also have a Crossing Signal.

Photo 3 shows an acceptable ramp. It has a gentle slope with flared sides and Detectable warnings (bumps) for the vision impaired. CAUTION: This ramp has a problem. Notice how the curb at the end of this ramp is slightly higher than the ramp. Ramps should be flush with the road. Also, check for wear on detectable warnings, they are often worn flat and need replacing.

Roads, Streets and Bike Facilities – Most of the area in your community is most likely taken up by rural roads where there is no sidewalk. Where roads do not have sidewalks a usable shoulder should be provided not only for safe motor vehicle travel but safe bicycle and pedestrian travel as well. Rural roads should have, at a minimum, a clearly marked shoulder which is 2-3 feet in width whenever feasible (NYSDOT). This provides space for cars to pull off the road as well as space for pedestrians and bicyclists to use the road. There should also be no debris on the shoulder.

Rural roads which are heavily traveled by bicyclists and busy streets in town may need additional accommodations so that bicyclists may safely use the roadway. An officially designated bike lane or a shared use lane is one option. Figure 3 Below shows an example of a shared use lane. A shared use lane is part of the driving lane but designated as an area where bicyclists should ride, The NYSDOT recommends a shared use lane be a minimum of 12ft (3.6m) wide not including any on street parking. Figure 4 shows a sample bike lane. A bike lane is a marked, separate lane exclusively for bicyclists. The NYSDOT recommends a bike lane be at least 5ft

Signage - Lastly, areas with heavy traffic or many bicyclists should have plenty of signage. The NYSDOT requires striping for an official bike lane and recommends some sort of painted marking in the lane as seen in photo 4. ANY area which bicyclists or pedestrians may use whether it’s a rural road or a busy main street can benefit from increased signage, some possible signage is shown in Figure 5.
Street & Sidewalk Assessment

Town: _____________________ Date: ______________ Street Name: ____________________

Segment: __________________ To _______________________ Street Side (odd/even): _______

**SIDEWALK**

1. What land use best characterizes this segment?
   - Commercial
   - Residential
   - Mixed
   - Undeveloped

2. Is there a sidewalk present on this segment?
   - Yes
   - No **(If No skip to question #11)**

3. Sidewalk Material (check all that are present)
   - Concrete
   - Brick
   - Asphalt
   - Other ________________

4. Condition of sidewalk?
   - Good: no surface problems; no obstacles
   - Fair: minor surface problems; minor obstacles
   - Poor: major surface problems; significant obstacles

5. Width of Sidewalk?
   - <4’
   - 4’-6’
   - > 6’

6. Do any obstacles block the sidewalk?
   - Yes
   - No
   - Please specify__________________________

7. Is there a buffer between the sidewalk and street?
   - Curb
   - Grass/trees/planting strip
   - On-street parking lane
   - None

8. Are there problems with sidewalk maintenance?
   - Vegetation/grass growing over sidewalk
   - Water/sand/gravel accumulation
   - Snow/ice removal
   - None
   - Other ____________________________

9. Are there non-residential driveways on this segment?
   - Yes
   - No

10. If yes, how are driveway crossings designated?
    - Marked crosswalk
    - Sidewalk
    - Not designated

**STREET/SHOULDER**

11. What is the condition of the street and shoulder?
    - Good: no surface problems, no obstacles
    - Fair: minor surface problems, minor obstacles
    - Poor: major surface problems, major obstacles

12. Is there a designated shoulder (marked with lines)?
    - Yes
    - No

13. Is the shoulder marked as a designated bike lane?
    - Yes
    - No

14. Is the shoulder usable for walking and/or biking?
    - Walking
    - Biking
    - Both
    - None

15. Is the shoulder used for parking?
    - Yes
    - No

16. If yes, are parking spaces marked?
    - Yes
    - No

17. Is pedestrian or bike signage provided on this segment?
    - Pedestrian
    - Bicycle
    - Both
    - None

18. Are mid-block crosswalks provided to destinations on this segment?
    - Yes
    - No
    - If so how many?_____

19. Condition of mid-block crosswalks?
    - Good: no problems with markings/pavement
    - Fair: minor problems with markings/pavement
    - Poor: major problems with markings/pavement

20. Condition of mid-block curb ramps?
    - Good: flush with road, detectible warnings present
    - Fair: not flush with road, detectible warnings worn out
    - Poor: not flush with road, no detectable warnings
21. Destinations in this segment

_______________________________________
_______________________________________
_______________________________________
_______________________________________
_______________________________________

Comments and Recommendations

Please list any additional comments you have about this street and/or sidewalk segment and/or recommendations for improving walking and biking.

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INTERSECTION & CROSSWALK ASSESSMENT

Date: __________ Town: __________ Intersection of (A/B) ___________________ & (C/D) ______________

**Curb Ramp**
- Condition of Ramp: [ ] Good [ ] Fair [ ] Poor
- Flush with road: [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Detectable warning: [ ] Yes [ ] No

**Curb Extension**
- [ ] Yes [ ] No

**Street A**
- # of lanes: _____

**Street B**
- # of lanes: _____

**Street C**
- # of lanes: _____

**Street D**
- # of lanes: _____

**Curb Ramp**
- Condition of Ramp: [ ] Good [ ] Fair [ ] Poor
- Flush with road: [ ] Yes [ ] No
- Detectable warning: [ ] Yes [ ] No

**Curb Extension**
- [ ] Yes [ ] No

Lable type of crosswalk on map above:

- [ ] S
- [ ] ST
- [ ] C
- [ ] D
- [ ] Z
- [ ] L

Label Condition of each crosswalk on map above:
- G (Good) – no problems with markings/pavement
- F (Fair) – minor problems with markings/pavement
- P (Poor) – major problems with markings/pavement

If there is NO crosswalk in one section mark “NA” in that section

For the questions below simply check the box if they are present, you do not need to mark the diagram

**Intersection Controls**

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<th>Street B</th>
<th>Street C</th>
<th>Street D</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>[ ]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Signal Lights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stop Bar</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Pedestrian Signals**

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<th>Street C</th>
<th>Street D</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Timer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Push Button</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audible Signal</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Comments & Recommendations

Please list any additional comments you have about this intersection and/or recommendations for improving walking and biking in this intersection.

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Complete Streets Design Guidance

Below are a few of the design options available which could improve the safety and accessibility of streets and roads for all users.

Curb Extensions – (photo 1) Curb extensions are where a sidewalk juts out into the street to provide access to a crosswalk. Curb extensions serve a dual purpose. First, they slow traffic down by narrowing the roadway. Second, they allow the pedestrian to get out into the street where they can better see oncoming traffic and oncoming traffic can better see them before they step into the roadway.

Crossing Island – (photo 2) Crossing islands usually appear in the middle of a crosswalk at a particularly busy or wide section of road. They allow pedestrians to cross half-way and then wait to cross the second half of the road, particularly useful for individuals with a disability. They also serve as a traffic calming device (slow traffic down).

Raised Crosswalk – A raised crosswalk is a raised strip of pavement where a crosswalk is located, it is usually raised to the level of the sidewalks on either side. This provides a speed bump of sorts which encourages motorists to slow down and yield for pedestrians. It can also eliminate the need for ramps if the crosswalk is at the same level as the sidewalks on either side.

Ladder Bars for Crosswalks – Ladder Bars (photo 4) in a crosswalk are much more visible to pedestrians and motorists than two straight lines going across the road.

Signage – (Photo 3) There are many different types of signage you can add to a roadway. Share the road, pedestrian crossing, school zone and walk to school zone to name a few. Signage helps raise motorist’s awareness of pedestrians and bicyclists regardless of the location.

Signalized Crossing - countdowns, sounds – (photo 5) Busy intersections may also have crossing signals, to make signals useful for people of all abilities they should contain an auditory signal for the vision impaired as well as a countdown timer so pedestrians know how much time they have to cross.
**Curb Cuts** – (photos 6, 7) Curb cuts are required by ADA standards. They should have a gentle slope, flared sides and be at least 3’ wide at the base and flush with the road.

**Photo 7**

**Truncated Domes** - bumps at crosswalks – Crosswalks are required by the ADA to have some sort of textured signal on the sidewalk on either side to alert pedestrians that they are entering a crosswalk. Usually sidewalks have truncated domes (bumps) to indicate a crosswalk. Truncated domes can be made of cement and laid right into the sidewalk but tend to wear out very quickly that way. Rubberized strips with truncated domes are available (photo 7), they’re more durable, cheaper, and easier to replace than concrete.

**Photo 8**

**Bike Lane Markings** – (photos 8, 9) bike lanes should be marked with a stripe as well as a stencil in the road. Stencils are usually a picture of a bike or the words BIKE LANE. Also, some places actually pave a bike lane with colored pavement (photo 8) to make an even stronger distinction between vehicle lane and the bike lane.

**Photo 9**

**Stop bars before crosswalks** – (photo 10) in addition to signs marking crosswalks there can also be a stencil on the pavement that alerts motorists of the crosswalk. It may be a line or XING or some similar stencil

**Photo 10**

**Paint** – There are different painting options for crosswalks etc... One method, thermo-plastic, actually lays paint down within the pavement. Another method, inlay tape, can be used on smoother roads without reconstruction or repaving the road. These methods are slightly more expensive but last much longer than standard surface paint and pay off in the long run.

**Landscaping** – This usually takes place in the “Furniture Zone” of the sidewalk (the area between a sidewalk and the paved roadway). Increasing the presence of trees, bushes and benches in the furniture zone will require narrowing the road which will slow traffic. Also, the more aesthetically pleasing environment will help slow down traffic and trees can protect pedestrians from motorists.

**Road Diet** – A road diet is a combination of any number of the design solutions mentioned above including narrower lanes, bike lane separated from parking, turn lane, crossing islands, landscaping, etc. Road Diets make a road/street more attractive, they slow traffic and they make the street safer for all users. Below is a model of a possible road diet.