

DRAFT: East Lyme Planning Commission ‘Complete Street’ Policy Statement

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to enable the streets of East Lyme to provide safe, convenient, and comfortable routes for walking, bicycling, and public transportation that encourage increased use of these modes of transportation, enable convenient travel as part of daily activities and meet the needs of all users of the streets, including children, older adults, and people with disabilities. Further, it is the intent of the Town of East Lyme Planning Commission in enacting this policy to encourage healthy, active living, reduce traffic congestion and fossil fuel use, and improve the safety and quality of life of residents of East Lyme by providing safe, convenient, and comfortable routes and connections for walking, bicycling, and public transportation.

POLICY

It is hereby the policy of the Town of East Lyme to consider the needs of all users of all abilities and ages (specifically including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and vehicle operators) in the planning, design, construction, retrofit and maintenance activities related to all roads and streets as a means of providing a safe, efficient transportation network which enhances quality of life and economic vitality. Complete Streets shall be defined as, for the purposes of this policy, a means to provide safe access for all users by providing a comprehensive, integrated, connected multi-modal network of transportation options.

JUSTIFICATION

The Connecticut General Statutes state that “accommodations for all users shall be a routine part of the planning, design, constructing and operating activities of all highways in this state (Section 13a-15f). Section 14i-300(a) goes on to define a ‘user’ with the following inclusive list:

“(A) A pedestrian; (B) a highway worker; (C) a person riding or driving an animal; (D) a person riding a bicycle; (E) a person using a skateboard, roller skates or in-line skates; (F) a person operating or riding on an agricultural tractor; (G) a person using a wheelchair or motorized chair; and (H) a blind person and such person's service animal.”

The 2024 East Lyme Plan of Conservation and Development recommendations include promotion of multi-modal forms of transportation and creation of safe sidewalk and bike lane systems (Section 14.5, p 111). Recommendations go on to include evaluation of the need to implement traffic calming techniques and investigate forming a Traffic Calming process for the town because speeding is consistently the most common traffic complaint in town. All commercial areas within East Lyme require installation of traffic calming techniques, and downtown Niantic was identified as a critical area. Several means of calming traffic are available: Narrow driving lanes to encourage automobiles to drive slowly; install street trees to provide the illusion of narrower travel lanes; more clearly identify areas of parking from travel lane(s) to provide a buffer for pedestrians from moving automobiles; install traffic calming “road art” in key locations to slow traffic.

IMPLEMENTATION

Complete Streets may include facilities and amenities, including but not limited to, pavement markings and signs; sidewalks and pedestrian safety improvements such as medians, curb extensions and crosswalks; ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) accessible curb ramps and accessible pedestrian signals; transit shelters and signage and improved pedestrian and bicycle access to transit stops and stations; bicycle detection at intersections and wide travel lanes, bike lanes, or shared use lanes; bicycle parking facilities; street trees, landscaping, street lighting, street furniture; and adequate drainage facilities, including opportunities for storm water quality treatment facilities.

By implementing a Complete Streets Policy the Town of East Lyme will set a legal and funding precedent to begin to create a transportation system that accommodates all users in a safe and practical manner. Planning and design should consider all potential modes of transportation in their development. The concept is to provide, where practical, pedestrian and bicycle friendly connections between neighborhoods, key commercial areas, transit stops, bike routes, greenways and trails, recreational areas, schools, points of interest, and village centers. Also, consider a transit service between destinations as demand and need dictates to provide options for all residents. Limited resources, both in funding and land, means that these uses must coexist in the same general space.