



# **Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania; A Case Study of Transportation Policy for the Public's Health**

**2018**

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## **Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania; A Case Study of Transportation Policy for the Public's Health**

### **Introduction**

“Complete streets” are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit users of all ages and abilities. Complete streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work. By adopting a Complete Streets policy, communities direct their transportation planners and engineers to routinely design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation.<sup>i</sup>

The premise of this study is that complete streets policies lay the foundation for safe and convenient travel for all persons by all modes of transportation. These policies have the potential to yield an increase in opportunities for active transportation and to ultimately improve the health of the communities impacted. WalkWorks, a collaboration of the Pennsylvania Department of Health and the University of Pittsburgh, subscribes to the philosophy that the intent of policy is to enhance outcomes. Specifically, adoption of complete streets policies is among the priorities of WalkWorks, as such policies can provide increased opportunities for physical activity and thereby improve the health of Pennsylvanians. To gain an understanding of the status of complete streets policies, as well as the perceived opportunities and obstacles to adopting and implementing the policies in Pennsylvania, WalkWorks conducted a survey of municipalities entitled Status of Complete Streets in Pennsylvania; a Survey (hereinafter referred to as “survey”) that examined the policies adopted to date and interviewed representatives from communities that have adopted policies.

Over the last 15 years, attention to complete streets policy has been significant, though not consistent, throughout the United States. While the focus has started to shift toward providing more multimodal transportation options for communities, the degree of awareness, level of consideration and adoption, and the extent to which adoption of complete streets policies is making a difference is not clear at this time.<sup>ii</sup>

The National Complete Streets Coalition (Coalition), a program of Smart Growth America, promotes the development and implementation of complete streets policies and professional practices, which have become a purposeful response to address the gaps in street designs and ensure streets are accessible and safe for everyone. At this time, over 1200 policies are in place in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. The policies have been adopted by 33 state governments, 77 regional planning organizations and 955 individual municipalities. The Coalition, which has been evaluating policies since 2006, reports that the policies passed in 2016 are the strongest yet. Prior to 2012, there was not a policy that received a score greater than 90, with 100 being the highest possible rating. One policy scored 100 in 2015 (and that was an executive order for Reading, Pennsylvania). In 2016, 51 policies received a score of 90 or higher, with three receiving a score of 100.<sup>iii</sup> This is evidence that an increasing number of jurisdictions are passing stronger and more effective policies. The Coalition evaluates Complete Streets policies based on a comprehensive policy model that includes ten ideal elements:

- **Vision** – The policy establishes a motivating vision for why the community wants Complete Streets: to improve safety, promote better health, make overall travel more efficient, improve the convenience of choices, or for other reasons.
- **All users and modes** – The policy specifies that “all modes” includes walking, bicycling, riding public transportation, driving trucks, buses and automobiles and “all users” includes people of all ages and abilities.
- **All projects and phases** – All types of transportation projects are subject to the policy, including design, planning, construction, maintenance, and operations of new and existing streets and facilities.
- **Clear, accountable exceptions** – Any exceptions to the policy are specified and approved by a high-level official.
- **Network** – The policy recognizes the need to create a comprehensive, integrated and connected network for all modes and encourages street connectivity.
- **Jurisdiction** – All other agencies that govern transportation activities can clearly understand the policy’s application and may be involved in the process as appropriate.
- **Design** – The policy recommends use of the latest and best design criteria and guidelines, while recognizing the need for design flexibility to balance user needs in context.
- **Context sensitivity** – The current and planned context: buildings, land use, transportation and community needs, is considered when planning and designing transportation solutions.
- **Performance measures** – The policy includes performance standards with measurable outcomes.
- **Implementation steps** – Specific next steps for implementing the policy are described.

The ten elements were developed and agreed upon by members of the Coalition’s Steering Committee and workshop instructors. Based on decades of collective experience in transportation planning and design, the Coalition considers the ten elements to be a national model of best practice that can be employed in nearly all types of Complete Streets policies at all levels of governance. Its scoring of policies is based on the Coalition’s analysis of how jurisdictions incorporated the elements into their policies.<sup>iv</sup>

Like many other states’ departments of transportation, the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) has not formally adopted a complete streets policy. PennDOT supports the development of local complete streets policies as part of municipalities’ efforts to improve land use planning through zoning and other regulations to implement a community vision that includes a multimodal transportation network serving users of all ages and abilities. Further, PennDOT is committed to improving the transportation system and Pennsylvania’s communities through a collaborative planning process called PennDOT Connects. PennDOT is interested in working with communities when the impacted streets are under state jurisdiction. It considers local planning efforts to be critical to fully realizing the potential of the PennDOT Connects process, which works to appropriately plan, scope, design and fund projects that meet the local and regional transportation needs. By working with local governments, creative transportation and land use solutions can be identified to sustain and expand mobility while improving communities throughout the Commonwealth.

At the time “A Case Study of Transportation Policy for the Public’s Health” was initiated, the intention was to make the survey and analysis of its results the focus. While respondents were not asked to provide their written policies, upon review of the responses to the survey questions, it became evident that an overview of complete streets – known to be adopted in Pennsylvania – was warranted. Because complete streets are a relatively new concept to many municipalities in Pennsylvania, the distinction between a practice or a written policy was not as important to this evaluation as were the actions being taken.

Thus, discussion of these adopted policies (whether written or based upon practice) and corresponding implementation efforts follow the reporting of the survey results. Throughout the remainder of this document, references to “policy” are generic. When used, the term refers to practices or written policies, resolutions, executive orders and ordinances adopted by a community.

### **Issue**

Streets have been designed to serve a single mode of transportation: the motor vehicle. Exacerbating that issue, many communities, particularly those of rural Pennsylvania, were developed without sidewalks. Today, an emerging body of research suggests multiple connections between community design, active transportation and health issues.

Communities need practical and realistic solutions to make it easier for people to walk, bicycle, use public transportation, and drive while feeling safe. As alluded to in the Introduction, complete streets and related policies and plans can lead to redesigning streets so that people have choices other than to rely on motor vehicles. The issue that often arises is the adoption and implementation of effective policies and plans.<sup>v</sup> The challenges and means to adopt and implement complete streets policies vary among municipalities. In some cases, it is a matter of educating staff and/or members of the governing body about the purpose of and what makes for a good policy for the individual community. It is not uncommon for governing bodies to be reluctant to adopt plans for fear of the potential associated costs and/or the impact on constituents. An example is a plan for a complete street that called for elimination of parking. In that case, residents had not been invited to provide input during the planning phase; in the end, the residents expressed their opposition to the elected officials who were not inclined to adopt the plan until it was modified.

### **Hypothesis**

Integrating health-enhancing choices into transportation policy has the potential to save lives and money by preventing or reducing chronic diseases, reducing motor vehicle injuries and deaths, and improving environmental health while stimulating economic development and increasing access to opportunities, goods and services for all.<sup>vi</sup> A complete streets policy that considers all the essential elements should optimize multimodal transportation, thereby maximizing walkability and bikeability. This will ultimately increase physical activity and improve the health of residents of the commonwealth. Adoption of a strong policy reflects the commitment of elected officials to streets that are safe and convenient for all persons. Adoption of a policy is a first step, whereas implementation often requires significant costs for engineering and construction to provide infrastructure to walkability and bikeability.

## Discussion

WalkWorks aims to increase opportunities for physical activity, including supporting the development of multimodal transportation plans and related policies, as they are instrumental, if not critical, to facilitating more walkable and bikeable communities. This study was conducted and is reported in three parts with the intention of informing WalkWorks and others about the status, gaps and potential of complete streets policies in Pennsylvania.

WalkWorks is aware of, through its network of partners throughout the state, 10 policies formally adopted by cities, boroughs and townships. Graphic illustrations of both the responses to the survey and relevant findings from the 10 policies will be found in the following discussion.

### 1) A survey of municipalities in Pennsylvania

To obtain a baseline of the extent to which the concept of complete streets is understood and being considered in Pennsylvania, a 20-question survey was crafted and directed to all municipal entities in Pennsylvania in the fall of 2017. The Pennsylvania Municipal League, Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs and Pennsylvania Association of Township Supervisors generously disseminated notification of the electronic survey to their respective members. See Appendix for “Status of Complete Streets in Pennsylvania; a Survey.” Members were advised that the results of the survey would contribute to a case study pertaining to the consideration and/or development of complete streets policies, the types of policies that have been considered (and adopted, if so), the strength of those policies, the extent to which they have been implemented, and obstacles encountered by those who have considered and not moved forward with development of policies. Inadvertently, the survey helped to reveal the level of knowledge about the purpose and/or applicability of complete streets to the community represented by the respondent.

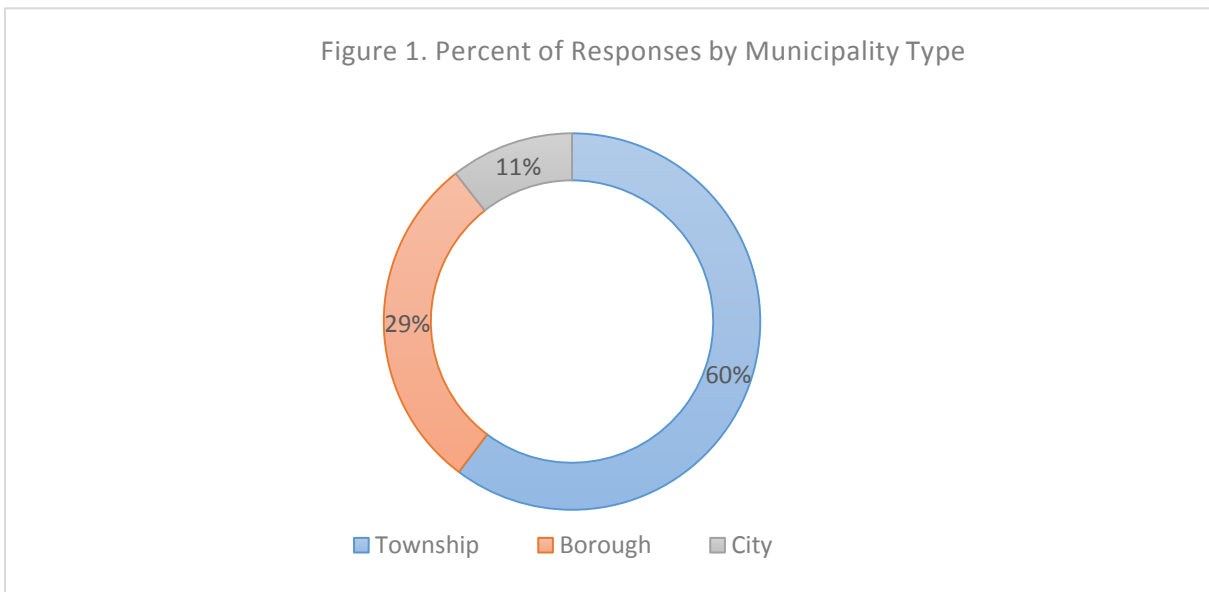
Respondents were invited, though not required, to identify themselves and/or the communities on whose behalf they were answering the survey. From those who did list their email addresses and/or elected to share identifiable information, it is obvious that the respondents varied significantly in their positions; respondents included planners, managers and even elected officials. It can be assumed, then, that the level of knowledge and involvement with complete streets varied significantly among the respondents. Not requiring the respondents to identify themselves was purposeful to maximize the number of individuals willing to complete the survey. There is no correlation between those who identified themselves and their responses. To that end, depending on one’s answers, the survey directed some to omit several questions. See Appendix for the survey and a diagram reflecting the flow in which respondents were directed to questions. The following provides a perspective on the number of responses, which became fewer throughout the length of the survey until the final question.

- A total of 339 individuals answered question #1, which pertained to the level of government represented by their responses.
- Of 317 answering how they would classify their communities, 50 percent indicated “rural,” 27 percent said “suburban,” 18 percent answered “urban,” and the remaining four percent answered “other.”

- By question #5, which asked whether the governing body with which one is associated has adopted a complete streets policy, 211 responded: 23\* “yes” and 188 “no.”
- Of the 23 responding “yes,” 13 went on to answer follow-up questions.
- The 188 individuals responding “no” to question #5 were directed to question #19.
- There were 109 responses to question #19, which asked for comments about the extent to which discussion on the topic of complete streets has been held.
- The 156 individuals who responded to question #20 represented six counties, 16 cities, 44 boroughs, and 90 townships.

\*The 23 individuals answering “yes” to whether their communities had adopted complete streets policies may have misinterpreted the question, as only 13 responded to the follow-up questions. Further, we have been unable to identify as many as 23 policies in Pennsylvania.

The following graphic reflects the types of municipalities represented by the 156 respondents volunteering to identify themselves and/or their communities in response to the final survey question. Of the respondents who chose to identify themselves, 60% were township employees, 29% were borough employees, and 11% were city employees.



Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

The 13 respondents indicating their communities adopted complete streets policies were asked to share the major objective of their communities’ policies; the majority emphasized multimodal considerations, specifically for pedestrians and bicyclists and several referenced integrating physical activity into the lives of residents. There were 23 responses to this question, a number far greater than those who indicated that complete street policies were adopted in their communities. Since only 13 respondents noted they adopted complete street policies, it is possible that respondents misinterpreted the question and/or they were unfamiliar with the purpose and concept of complete streets. It is also likely that some employ the practice in planning for their communities without having formally adopted policies. Table 1 presents the major objectives that the respondents listed.

<b>Table 1</b> <b>Complete Streets Survey</b> <b>Verbatim Responses to:</b> <u>Please share the major objective of your policy.</u>
To maintain our streets and provide walking and bicycle paths whenever and wherever possible.
Creation of new streets that are multi-modal, recognizing the importance of bicyclist and pedestrian amenities, active transportation, recreational aspects, and transit incorporation.
To service all adopted ordained roads in the township
To develop transportation systems that serve all transportation modes including pedestrian, bicycles, vehicles and parking.
All streets are to be complete for pedestrian, bicycle, and alternative modes of transportation where appropriate and regularly monitored.
Parking along streets
Evaluate and include various modes of transportation throughout municipality by providing interconnected routes to major areas of interest.
To shift the discussions around planning and development to put a higher (and earlier-in-the-process) priority on safe and equitable mobility.
Adopted a Complete Streets Policy to better integrate physical activity into the daily lives of those who live in and visit the borough through an increased emphasis on various active transportation modes which ultimately contribute to improved health, reduced traffic congestion which will improve air quality, reduce harmful environmental impacts and create an economically vibrant twenty-first century community.
The Complete Streets policy of the City of York is developed to provide guidance to decision makers, engineers, and planners to ensure that multimodal elements are incorporated into all transportation improvement projects taking place in the City.
To better integrate physical activity into the daily lives of those who live in and visit the City through an increased emphasis on active transportation modes which will contribute to improved health, reduced traffic congestion, improved air quality, reduced emissions of greenhouse gases and more economically vibrant communities.
To keep the motoring public safe.
To encourage consideration of all users in planning and engineering transportation projects that prioritize pedestrians, bicycles, cars and trucks in that order. To improve walk ability, safety and access to a healthy life style.

Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

The survey listed specific elements and asked which were included in respondents' policies. As seen in Table 2, physical activity or promoting public health is the most common element cited as being included in the policies adopted in Pennsylvania (11 of the 13). Most of the policies reportedly include exceptions for implementation and consider land use in applying the policy.



<b>Table 2</b> <b>Responses of the 13 Indicating Their Communities Have Passed</b> <b>Complete Streets Policies</b>	<b>Number</b>	
	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
Is encouraging physical activity or promoting public health an explicit goal of the policy?	11	2
Does the policy allow for exceptions?	9	4
Is land use a factor in selecting specific streets and/or appropriate design treatments?	8	5
Does the policy prioritize projects and/or include a method for prioritization?	2	11

Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

Support during the development of the policy is critical to the implementation of a complete streets policy. The support of decision-makers, i.e., the elected officials, is essential to the development of policies to optimize the likelihood of their endorsement for implementation. The survey asked respondents to rate the level of support from various individuals and organizations for their complete streets initiatives on a scale of one to five (with one representing “impedes or does not support at all” and five being “fully supports”). Table 3 depicts the average level of support by category indicated by 13 respondents.

<b>Table 3</b> <b>Average Level of Support Perceived to Given by Category</b>	
<b>Category of Support</b>	<b>Average</b>
Metropolitan and rural planning organizations	4.43
Elected officials	4.38
Bicycle advocacy group	4.22
Planning department	4.17
Pedestrian advocacy group	4.13
Public works department	4.08
Public health	4.00
Transit group	3.83
PennDOT	3.80
AARP	3.67

Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

Respondents were instructed to select **all** measures that support a complete streets and/or multimodal transportation policy in place in their respective communities. As evidenced on Table 4, the two measures reported to be in place in most communities are pedestrian and bicycle plans – 29 and 28, respectively. The measures that are in place in the fewest number of communities are (1) a data collection policy that includes users and modes over time and (2) adoption of design guidelines of the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) – nine and seven responses, respectively.

<b>Table 4 Number of Respondents Indicating Their Communities Have Measures In-Place in Support of Complete Streets and/or Multimodal Transportation</b>	
<b>Measure</b>	<b>Number</b>
Adoption of a pedestrian plan	29
Adoption of a bicycle plan	28
A formally adopted complete streets resolution	23
A formally adopted complete streets policy	22
A complete streets checklist and/or performance metrics	20
A citizen advisory committee for complete streets/multi-modal/active transportation	19
Training to enhance staff skills related to complete streets policy implementation	16
Agency policies and procedures to serve all transportation modes	15
Design guidelines to serve all modes	14
Data collection policy that includes users and modes over time	9
Adoption of NACTO design guidelines	7
Other	24

Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

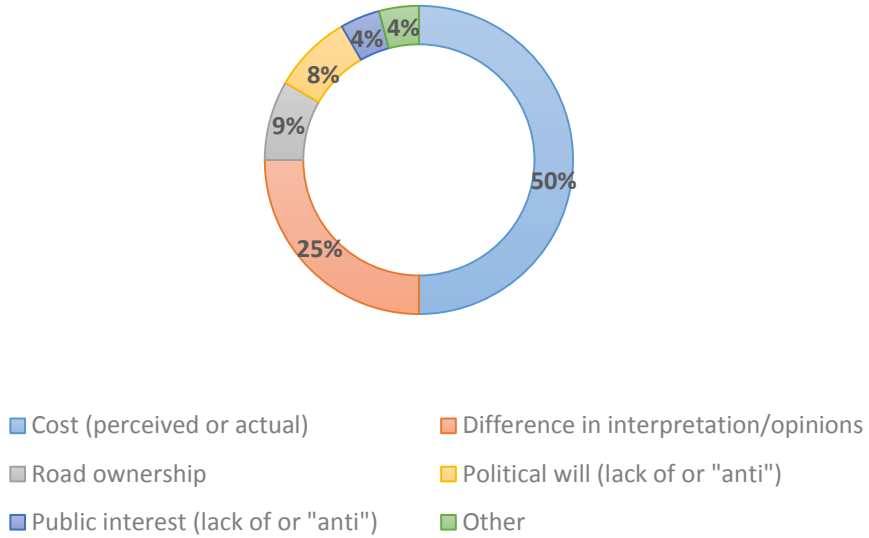
The survey proffered a list of topics or activities and asked which were included in the respondents' policies. Table 5 reflects how many of the 13 respondents reporting that they have adopted policies incorporate the specific elements as listed.

<b>Table 5 Of the 13 Reporting Adopted Policies, Number of Respondents by Elements Subject to the Policy</b>	
<b>Elements Subject to Policy</b>	<b>Number</b>
Design	10
New construction	10
Rehabilitation projects	9
Maintenance and operation	8
Planning	8
Project selection	5
Overlay projects	4
None of the above	2

Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

Fifty percent of those responding to a question about barriers cited cost as the number one obstacle to implementation of complete streets. The differences in interpretation or opinions of what complete streets means to a community is the second most frequently reason cited as to why the policies are not implemented. This is evidence of an opportunity for further orientation regarding complete streets. See Figure 2 for Barriers to Implementing Complete Streets Policies.

Figure 2  
 Barriers to Implementing Complete Streets Policies: What barriers, if any, exist that are preventing or may prevent implementation of complete streets in your jurisdiction?



Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

Respondents were asked, if they do not currently have Complete Streets policies, in any form, if there has been discussion about development of such. For purposes of reporting, Table 6 reflects the number of responses to each of six categories beginning with “no discussion” to “not interested.”

Table 6 Reasons for Not Adopting Complete Streets Policies; Number by Categorized Responses	
No discussion/not familiar	54
Rural area/no streets	18
Discussion/consideration	12
Interested/would like more information	10
Policy under development	8
Not interested	2

Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

Table 7 shows the verbatim responses of those who indicated that they are interested, though challenges inhibit their movement toward a policy.

<b>Table 7 Reasons for Not Adopting Complete Streets Policies; Interested/Challenges</b>
We struggle to get enough money to fix the roads and bridges. If we did not have liquid fuels money our roads would be in very bad shape. The only money I get to fix the roads and bridges is from liquid fuels. I don't get any general fund money, 57% of general fund money goes to the police department.
The community non-profit development corporation, which is supported fully by the municipal government, has had discussions and programs to increase bike/ped safety and accessibility. The borough council has not itself had such discussions.
General reluctance and cautiousness about cost or incurring new requirements. Also lack of control since PennDOT controls the main streets and those are hardly treated as Complete Streets.
Eight years of excessive turnover in elected officials placed the Township in maintenance mode amidst unplanned growth, there is no current vision.
We accomplish the goals (or at least some of them) of complete streets by our current Ordinances which require pedestrian and bike-oriented streets that focus on people first and other modes secondarily.
This has never even been a topic of conversation in the municipality as far as I know. There is no "multi-modal" anything though and streets are maintained but no long-range planning is done even for that. Essentially volunteer elected officials are mainly concerned about money and do not take the time nor do they want to spend the money for such planning and organizing.
There has been no discussion on "Complete Streets" policy in our Township. In fact, I had to Google to see what exactly was "Complete Streets". We do have street specifications for streets in the township for new development but does not include the "Complete Streets" for pedestrians, bikers, etc. We are mostly Rural with pockets of development closer to the City where public sewer/water exist. Population is over 10,000. We did widen two of our more heavily travelled roads in the past 10 years, but this took about 3-4 years of liquid fuels allocation (\$750,000 total cost of ONE project) just to widen the road to have a shoulder for walkers/bikers and vehicular traffic. Very expensive.
The complete streets models pushed by local entities upon Townships are designed primarily for urban areas, i.e. cities and boroughs. Despite numerous attempts to encourage a suburban version, Lancaster County has declined. As such, only Lancaster City and a couple boroughs have adopted the model resolution. Townships will remain reluctant until a version more suited for us is presented.
Current Complete Street policies in the Commonwealth only create more issues by restricting vehicular traffic flow and/or volume, aggravating drivers, non-existent responsibilities i.e. lacking or non-enforced laws to control pedestrians and bicyclists, and a lack of input from the people that already use the street and own the adjacent property. Realistically a Complete Street Policy needs to vary based on the road type and needs funding for upkeep and maintenance by the private groups lobbying for this type of regulation etc etc etc etc.
We have pursued the construction of pedestrian bridges and sidewalks in areas that are unsafe or impossible to walk. Yardley Borough last year won a multimodal grant to start a North Main Street sidewalk but PennDOT review and requirements shortened the span to about 25% of our original plan. State ownership of our main roads is the biggest barrier to making them safe for walking.

Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

In addition to sharing specific challenges, respondents offered other reasons for not adopting or considering the development of Complete Streets policies. Table 8 provides those verbatim responses.

<b>Table 8 Reasons for Not Adopting Complete Streets Policies; Other Comments</b>
Although I am quite aware of complete streets policy of Penn DOT, staff there often are not familiar. Also, our Supervisors have not been very interested in the concept to date. Our township has a lot of rural streets and walking outside our central park is not encouraged.
Most of the concepts in Complete Streets have already been adopted in our ordinances. "Complete Streets" is just a new name for things already being done.
A walking path was initiated at the local Airport property about 2 years ago but not sure if there still an area utilized for this purpose.
We are underway on a sidewalk study which should be completed in the first quarter of 2018.
Putting in new sidewalks in 2018 along the streets.
The only discussion was on creating a walking trail at Keene Community Park in Penns Creek where our Township is located.
We will be working on a sidewalk plan for the Township, that will identify the areas that need sidewalk and where sidewalk needs to be replaced or repaired.
Council is beginning to talk more about alternate forms of transportation.
I'm not sure how you are defining a "complete streets policy", but we have resolutions adopting roads over certain periods of time throughout the City. The street maintenance is handled by our Street Dept. and I evaluate our streets in the spring and fall to determine what specific maintenance needs are required at various streets. This includes milling/overlay projects, base repairs, scratch coating, seal coating, crack sealing, inlet and storm line repairs/replacement- along with cleaning the storm inlets and pipes. Trimming of tree limbs/shrubs, and weeds as well as sign reflectivity evaluations are all performed annually as part of our street maintenance processes.
Ours is a rural community. Before gas well drilling, one could step outside and stroll on "sidewalkless" roads without sidewalks or cut through the woods to get to the town's only store. Not so today. The roads have become dangerous places to drive, let alone dangerous places to walk. Kids used to be able to ride bikes on the roads. Now the tankers and eighteen wheelers ride the roads. There will be no "complete streets" till the drilling is done.
We have recently monitored through a spreadsheet for work repairs that are done for storm basins, pipe work, manholes, etc. and have taken a PIBB loan to pave over 60% of our streets. We do not have a policy but have had many discussions about planning for our community.
NO, we have no sidewalks or walkways. This is an outdoor recreational area for hunting, fishing, snowmobiles, 4-wheelers etc.
We have a complete streets LISTING.

Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

When asked to “share any efforts or activities that they consider especially innovative and/or believe would be of interest to this study,” four respondents answered:

- Our town is basically a summer resort with less than 200 year-round residents, but the population increases to 2500 to 3000 in the summer months. Focus is on outdoor and lake activities in the summer months. With climate change, we are no longer able to depend on any winter activities such as skiing or tobogganing, and this affects our ability to maintain a year-round economy. Funding is our biggest problem to providing more walking paths or bicycle lanes on our streets. We had planned to add another walking path, but lack of funding has put this off for many years.
- We have a Large Amish population and are working on a Multi Corridor study to add a Buggy Lane on Main Roads.
- Sharpsburg Neighborhood Organization is wrapping up a Community Vision & Design Plan that will approach the community's opportunities and challenges through six "EcoDistrict" lenses (as seen in Millvale): water, food, air, energy, mobility, and equity. This plan, launching in early 2018, will strengthen the community-wide focus on improving mobility, multi-modal transit access, and connections within and outside of the community. Since implementing our complete streets policy, anytime we resurface a street, we make sure that it meets our standards. We hope that our community will continue to be more walkable as the years continue!
- Incorporating green storm water infrastructure into our complete street projects.

## 2) An overview of complete streets policies in Pennsylvania

WalkWorks has identified 10 complete streets policies in Pennsylvania, as well as official guidance developed by at least two counties (Blair and Lancaster) for their respective municipalities that might be considering complete streets policies. The identified policies are listed in the National Complete Streets Coalition inventory<sup>vii</sup> as of February 2018. Communities are not required to file policies with the Coalition nor is there a designated repository of policies in Pennsylvania.

As seen in Table 9, as of February 2018, three boroughs, six cities and one township in Pennsylvania adopted complete streets policies between the years of 2009 and 2017. The table reflects key elements of policies included in/excluded from the policies of the 10 municipalities. The two most frequently omitted elements were exemptions and performance measures. Both of these elements are fundamental to implementation. As an example, if a policy does not set parameters for projects and define the process for seeking exemptions, developers are able to avoid including sidewalks. Realistic performance measures are critical to assessing the progress of adherence to and implementation of the policy. To avoid the perception that WalkWorks is rating the policies, the municipalities are not identified.

Jurisdiction	Intent	# Modes	New and Reconstruction	Exempts.	Network	Design Guide	Perf. Meas.	Implementation
Borough 1	√	4	√	√	√	√	√*	√
Borough 2	√	4	√	X	√	X	X	√**
Borough 3	√	5	X	√	√	√	√	√**
City 1	X	6	√	√	√	√	X	X
City 2	√	4	√	X	√	√	X	X
City 3	X	4	√	X	√	√	X	√
City 4	√	5	√	√	√	√	√	√
City 5	√	5	√	√	√	√	√	√
City 6	√	6	X	√*	X	X	√	√**
Township 1	√	4	√	X	√	X	X	X

Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

\*Defining the elements:

Intent – Unequivocal intent (i.e., "shall" or "will" – not "will consider")

# Modes – The number of modes mentioned in the policy (walking, biking, public transportation, automobiles, assisted mobility devices, commercial and utility vehicles)

New and Reconstruction – Mention of new construction and/or reconstruction

Exemptions – Exceptions and responsibility for approval

Network – Reference to connectivity, interconnectedness

Design Guide – Identifies design guidance (e.g., AASTHO, NACTO, PennDOT, "best available")

Perf. Meas. – List of measures (e.g., inventory or linear feet of sidewalks, crash data, % of pop. walking to work/children biking to school, new transit stops)

Implementation – Specification of activities (e.g., incorporating policy in plans, staff development/training, educating public, instituting data collection)

√\* - Referenced, though not specified

√\*\* - Lists a range of starting points, such as, though not limited to, incorporating the policy in planning documents and seeking funding for implementation

X – Not included

In addition to the above, commonalities of the policies are that all of them reference health benefits and/or increasing opportunities for physical activity. Respondents commonly stated that the policies apply to persons of all ages and abilities. Also, all policies include language indicating that comprehensive plans, subdivision and land use ordinances and related documents will be updated in accordance with the adopted policies. None of the policies identifies specific projects or includes timelines.

While many of the clauses of the policies were similar or have the same intent, the following are inclusions that were unique:

- One policy speaks to the development of a complete streets task force, appointed by the mayor, to promote and advance both the vision and implementation details of the policy and ensure that the needs of all users and modes be addressed throughout planning and design.
- The planning commission, "in coordination with Borough staff, shall prepare and provide the Borough Council ... an annual report on the borough's consistency with this Complete Streets

Policy with respect to all street construction, rehabilitation and pavement maintenance projects.”

- “Whereas, investments in pedestrian, bicycle and transit infrastructure will help promote ‘active transportation’ and bring physical activity into the daily lives of the citizens of the Borough which will improve their health, reduce the incidence of diseases related to inactivity such as obesity and heart attacks, improve air quality and limit and or reduce negative impacts on the environment from traffic congestion. ...”
- While other policies include “health” and/or “physical activity” among reasons to adopt complete streets policies, one specifically cites the percentage of the adult population in the county that is overweight or obese. Like that of the above clause, this policy further speaks to the fact that physical activity “reduces the risk of obesity, coronary heart disease, stroke, hypertension, diabetes, and some types of cancer.”
- One policy is more detailed than the others regarding exceptions. It specifically states that, to receive consideration, a written request to the Director of City Planning must show that the project meets at least one of the listed criteria. Others are general, suggesting that that one can advise as to why criteria are burdensome or impractical without indicating who makes the decision as to whether something is an exception.
- One policy makes the statement that the city will make “reasonable efforts” to fund implementation of the policy. This is consistent with the one affirmative answer to the survey question, “Does the policy include a timeline and/or budget?” One other policy alludes to funding. Others do not reference funding.

### 3) Interviews with representatives involved with the development and/or implementation of complete streets policies in their respective communities

Telephone interviews were conducted with representatives of three of the 10 communities – all boroughs – that have adopted complete streets policies. The purpose of the calls was to determine the extent of implementation. The following lists some of their commonalities, as well as distinctions learned from the conversations:

- All the interviewees stated that, while the concept of complete streets required orientation, there were no significant challenges or obstacles to adopting the policies.
- Public input was obtained at meetings of the respective borough councils; special forums or separate opportunities for the public to provide input were not offered.
- In the case of two of the communities, both of which adopted their policies long before the third, there have not been any requests for exceptions/exemptions. For a policy to “work,” it should “allow” for exemptions **and** declare the process by which such may be granted. The Federal Highway Administration has issued guidance on accommodating bicycle and pedestrian travel<sup>viii</sup> and should be relied on when considering allowable exceptions.
- As indicated earlier, most of the complete streets policies in Pennsylvania include incorporating the policies into comprehensive plans or related documents. Common to all three of those interviewed is that their comprehensive plans and codes are multi-municipal plans. While all speak to the intent to incorporate complete streets, none has done so to date. This appears to be due to the other municipalities not having like policies and/or the timing of updating their comprehensive plans.
- Several of the policies indicate that, to optimize implementation, there will be training opportunities for decision makers, planners, public works personnel and others.



- Two of the three communities are very much in the throes of carrying out or adhering to their complete streets policies. The representative of the smallest of the three boroughs, who championed the introduction and adoption of the policy, candidly shared, “I don’t know what to do now ... what the next steps are.”

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The information gained from the study is considered a baseline. There is much more to learn from those who have yet to develop policies, as well as from those who have adopted policies.

For example, there are numerous communities that lack an understanding of the concept of complete streets – many of which expressed that they would like to learn more. Since the number of people answering questions about their adopted policies was greater than the number of policies known by WalkWorks to be adopted in Pennsylvania, one can conclude that the concept is not as widely known or understood as was thought when developing the survey. For example, of the 13 indicating that they have policies, seven said that connectivity is not an explicit goal. Again, to our knowledge, there have been 10 policies adopted by municipalities, nine of which speak to connectivity; see Table 9.

Below are some suggestions for follow-up to this study and corresponding survey.

- Build on what was initiated through this study and conduct a similar, enhanced, survey in 12-18 months. Every effort should be made to connect the answers of individual respondents throughout the survey. Among new or additional topics that should be considered are:
  - The degree of familiarity with complete streets, today versus one year ago;
  - Whether one has attended training(s) or workshops related to complete streets, if not, whether the training(s) might be useful (and whether basic or intermediate would be warranted);
  - Whether technical assistance pertaining to implementation of complete streets would be useful;
  - More about the support (or lack thereof) from elected officials; and
  - The perception of advocacy and its impact.
- Offer workshops, designed for elected officials and planners, on walkable/bikeable communities, including the meaning and value of complete streets and their applicability to their respective communities. Consider focusing on rural and suburban areas, represented by 77 percent of the respondents, as research has shown that people living in dense cities are of healthier weight and have healthier hearts than those in sprawling areas.<sup>ix</sup>
- In addition to the above, consider whether offering trainings to decision makers, planners, public works personnel would be warranted to ensure optimal implementation.
- Survey metropolitan and rural planning organizations and counties regarding their plans or guidance to assist the communities within their jurisdictions.
- Devise and distribute a separate survey, focusing on implementation to communities that are known to have formally adopted policies.

The extent to which the implementation of complete streets policies is making a difference is not currently being evaluated by the National Streets Coalition or otherwise. This may be because this relatively new transportation concept will take an extended period to be implemented and, thus, to yield measurable results. Thought should be given to contacting the Coalition to determine whether

such evaluation is under consideration or if it has been determined whether an evaluation is not warranted or feasible.

In regards to the hypothesis that well-developed complete streets policies will optimize multimodal transportation, it may be too soon to assess whether the policies are leading to increased physical activity. In conjunction with some of the above suggestions, more detailed discussions should be held with planners, elected officials and members of the public. Those discussions would enlighten others who are considering complete streets policies. Additionally, perhaps this is another opportunity for the Department of Health and PennDOT to work with communities to collect baseline data, prior to adoption of the policies, and to measure the same elements three to five years after the policies have been in place. This suggested timeline is based on the length of time it takes to secure funding needed in most cases to implement portions of the policy through projects. Design and construction of such facilities can take several years before implementation and impact can be measured. Finally, tracking the interpretation of the policies will help the agencies and planning organizations assist communities in determining opportunities, barriers, timing and strategies related to complete streets.

### Acknowledgments

A special thank you to the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs, Pennsylvania Municipal League and the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors for assistance in notifying their memberships and encouraging completion of the survey.

Also, thank you to Amy Kerner/State College borough engineer, Pam Craddock/Planning and Zoning director for Elizabethtown Borough and Brittany Reno/president of Sharpsburg Borough Council for their time and information.

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<sup>i</sup> [Smart Growth America](#)

<sup>ii</sup> Evaluation of Complete Streets Policy Implementation by Metropolitan Planning Organizations: From Policy Adoption to Implementation:

[https://activelivingresearch.org/sites/default/files/2015\\_PolicyEnvironStrategies\\_Fields.pdf](https://activelivingresearch.org/sites/default/files/2015_PolicyEnvironStrategies_Fields.pdf).

<sup>iii</sup> National Complete Streets Coalition. (June 2017). *The Best Complete Streets Policies of 2016*. Available at

<https://smartgrowthamerica.org/announcing-best-complete-streets-policies-2016/>.

<sup>iv</sup> The Elements of a Complete Streets Policy. Available at <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/resources/elements-complete-streets-policy/>.

<sup>v</sup> Evaluation of Complete Streets Policy Implementation by Metropolitan Planning Organizations: From Policy Adoption to Implementation:

[https://activelivingresearch.org/sites/default/files/2015\\_PolicyEnvironStrategies\\_Fields.pdf](https://activelivingresearch.org/sites/default/files/2015_PolicyEnvironStrategies_Fields.pdf).

<sup>vi</sup> <https://www.cdc.gov/transportation/>.

<sup>vii</sup> Complete Streets Policy Adoption (February 2018). Available at

<https://smartgrowthamerica.org/app/uploads/2018/02/00-CS-Policy-Data-02052018.pdf>.

<sup>viii</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation – Federal Highway Administration. Design Guidance Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel: A Recommended Approach. Available at

[https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/other\\_topics/fhwas09027/resources/Design%20Guidance%20Accommodating%20Bicycle%20and%20Pedestrian%20Travel.pdf](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/intersection/other_topics/fhwas09027/resources/Design%20Guidance%20Accommodating%20Bicycle%20and%20Pedestrian%20Travel.pdf).

<sup>ix</sup> National Institute of Health. "Overweight and Obesity Statistics." Available at <https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/health-statistics/overweight-obesity>.



**Appendix to**

**Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania;**

**A Case Study of Transportation Policy for the Public's Health**

**A Survey of the Status of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania and**

**Illustration of Survey Flow**



## **Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania**

### **Background**

WalkWorks, an initiative of the Pennsylvania Department of Health in partnership with Pitt Public Health, aims to increase opportunities for physical activity. By engaging community-based partners, WalkWorks plans, implements and markets walking programs utilizing the built environment. By early 2018, partners will have developed 75 walking routes of 1-2 miles in 17 counties – all of which are utilized by individuals as well as organized walking groups, which provide the social support that evidence has shown to be effective in getting people to walk who might not otherwise do so. Further, WalkWorks promotes relevant policies to further optimize and maximize the walkability and bikeability to, ultimately, improve the health of the commonwealth.

### **Introduction to Survey**

The design of our streets is critical to a multimodal transportation system. Streets can and do influence the health and quality of life of community residents. To this end, WalkWorks is studying the value of as well as opportunities and barriers and to adopting and implementing Complete Streets policies, the implications of future policies in the state and innovative efforts. We are requesting assistance from all municipalities – even if you do not have a current policy. The study will examine variables, such as, though not limited to: the current status of complete street policies; whether the policy was adopted by local legislation or resolution; whether it is reflected in a plan, design manual, ordinance; whether the policy includes a timeline and budget for implementation; and community input during development and/or implementation. Its purpose is to help determine the extent to which complete streets policy adoption – in Pennsylvania – is making a difference in the implementation of projects and, thus, a valuable mechanism for communities to use to enhance opportunities for physical activity.

Please complete this survey or, if you feel that you are not the appropriate person to complete the survey, please forward this request to the most appropriate person in your municipality. Note that it is important that we hear from everyone – including those municipalities that do not currently have policies in place.

Thank you, in advance, for your assistance with our work to make Pennsylvania more walkable, bikeable and healthier!

### **Link**

#### **Screening Questions**

1. Which level of government do your responses represent?
  - A. County
  - B. Municipal
  - C. Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. If "B," what is the governing structure of your municipality?
  - A. Township
  - B. Borough
  - C. City
  - D. Home Rule
  - E. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. How would you classify your community?
  - A. Suburban
  - B. Urban
  - C. Rural
  - D. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Please check all that apply and indicate the year(s) in which the measure(s) in support of complete streets and/or multi-modal transportation was/were put into place.
  - A. A formally adopted complete streets policy \_\_\_\_
  - B. A formally adopted complete streets resolution \_\_\_\_
  - C. A complete streets checklist and/or performance metrics \_\_\_\_
  - D. Agency policies and procedures to serve all transportation modes \_\_\_\_
  - E. Design guidelines to serve all modes \_\_\_\_
  - F. Adoption of NACTO design guidelines \_\_\_\_
  - G. Training to enhance staff skills based related to complete streets policy implementation \_\_\_\_
  - H. Data collection policy that includes users and modes over time \_\_\_\_
  - I. A citizen advisory committee for complete streets, multi-modal, active transportation, etc. \_\_\_\_
  - J. Adoption of a bicycle plan \_\_\_\_
  - K. Adoption of a pedestrian plan \_\_\_\_
  - L. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Has your governing body adopted a policy, resolution or ordinance related to Complete Streets?  
 Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
  
6. If you have adopted a complete streets policy or resolution, please answer the following:
  - A. What is the major objective of your policy? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Is improved street connectivity an explicit goal of policy? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
  - C. Of the following, which – if any – are subject to the policy? (check all that apply)
    - Planning \_\_\_\_
    - Project selection \_\_\_\_
    - Design \_\_\_\_
    - New construction \_\_\_\_
    - Rehabilitation projects \_\_\_\_
    - Maintenance and operation \_\_\_\_
    - Overlay projects \_\_\_\_
    - Other \_\_\_\_\_

- D. Does the policy include a timeline and/or budget? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
- E. Is encouraging physical activity or promoting public health an explicit goal of the policy?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
- F. Is land use a factor in selecting specific streets and/or appropriate design treatments?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
- G. Does the policy prioritize projects and/or include a method for prioritization? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
- H. Does the policy allow for exceptions? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
7. What barriers, if any, exist that are preventing or may prevent implementation of complete streets in your jurisdiction (check all that apply)?
- A. Cost (perceived or actual) \_\_\_
  - B. Lack of local capacity \_\_\_
  - C. Road ownership \_\_\_
  - D. Political will (lack of or "anti") \_\_\_
  - E. Public interest (lack of or "anti") \_\_\_
  - F. Differences in interpretation \_\_\_
  - G. Different opinions with regard to priorities \_\_\_
  - H. Organizational culture \_\_\_
  - I. Other \_\_\_\_\_
8. Does the jurisdiction or the policy reference a minimum lane width for specified roadways?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
9. If yes to the above, was the standard lane width adjusted based on the complete streets policy? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
10. Indicate the level of support for complete streets initiatives you have received from the following (with 1=impedes or does not support at all, 10=fully supports, NA if not applicable):
- A. PennDOT \_\_\_
  - B. MPO/RPO \_\_\_
  - C. Elected officials \_\_\_
  - D. Planning department (local or county) \_\_\_
  - E. Local public works department \_\_\_
  - F. Bicycle advocacy group \_\_\_
  - G. Pedestrian advocacy group \_\_\_
  - H. Transit group \_\_\_
  - I. AARP \_\_\_
  - J. Public health \_\_\_
  - K. Other \_\_\_\_\_
11. Please share any efforts that you consider especially innovative and/or you believe would be of interest to this study.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

12. If you do not currently have a complete streets policy, in any form, we would very much appreciate learning whether there has been discussion about development of such and anything that you deem would inform our study with regard to that discussion.

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It would be most helpful to the study if you would please share the municipality for which you are responding as well as your email address. If you elect not to do so, your completed survey is still very important to us.

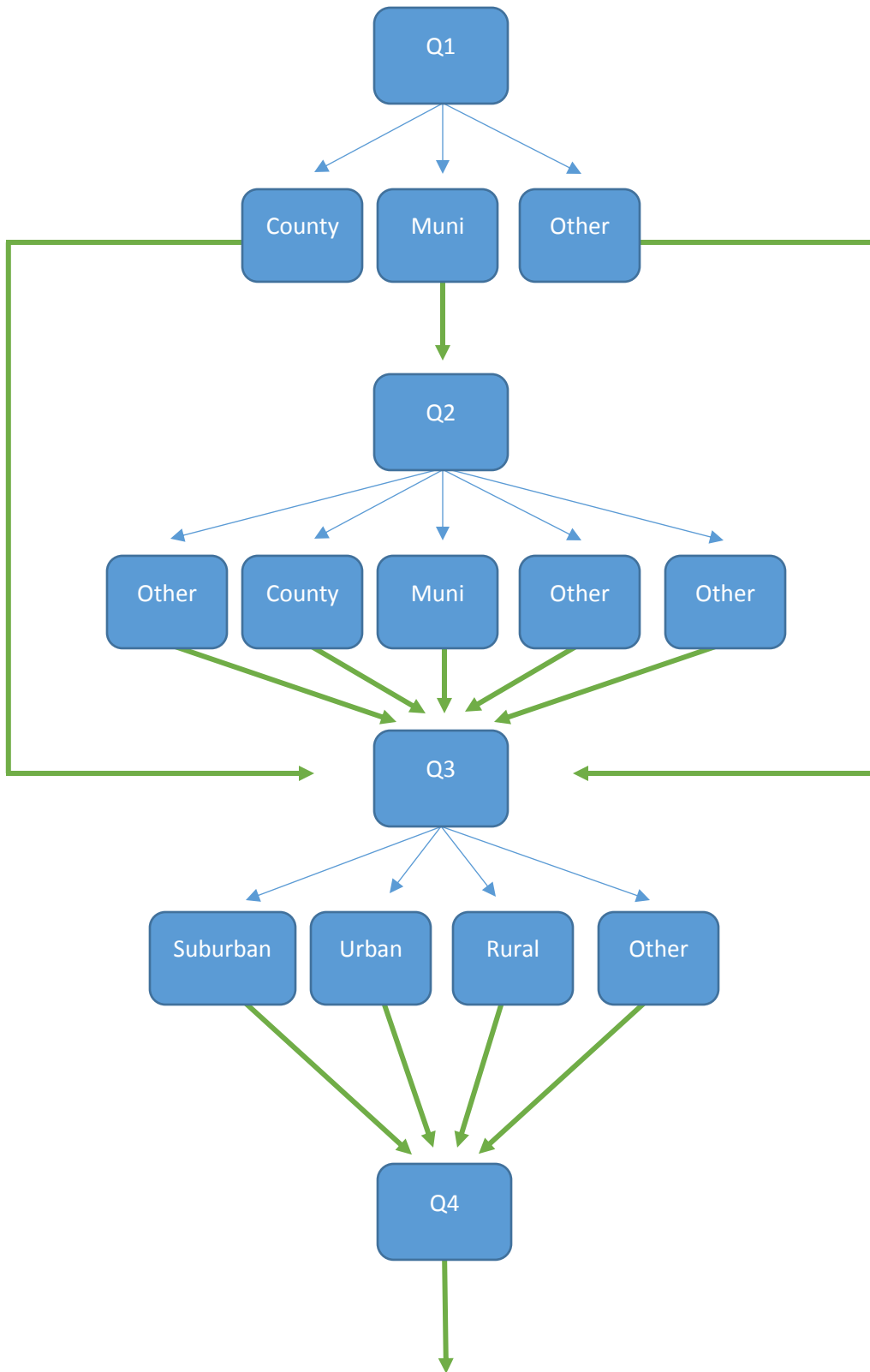
Borough/Township/City: \_\_\_\_\_

Name/email address: \_\_\_\_\_

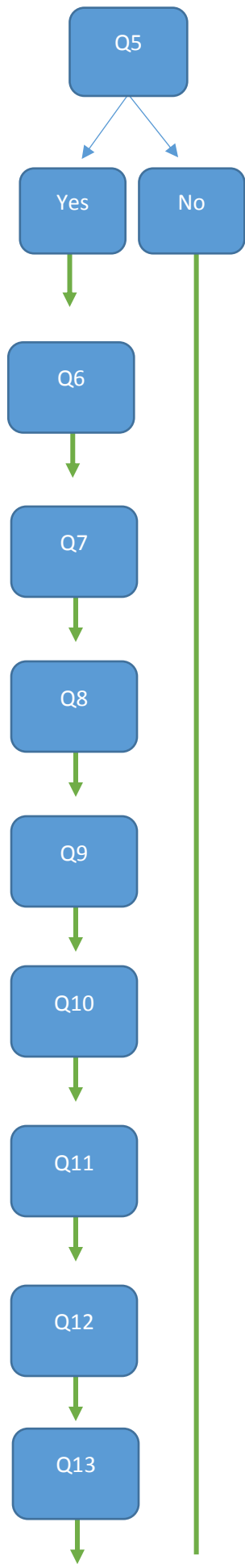
Again, we thank you so much for your time and participation. If you have any questions or would like to receive a copy of the completed study, please feel free to email Carol Reichbaum at [carolr@pitt.edu](mailto:carolr@pitt.edu).

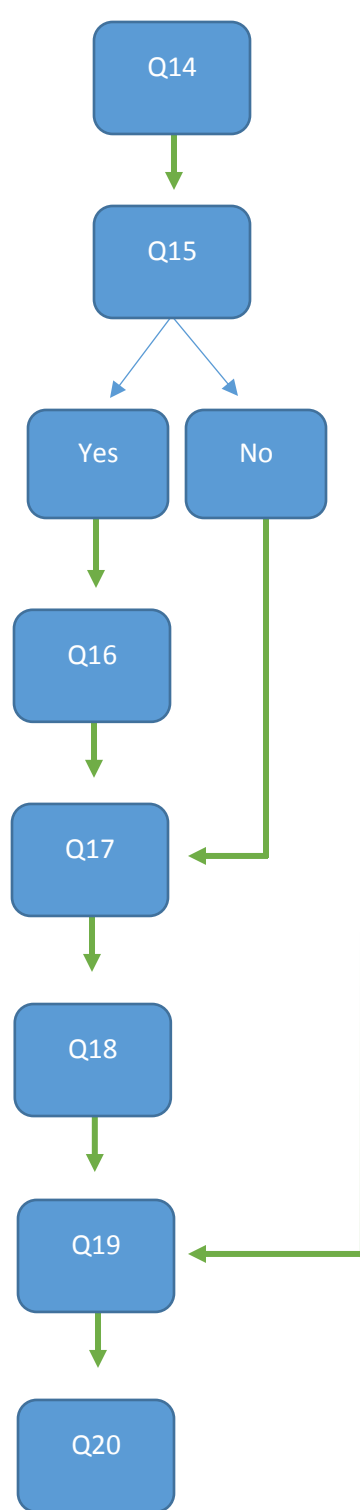
# Status of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania

## Survey Flow









- > Specifies answers, which determine next questions to be addressed
- > Indicates next question, depending on response