ORDINANCE NO. 20140612-119

AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING THE CITY OF AUSTIN COMPLETE STREETS POLICY.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF AUSTIN:

PART 1. Findings.

(A) Austin City Council Resolution No. 20131212-080 directed the City Manager to create and implement a comprehensive Complete Streets Policy.

(B) The intent of this policy is to implement the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan and to enhance Austin's quality of life over the long-term by advancing mobility; economically sound, compact, and connected development patterns; public health and safety; livability; environmental enhancement; sustainability; equity; affordability, economic activity; climate resiliency; and excellence in urban design and community character.

(C) The Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan established a Priority Action to "Develop complete streets design guidelines for all new road construction and reconstruction," to include: "Pedestrian and bicycle facilities and amenities;" "Green Street Techniques/Green Infrastructure Best Management Practices;" "Interconnected, navigable, grid-like streets and blocks;" "Transit accommodations;" and other measures.

(D) Streets are the public realm and should be designed to a higher standard as beautiful, safe, and comfortable places for all people, in order to equitably support the common good and the Imagine Austin vision statement: "Austin Values and Respects its People."

(E) City staff has developed a policy reflecting national best practices that provides a vision and intent, Complete Streets principles, applicability and jurisdiction, implementation guidance, a high bar for exceptions, and guidance on potential Code amendments and metrics for evaluation.

PART 2. Council adopts the Complete Streets Policy attached to this ordinance as Exhibit 1.

PART 3. This ordinance takes effect on June 23, 2014.

PASSED AND APPROVED

June 12, 2014 § Lee Leffingwell
§ Mayor
§

APPROVED: Karen M. Kennard
City Attorney

ATTEST: Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk

EXHIBIT 1

COMPLETE STREETS POLICY **CITY OF AUSTIN**

VISION & INTENT

Complete Streets are necessary to advance multiple long-term community goals defined by the vision and policies of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan.

Complete Streets will enhance Austin's quality of life over the long-term by advancing mobility, economically sound compact and connected development patterns, public health and safety, livability, environmental protection and enhancement, sustainability, equity, affordability, economic activity, climate resiliency, and excellence in urban design and community character. As the public realm, streets should be designed to a higher standard for the common good of all people, in keeping with the Imagine Austin vision: "Austin Values and Respects its People."

Specifically, this Complete Streets Policy is integral to a core Imagine Austin Priority Program: "Invest in a compact and connected Austin." Achieving this goal requires a shift in how we define the role of roadways: They are public spaces that serve people first. Therefore, the City of Austin commits to improvements that support safe, efficient, and convenient mobility for all roadway users – pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and motorists – regardless of age or ability. Complete Streets are necessary to support compact development patterns. They expand everyone's mobility choices for safe and convenient travel by different modes between destinations throughout Austin. As appropriate for their context, they are designed to balance safety and convenience for everyone using the road.

Safety, including a reduction in hazards for pedestrians and bicyclists on Austin roadways, is a fundamental consideration of this Complete Streets policy. Complete Streets also encourage people to make active transportation choices, which are associated with improved health outcomes for people at all stages of life. To improve community health, Austin seeks to transform its street network from a barrier to an asset for regular walking and biking. The City also recognizes the multiple public health benefits of reducing the air and climate pollution caused by vehicles.

The City of Austin recognizes that the planning and design of streets and regional roadways should holistically include the entire right-of-way and public realm – defined as the entire area between building fronts. A Complete Streets approach provides a unique opportunity to thoughtfully integrate and advance multiple objectives for our community, now and in the future, while delivering maximum benefits from both public and private investments.

A. COMPLETE STREETS PRINCIPLES

1. **Complete Streets serve all users and modes.** The City of Austin commits to design, operate and maintain the community's streets and right-of-way so as to promote safe, comfortable and convenient access and travel for people of all ages and abilities. This is the core intent of this policy. All streets and roadways within

the city shall provide basic safe access and crossings for all allowed categories of users – people traveling as pedestrians and by bicycle, transit riders, motorists and others. City streets and/or street networks shall accommodate emergency responders and freight needs as well, in a manner consistent with this policy. The City recognizes that children, seniors, and persons with disabilities may require inclusive accommodations.

2. **Complete Streets require connected travel networks.** The City of Austin shall prioritize opportunities to create a complete transportation network that provides connected facilities to serve all people and modes of travel, now and in the future. Streets shall be connected to create complete street networks that provide travelers with multiple choices of travel routes and that help to reduce congestion on major roadways. This network includes off-street hard-surface trails for biking and walking. All roadways and routes need not be optimized for all modes; however, people using each mode require a network of safe and convenient travel routes and crossings throughout the city.

3. **Complete Streets are beautiful, interesting and comfortable places for people.** The design of cities begins with the design of streets, as community places where people want to be. As part of Austin's public realm, streets shall be held to a higher standard for urban design at a human scale. Multi-modal accommodations and all City projects in the right-of-way shall be approached as opportunities to enhance the aesthetic qualities of Austin and its public realm through the thoughtful creation of place. Wherever feasible, streetscapes shall protect and include street trees and native plants, and incorporate landscape architecture, public art, pedestrian amenities and wayfinding signage, sidewalk cafes and street-facing retail, and/or other elements that enhance the attractiveness of Austin and foster healthy economic development.

4. **Complete Streets require best-practice design criteria and context-sensitive approaches.** The City will align land use and transportation goals, policies and code provisions to create Complete Streets solutions that are appropriate to individual contexts; that best serve the needs of all people using streets and the right-of-way; and that support the land-use policies of the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan. Context sensitive design allows roadway design decisions to be more flexible and sensitive to community values, and to better balance economic, social and environmental objectives. The City will take a flexible, innovative, and balanced approach to creating context-sensitive Complete Streets that meet or exceed national best-practice design guidelines. This includes a shift toward designing at a human scale for the needs and comfort of all people and travelers, in considering issues such as street design and width, desired operating speed, hierarchy of streets, mode balance, and connectivity. Design criteria shall not be purely prescriptive but shall be based on the thoughtful application of engineering, architectural and urban design principles.

5. **Complete Streets protect Austin's sustainability and environment.** By reducing automobile dependence, Complete Streets will help Austin advance toward its goals of sustainability and carbon neutrality. In the design, operation, and maintenance of its transportation system, the City shall seek opportunities to integrate best-practice "Green Street" principles, features and metrics adapted for

the Austin climate. These may include stormwater management, tree canopy, shade structures, landscaping, climate protection and resiliency, urban heat island mitigation, accessible and integrated parks and natural areas, and other measures. Projects in the public right-of-way and their landscape elements shall seek to advance sustainable management and conservation practices for water, energy, materials and other resources, balanced with other goals.

6. **Complete Streets are the work of all City departments.** The City shall approach every public or private project, program, and practice that affects the transportation network or occurs in the right-of-way as an opportunity to improve street conditions and travel routes for everyone. City departments, inclusive of utilities, shall work in coordination and collaborate with other entities to maximize current and future opportunities for Complete Streets, enhancement of the public realm, and street connectivity.

7. **Complete Streets include all roadways and all projects and phases.** The City shall apply this policy in a context-sensitive manner to all private and public routes and roadways. It applies to both new streets and retrofit projects, including the construction, reconstruction, retrofit, resurfacing, alteration and major repair of streets. It shall provide guidance to all City capital improvement projects. It includes parking facilities, alleys, bridges, frontage roads, private drives or streets and internal circulation routes, temporary traffic zones, off-street bicycle-pedestrian paths, park roads, and other elements of the transportation system.

8. **Complete Streets require appropriate performance measures.** The City will track and report performance measures for the transportation system that measure how well the City is conforming to this policy. Indicators shall reflect safe and efficient mobility for all users – pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists, and freight. A system of Green Streets metrics will be adopted and reported as well. For multimodal mobility, performance indicators shall be utilized and weighted in a manner that reflects context and community values.

B. Applicability and Jurisdiction

This policy is applicable to all development and redevelopment in the public domain within the City of Austin. It applies to the work of all City Departments and entities. It is intended to guide all private development that affects streets, the transportation system, and the public realm.

Where new streets and subdivisions are subject to the City of Austin Land Development Code and/or Transportation Criteria Manual, the City shall fully and consistently refer to this policy for guidance. In the City's extra-territorial jurisdiction, applicability to specific projects shall be reviewed, determined and overseen with the appropriate county in accordance with the provisions of Title 30 (§ 30-1-1).

In existing developed areas of the City, roadway improvements that implement this policy shall be achieved as individual projects advance, as sites and corridors are developed and improved, and as needs and travel-mode balance evolve over time.

For activity centers and corridors identified in the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, and areas with high levels of pedestrian activity, the City shall seek and prioritize funding sources for strategic Complete Streets improvements.

The City of Austin requires all agencies over which it has permitting authority to comply with this policy. At a minimum, they should not adversely affect multimodal travel conditions and future opportunities. These include, but are not limited to, water agencies, electric utilities, gas and petroleum utilities, communications utilities, and service contractors. Provisions that support this Complete Streets policy shall be added to new franchise agreements affecting the City right-of-way.

For all transportation projects designed by other agencies or entities that require funding or approval by the City, Austin Transportation Department shall, in advance of finalizing such funding or approval: (1) evaluate the proposed project for compliance with this Complete Streets Policy, and (2) where needed, recommend measures and require appropriate changes to bring it into compliance.

The City of Austin encourages entities not under its jurisdiction to satisfy this policy, including school districts, counties, and State of Texas agencies with facilities in the City of Austin and its extra-territorial jurisdiction. Partner agencies are encouraged to adopt this Complete Streets Policy or an equivalent.

For regional transportation projects, the City will promote compliance with this Complete Streets Policy by its partners, including Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, Capital Metropolitan Transit Authority, Texas Department of Transportation, Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority, and neighboring cities, counties and other agencies as applicable.

C. Exceptions

The City expects full compliance with this policy. An exception for a specific project may be requested and granted when:

- Use of the roadway is prohibited by law for a specified category of users (e.g. pedestrians on an interstate freeway, vehicles on a pedestrian or transit mall);
- The costs of providing accommodation are excessively disproportionate to the need or probable use;
- The application of Complete Streets principles would be contrary to public safety;
- An absence of current and future need to serve a category of users is documented (e.g. in a rural or low-density area). In determining future need, applicants and City review staff shall consult relevant City and regional long-range plans for land use and transportation, including the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan.

A request for an exception should be submitted to the Director of Austin Transportation Department at the earliest project phase (e.g. during initial project planning and budgeting). The request submitted must include a narrative, site photographs, project site map and drawings if available, and supporting data.

The request shall be jointly considered by the Director of Public Works, Director of Austin Transportation Department, and Director of Planning and Development Review or their designees. In the City's extraterritorial jurisdiction, exceptions also shall be considered by the relevant county, which may have final authority.

For all project elements constructed in the City right-of-way, final determination and approval of exceptions shall reside with the Director of Public Works. Exceptions granted shall be publicly reported on the City's website. Reports shall include the applicant's documentation as backup and indicate the basis for the decision.

Where exceptions are granted, parallel accommodations for the category of users excluded shall be sought on alternate routes within the transportation system.

D. CODE AMENDMENTS

The City of Austin Land Development Code, including Subdivision Regulations, shall be revised to incorporate the principles and provisions of this Complete Streets Policy. This policy in itself does not change the Land Development Code.

All City of Austin criteria manuals referenced in the City Code that affect the design of roadways and facilities sited in the right-of-way, which affect the implementation of this policy, shall be reviewed and updated to make them consistent with its goals and support its implementation. These include the Transportation Criteria Manual, Utility Criteria Manual, Environmental Criteria Manual, and Drainage Criteria Manual. Related administrative rules also shall be reviewed and updated as needed.

The City's Transportation Criteria Manual shall be reviewed and revised to make it consistent with this policy. To facilitate near-term compliance with this policy, an interim advisory on the design of streets and subdivisions that references national guidelines and manuals shall be issued as an administrative rule.

By September 15, 2014, the City Manager shall report to Austin City Council on any future code amendments needed to support implementation of this policy. The report also will address the applicability of this policy to private development.

E. IMPLEMENTATION

The City of Austin shall make Complete Streets practices a routine part of everyday operations and procedures. The Complete Streets principles of this policy shall inform all transportation planning, design, maintenance, and funding decisions. In addition, they shall inform the early scoping phase of all City capital improvement projects that include or affect roadway elements and the right-of-way.

As needed to ensure robust implementation of this policy, the City shall develop or update City design policies, guides, and manuals across disciplines. It also shall reference the most up-to-date national standards, design guides, and best practices supportive of Complete Streets.

Guidance on Implementation is provided in "Exhibit A," attached to this policy.

Complete Streets Policy Implementation Guidelines shall be developed, to provide more detailed direction. These Guidelines shall be adopted as a separate document as an administrative rule. The Guidelines shall be provided to all City departments, regional transportation agencies, and the public by September 15, 2014.

The City will actively seek sources of funding to implement this policy.

EXHIBIT A: GUIDANCE ON IMPLEMENTATION

1. **Application to City Projects**

    a. Austin City Council Resolution No. 020418-40 required major City roadway projects to budget up to 20% for appropriate sidewalk and bicycle facilities. Major roadway projects initiated *prior* to adoption of this Complete Streets Policy shall continue to adhere to its provisions. In keeping with this Complete Streets Policy, available budget within the 20% criteria also may be allocated to address the needs of transit users; integrate Green Street practices, including street trees and landscape elements; and/or provide other amenities that invite walking and create a sense of place.
    b. All City capital improvement projects, including roadways, initiated *subsequent* to the adoption of this Policy shall fully integrate its Complete Street goals and principles from the earliest project scoping and budgeting phases. As this Complete Streets Policy establishes higher and more comprehensive goals and criteria than Resolution No. 020418-40, this policy shall supersede it for roadway projects. All projects shall be initially defined such that the overall project budget is sufficient to assure conformance with this policy.

2. **Capital Improvement Projects.** Consideration of this Complete Streets Policy and its long-range goals shall be incorporated into the planning, scoping, budgeting, funding, design, approval and implementation process for all City facilities, roadways, and right-of-way infrastructure. The Capital Planning Office shall provide coordination and support. Departments shall consult the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan, Long-range Capital Improvement Program Strategic Plan, Capital Improvement Program Five-Year Plan, and other relevant City master plans for guidance.

    In planning and designing City projects that include or impact roadways, City Departments shall consult the Austin Transportation and Public Works Departments and shall consult City master plans and policies related to pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and vehicle transportation. All projects shall strive to advance and integrate multiple goals, including a high-quality public realm, placemaking, Green Streets, and economic development. City projects shall seek cost-saving opportunities through such integration.

    Projects shall anticipate opportunities to incrementally achieve fully complete streets and networks over time, and in future phases of work. Departments shall take care that their work does not adversely affect the pedestrian realm and opportunities for multimodal travel and facilities.

    Projects should anticipate funding needs and seek resources to acquire necessary right-of-way and/or easements. Where the costs of acquiring right-of-way to provide separate accommodations for each mode of travel are cost-prohibitive, innovative or multi-use facilities within the existing right-of-way that accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists may be considered, if appropriate for the roadway and its context.

For City parks projects, park land may be used for bicycle/pedestrian trails and other elements of the transportation system that provide connectivity and support people's access to parks and recreational/outdoor activities.

City utilities will provide guidance on ensuring that Complete Streets Policy implementation does not create public safety hazards or reductions in levels of utility service unacceptable to utility customers. Utility projects will seek to support and advance implementation of this policy and related right-of-way conditions.

3. **Project Budgets.** It is the responsibility of each project to budget appropriately for implementation of this policy, in a context-sensitive manner. This includes budgeting for right-of-way and/or easement acquisition. Where primary funding sources for City projects are narrowly constrained (e.g. restricted to utility, affordable housing, or other purposes), the City will actively pursue additional funding sources to allow implementation of this policy to a high standard.

4. **Private Projects.** In reviewing zoning, site plans, subdivision plans, planned unit developments, and other projects that include streets or private drives or other internal circulation routes, City staff shall seek full compliance with the intent of this Complete Streets Policy. To ensure that its goals and principles are fully incorporated into the City of Austin zoning and development review process, City zoning and development review staff across departments shall receive appropriate training. The Planning and Development Review Department also shall provide appropriate information and education to the development community and applicants.

   In reviewing projects subject to Design Standards and Mixed Use Chapter 25-2 Subchapter E ("Commercial Design Standards") and Specific Area Regulating Districts, the City shall approve Alternative Equivalent Compliance only as it conforms to the goals and intent of this Complete Streets Policy. A system shall be developed to track approvals of Alternative Equivalent Compliance; such approvals shall be reviewed annually by a multidisciplinary staff team to assess impacts on Complete Streets and the pedestrian realm.

   If City staff recommends additional measures regarding private projects, that process will include public review and input.

5. **Complete Streets Program.** The City will implement this policy through a Complete Streets Program based in Austin Transportation Department. The Program will be developed and implemented in consultation with the Public Works Department and other departments and partners. It will be appropriately staffed to provide multi-modal transportation planning; it will be coordinated with City programs and initiatives for bicycling, pedestrians, transit and on trails. Program staff will facilitate development of a Pedestrian Master Plan.

   The Complete Streets Program will be structured as an element of Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan implementation and be inclusive of all relevant City Departments. The Program shall facilitate citywide staff training, public education,

document development and/or updates, departmental Complete Street efforts, and other actions as necessary to fully implement this Complete Streets policy.

An interim report on the development and progress of this program shall be delivered to Austin City Council within 12 months of policy adoption.

6. **Modal Networks**. The City shall advance projects that are needed to close gaps and to complete priority transportation networks and routes for people using each individual travel mode.

7. **Street Design Standards.** The City shall refer to the following national guidelines, recognized by Austin City Council:
   a. *Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A context sensitive approach* (Institute of Transportation Engineers/Congress for the New Urbanism)
   b. *Urban Street Design Guide*, and *Urban Bikeway Design Guide* (National Association of City Transportation Officials)

   Flexible and innovative context-sensitive design solutions that conform to these guidelines are encouraged for both public and private projects. Updated street design standards and criteria that reflect these national guides will be developed in the course of revising the Transportation Criteria Manual.

   The design of roadway water quality controls and storm drain infrastructure (as required by ordinance for new roadways and major roadway reconstructions) shall be incorporated into this approach.

   In Downtown, Great Streets Design Standards shall continue to apply.

8. **Green Streets Guidelines**. A multi-disciplinary City staff team shall develop specific Green Streets principles, guidelines, and metrics. The guidelines shall reflect national best practices as well as green infrastructure goals referenced in Imagine Austin. They shall address roadway-design related stormwater infrastructure and management, for both water quality and runoff volume; the linking of trails and greenbelts with roadway networks; and other relevant sustainability, environmental and ecosystem goals.

   The integration of Green Streets principles and metrics shall be overseen by the Imagine Austin Green Infrastructure Priority Program Team, in coordination with the Compact and Connected Priority Program Team. They shall be administered as an integral part of street design and project reviews.

9. **Staff Training.** The City will provide information and training on this Complete Streets policy and its principles, and best practices for implementation, to relevant City staff across departments within 150 days of policy adoption. Continuing education inclusive of all aspects of this policy shall be provided on an annual basis. The training materials shall be offered to regional and City partner agencies.

10. **Outreach and Education.** The City and partner organizations will provide ongoing public information and education about Complete Streets to Austin residents; community groups and leaders; transportation, planning, design and engineering professionals; and the private development community. The City will meet at least

annually with representatives of Capital Metropolitan Transit Authority, Travis County, Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority and TxDOT to review best practices in Complete Streets Implementation and evaluate cross-agency efforts.

11. **Metrics for Evaluation.** Complete Streets Policy metrics will be tracked and reported in coordination with metrics and monitoring established for Imagine Austin implementation. For mobility goals, they include miles of new and improved sidewalks and bicycle facilities and number of accessible transit stops. Additional metrics that reflect the comprehensive goals of the policy will be developed within 12 months of policy adoption. A Complete Streets performance report will be included as a section in the Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan Annual Report.

12. **Code Amendments.** City staff will conduct a diagnosis to identify: 1) what, if any, provisions in current code or criteria are in conflict with implementation of this Complete Streets policy, or otherwise present impediments, and 2) what code and criteria amendments are needed, if any, to address impediments or to otherwise advance the implementation of the Complete Streets policy.

    Upon adoption of a major revision to the Land Development Code by Austin City Council, necessary updates on this policy shall be issued to create consistency with all Land Development Code provisions and language related to roadways, right-of-way, street classifications, character districts, and other applicable elements.

13. **Roles and Responsibilities.** Austin Transportation Department, as the administrator of the Complete Streets Program, shall have lead responsibility for implementation of this policy.

    Final authority for the construction of elements in the City right-of-way, as well as reporting responsibility for exceptions granted to this policy, resides with the Public Works Department.

    Per City Code, the Director of Public Works is responsible for the functionality of streets as defined by their utility, durability, condition and serviceability and has final authority over related decisions. The City Traffic Engineer is responsible for the design and functionality of streets and the roadway network as it relates to providing safe, efficient, and comfortable travel for roadway users. The Public Works Department and Austin Transportation Department shall jointly and collaboratively address these goals for the community's roadways, coordinating with other City departments and partner agencies as needed.

14. **Exceptions Reporting.** The Public Works Director shall report each exception granted through the mechanism established in this policy, including for City projects, and shall oversee the timely public posting of such reports on the City of Austin website.

    Quarterly, a summary report on exceptions granted shall be provided to a multidisciplinary City staff team responsible for guiding Complete Streets implementation. Annually, a report shall be provided to the Urban Transportation Commission.