



## **French Broad River MPO Complete Streets Policy Adopted by the FBRMPO TAC on February 28, 2013**

### **1. Policy Statement**

FBRMPO will review all regionally-significant surface transportation projects for Complete Streets accommodation prior to inclusion in the SPOT prioritization process or Transportation Improvement Program (TIP/STIP). FBRMPO will work with NCDOT, local governments and other partners and stakeholders to ensure that all regionally-significant surface transportation projects constructed with federal or state funding in our region will either provide accommodation for all users (with reference to NCDOT Complete Streets Design Guidelines), or will have clearly documented reasons for making an exception.

FBRMPO will promote the Complete Streets concept throughout the region and will assist local jurisdictions in the region to craft and implement their own local policies, consistent with the regional policy. FBRMPO will seek incorporation of the Complete Streets concept and policy into the development of all transportation infrastructures within the region at all phases of their development, including planning, scoping, design approvals, implementation, and performance monitoring.

### **2. Definition**

Complete Streets are roadways designed to safely and comfortably accommodate all users, including, but not limited to motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, wheelchair users, transit and school bus riders, delivery and service personnel, freight haulers, and emergency responders. "All users" includes people of all ages and abilities.

Regionally-significant transportation projects for the purpose of this policy are defined as roadway, transit, bicycle and pedestrian surface transportation projects in the FBRMPO Transportation Planning Area which are funded through federal and state transportation funds, and are submitted by FBRMPO for inclusion in the TIP/STIP through SPOT prioritization, or are otherwise added to the TIP/STIP.

### **3. Vision/Purpose**

This Complete Streets policy promotes a multimodal transportation system that is integrated with sustainable land use developments. Its main objective is to design and build roads that safely and comfortably accommodate all users of roadways, including, but not limited to motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, wheelchair users, transit and school bus riders, delivery and service personnel, freight haulers, and emergency responders. It includes people of all ages and abilities and considers the importance of transportation system for public health outcomes.

Building complete streets provides many benefits to residents, business owners, developers, and the community as a whole. Embracing the complete streets concept will create balanced transportation systems by providing accessible, safe, and efficient connections between destinations. It will bolster economic growth and stability while increasing property values. It will ensure job growth, reduce crashes through safety improvements, improve public health and fitness, reduce harmful emissions, and reduce the overall demand on our roadways by allowing people to replace motor vehicle trips with active transportation options. In addition, integrating sidewalks, bike facilities, transit amenities, or safe crossings into the initial design of a project spares the expense and complications of retrofits later.

The purpose of this policy is as follows:

- To act in concurrence with North Carolina Department of Transportation Complete Streets Policy and any locally-adopted Complete Streets policies and transit, bicycle and pedestrian plans
- To support NCDOT Healthy Transportation Policy
- To provide a safe, efficient multi-modal transportation network in the French Broad River Metropolitan Planning Region which provides for access, mobility and safety needs of transit users, motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians of all ages and abilities
- To work in partnership with local government agencies, NCDOT, interest groups and the public to plan, fund, design, construct and manage complete streets networks that sustain mobility while accommodating walking, biking, and transit opportunities safely

#### **4. Applicability**

This Complete Streets Policy applies to all regionally-significant surface transportation projects in the FBRMPO Planning Area, including the new construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, repair, maintenance, or planning of roadways, trails and other transportation facilities that will use federal and state funds allocated through FBRMPO process and requiring addition to the TIP/STIP. Signal improvement projects and road resurfacing projects other than pothole patching will be reviewed for Complete Streets applicability. NCDOT Complete Streets Design Standards will be used, whenever feasible and applicable in the mountain region topography.

Review process – The following steps will be part of the complete streets review process of regionally-significant projects:

1. When a project sponsor submits a project for SPOT prioritization to the FBRMPO, a paragraph describing complete streets accommodation or explanation of reasons for exception will be attached
2. FBRMPO staff will work with local government staff and NCDOT to work out the most suitable accommodation for projects where complete streets accommodation is desired, but no clear solution exists; reference will be made to local and regional community transportation, transit, pedestrian, bicycle and greenway plans and NCDOT Complete Streets Design Guidelines
3. Proposed exceptions will be taken up for a vote by the TAC
4. If a project is submitted through NCDOT Division and does not have to go through FBRMPO review of SPOT prioritization projects, an explanation will be requested from Divisions upon inclusion of projects in the draft STIP to indicate how complete streets accommodation will be provided, or which exception clause applies if no accommodation provided
5. Future projects identified through CTP or LRTP update process will include recommended complete streets-appropriate cross-sections

#### **5. Exceptions to Policy**

FBRMPO expects that suitable multimodal alternatives will be incorporated in all appropriate new surface transportation projects and during significant maintenance and rehabilitation of existing facilities. Exceptions to this policy will be considered where one of the following conditions applies:

1. The project is scheduled for construction in FY 2016 or earlier at the time that this policy is adopted, and updating the design documents would delay the project implementation by a year or more

2. Pedestrians and bicyclists are prohibited by law from using the facility. In this case, alternative facilities and accommodations shall be provided within the same transportation corridor, and the ability to reasonably and conveniently cross the facility will be part of the facility design and construction. Greenway crossing accommodation will be provided as feasible and as specified by the local or regional adopted greenways plans.
3. Where existing right-of-way does not allow for the accommodation of all users and the purchase of additional ROW would be disproportionate to the need. In this case alternatives shall be explored such as obtaining additional right-of-way, use of revised travel lane configurations and road diets, paved shoulders, signage, traffic calming, lowering the speed limit, education or enforcement to accommodate pedestrians, cyclists, transit vehicles and riders and persons with disabilities.
4. The construction is not practically feasible or cost effective because of unreasonable adverse impacts on the environment or on neighboring land uses, including impact from right-of-way acquisition. Generally, a project cost increase over 20% due to transit, bicycle and pedestrian accommodation may be considered unreasonable, with higher cost increase acceptable for bridge, tunnel and other “pinch point” projects
5. The project in question is a routine roadway maintenance, bridge maintenance or sidewalk project with less than \$100,000 construction cost; if the maintenance projects is focused on a traffic signal—an exception can be made if the project cost is less than \$10,000. During routine maintenance, all temporary detours shall comply with temporary traffic control requirements of the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.
6. If a traffic signal is being added or upgraded in an area with no multi-family residential, civic, school, commercial, convenience store, office use or single family residential development at a density of 6 units per acre or higher present within ¼ mile (i.e. agricultural, forest, or rural and low-density single family residential use only).
7. Transit project-transit operations, purchase or upgrade of transit vehicles or transit equipment only, no facility construction involved
8. Where the accommodation of one type of user might compromise the safe travel by another user type, as for example with conflicting freight and pedestrian accommodation. In this case, the selected solution would prioritize the more vulnerable user groups (i.e. disabled individuals, pedestrians and bicyclists) if accommodating both user types to the desired degree is not feasible.

Any determination that a project will warrant exception from the Complete Streets requirement based on the above exception clauses will have said determination reviewed and confirmed by the MPO Board (TAC).

### **7. Bridge Accommodation**

Bridge projects in the French Broad River MPO planning boundary will be subject to complete streets design requirements, based on a three-tier approach: bridges inside municipal boundaries, bridges outside municipal boundaries which trigger additional accommodation, and bridges outside municipal boundaries with no additional accommodation.

#### *Bridges inside municipal boundaries complete streets accommodations required:*

ADA-compliant sidewalks and pedestrian-appropriate guardrails provided on all bridges inside municipal boundaries; bicycle and greenway/multi-use path accommodation, including in the bridge ROW where needed, to be provided on bridges inside municipal boundaries as appropriate based on local, regional and state bicycle and greenway plans.

*Bridges outside municipal boundaries which trigger additional accommodation:*

Bridge projects outside municipal boundaries to include a 5 to 6 foot shoulder and bicyclist/pedestrian-appropriate guardrails, plus travel lanes no wider than 12 feet if one of the following factors apply:

- Within ½ mile of a school
- On a designated local, regional or state bike route or included in adopted bicycle plan or greenways plan
- If there are existing shoulders on at least one approach
- If multi-family housing, manufactured home parks, single family residential housing, or commercial/civic/medical/other trip generators located in the half-mile buffer from the bridge cumulatively result in 1000 trips per day or higher (to be estimated using ITE Trip Generation Manual or other latest engineering and planning guidance as appropriate)
- If the adopted land use plan or zoning map indicate that future cumulative impact of multi-family housing, manufactured home parks, single family residential housing, or commercial/civic/medical/other trip generators located in the half-mile buffer from the bridge would result in 1000 trips per day or higher (to be estimated using ITE Trip Generation Manual or other latest engineering and planning guidance as appropriate)
- Where sight distance or grade issues create an unsafe environment in the absence of shoulders (subject to engineering judgment)
- AADT or ADT on the corridor is at or over 4,000 vehicles per day

*Bridges outside municipal boundaries with no additional accommodation:*

If not inside the municipal boundaries and one of the above factors does not apply, then a standard procedure of providing a 2-ft shoulder on bridges is applicable.

### **8. Interstate Projects**

On interstate projects inside FBRMPO planning boundary, the following recommendations and elements shall be considered in the design of all projects: inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations at interchanges to where pedestrian and bicycle safety is given equal emphasis to traffic movement; and inclusion of crossing accommodations in the interstate ROW outside of interchanges at stream crossings or other key crossing points for non-motorized modes of transportation, with particular attention to off-road greenway, bicycle and pedestrian networks that are shown in adopted plans.

### **9. Education**

French Broad River MPO will work with local government members and regional stakeholders including NCDOT representatives on providing and co-sponsoring education on complete streets policies and design, to foster a better understanding of complete streets principles and practice in our region.

### **10. Future Updates to the Policy**

This policy will be updated in the future by the FBRMPO as needed.