

7 | Complete Streets & Roadway Aesthetics

7.1 OVERVIEW

Our streets lay the foundation for how we interface with travel needs, physical exercise, social exchanges and access to goods and services. They are meaningful for all users of our transportation network whether by car, bus, bike or walking. Over the last several decades, auto-centric transportation plans and designs have limited the mobility needs of the most vulnerable transportation users, i.e., children, seniors and the economically disadvantaged. In many US communities, a narrowed focus on increasing the level of service of vehicle movement has dominated other transportation alternatives in favor of expanding capacity and reducing vehicle delay. It has also placed a costly burden on cities and communities who endeavor to compete economically with ever-evolving demographic shifts and market demands. When planners, engineers, developers and decision makers consider designs that include all users, they can begin to provide a balanced transportation network that improves the quality of life desired in our region. Our streets, if properly designed, can act as a catalyst to economic development attracting investment dollars from the private sector and other partnerships.

7.2 PURPOSE and NEED

In May of 2012, Farmington MPO staff first invited the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute (WALC) to the Farmington region. Led by their charismatic leader Dan Burden, they discussed with local staff, elected officials, area residents and transportation stakeholders the value of a paradigm shift to complete streets that includes all modes and users of our transportation network.



With momentum and eagerness for complete streets in our region communicated, MPO staff organized a Complete Streets Advisory Group (CSAG) in the fall of 2012. Members represent a diverse cross-section of transportation stakeholders from across the region including Safe Routes to School coordinators, land-use planners, land/commercial developers, civil engineers, public health officials and economic development professionals. The grassroots nature of the complete streets planning process aided MPO staff in determining community values as they pertain to our streets and roadways. The CSAG recommended policies, goals, and design guidelines that reflect the region’s consolidated voice. After each proposal was vetted at the Advisory Group level, MPO staff then presented the concepts to the MPO Technical Committee for recommended approval before gaining final approval and adoption from the Policy Committee.

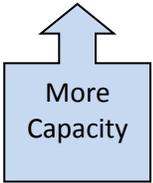
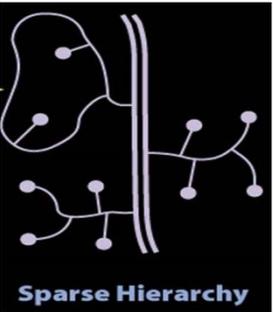
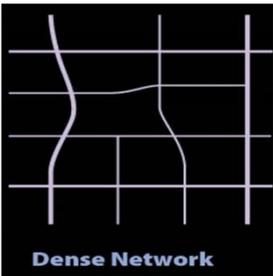
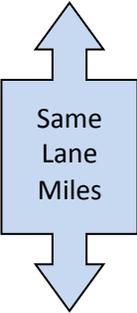
7.3 CORE VALUES

The CSAG was instrumental in establishing the goals and visions that were derived through the planning process. The first task appointed to staff was to share with the public six-core values that were identified by the CSAG. Those values are as follows:

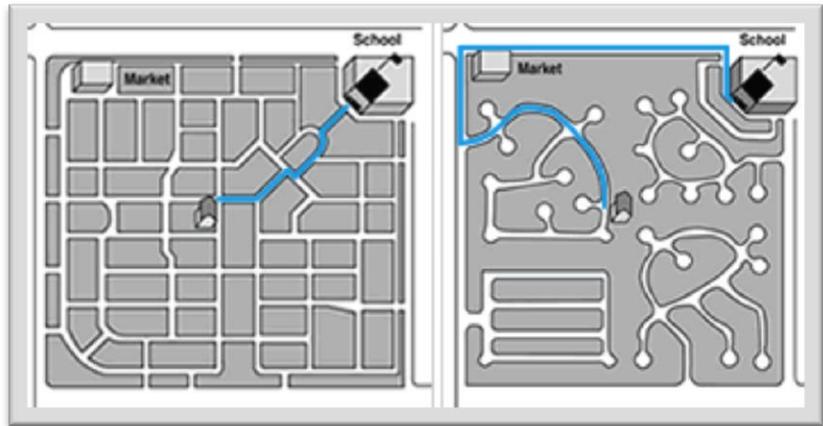
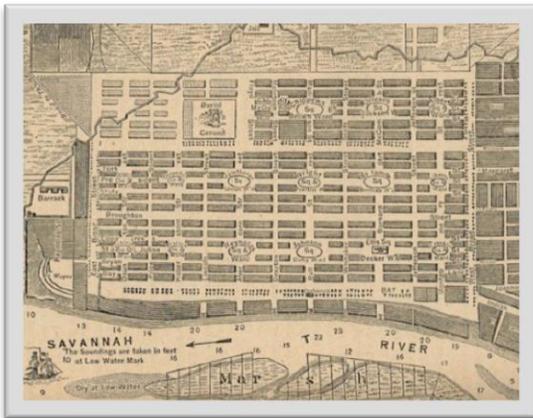
MULTI-MODAL TRANSPORTATION	
Planning, designing, and constructing convenient and appropriate facilities for all modes	
1.	Plan, design and construct appropriate amenities for all modes that provide a balanced and aesthetically pleasing transportation system from urban to rural settings
2.	Design and construct buffers (stripes, medians, etc) between vehicular traffic and other modes where possible
3.	Encourage the use of separate walking/biking paths and equestrian trails, especially along high speed arterials
4.	Build transit stops that are ADA compliant and accessible by walking and biking facilities
5.	Ensure buy-in and support from city departments and transportation agencies that multi-modal features will be incorporated into planning and construction of roads
6.	Encourage the local governments to develop a mechanism for constructing sidewalks for infill and vacant lots.



NETWORK CONNECTIVITY	
Conditions that make it easier to get from one destination to another and that link neighborhoods and districts by minimizing obstructions and restrictions	
1.	Construct linkages - both within and to each other - among neighborhoods, developments, schools, parks, river trails, roads, transit stops, and walking/biking/equestrian networks.
2.	Implement grid patterns within new developments that disperse traffic, provide connectivity for vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists, and slow traffic
3.	Design creative uses for easements (alleys, gas lines, etc) and cul-de-sacs (dead-end streets) as a means of connecting walking/biking/equestrian paths
4.	Encourage the local governments to develop a mechanism for constructing sidewalks for infill and vacant lots.
5.	Integrate and enhance natural land forms and topographies into the design and construction of roads and neighborhoods.



Network connectivity in transportation terminology, improves the movement of people and goods whether you are talking about streets, urban bicycle routes, the public transit system or sidewalks and walking trails. There are many benefits to network connectivity including an improvement to traffic on busy streets, elimination of traffic bottlenecks, continuous and direct routes that can encourage travel by walking, biking and public transit; and allowing for improved accessibility for emergency response vehicles as well as for the evacuation of communities in case of disasters.

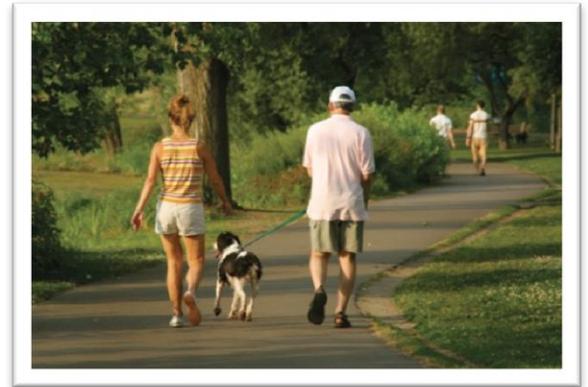


HEALTH

Providing transportation options that encourage physical activity, improve air quality, reduce congestion, and improve livability

1. Ensure that transportation options are provided as a means of promoting healthy activities for all age groups (children, adults, seniors, etc)
2. Encourage active participation by all socio-economic groups by promoting bicycle/pedestrian events and destinations
3. Market the health benefits (physical activity, less emissions, etc) of walking, biking, and taking public transit
4. Develop partnerships with Health Organizations to educate and promote complete streets and healthy life styles.

Through the MPO's Complete Streets Advisory Group and other outreach events, the MPO has successfully made connections with local health professionals such as Blue Cross/Blue Shield, Place Matters, San Juan Regional Medical Center and NM Department of Health. A health profile report of San Juan County Health accessible via the New Mexico Indicator Based Information System (IBIS) shows that adult physical activity in the years 2005, 2007, 2009 was at 45.7% - below the state average of 52.5%. Data from a 2011 health indicators study, the San Juan County Health Forecast, reveals that obesity among adults (those with a body mass index (BMI) greater than 25) was at a staggering 71% for San Juan County. This was above the state average of 60.7% and the national average of 66.9%. Fortunately, there is a movement within San Juan County health practitioners and advocates to examine "health in all policies", which includes looking at infrastructure designs to ensure they are safe, comfortable and convenient for walking, biking and transit modes of travel.

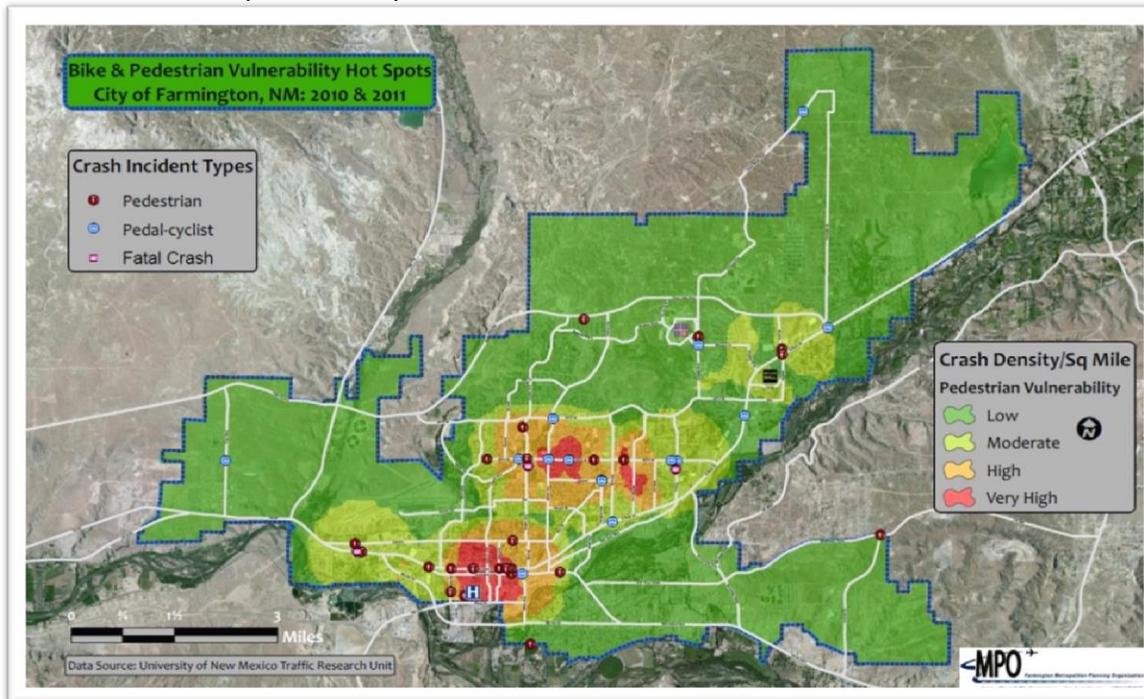


SAFETY

Designing roads [and pathways] that accommodate all users; providing amenities for each mode type that create separation, increase visibility, and minimize conflict points

1. Integrate safety measures (buffers, medians, traffic calming, roundabouts, cross access easements, etc) into all road sections that benefit all users and maximize context appropriate measures
2. Separate modes using physical structures to ensure the comfort and safety of all users
3. Provide context appropriate safety measures in urban and rural settings and for paved and unpaved surfaces.
4. Provide roadway landscaping as a means to slow traffic and appropriate lighting designed to meet land use contexts

An examination of regional crash data will help prioritize safety projects through the State's Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). Vehicular and pedestrian vulnerability "Hot Spot" mapping helps identify corridors or intersections that need counter measures to reduce hazards and improve safety.

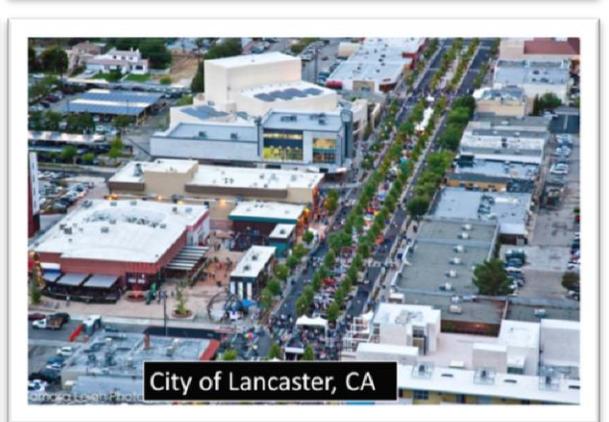
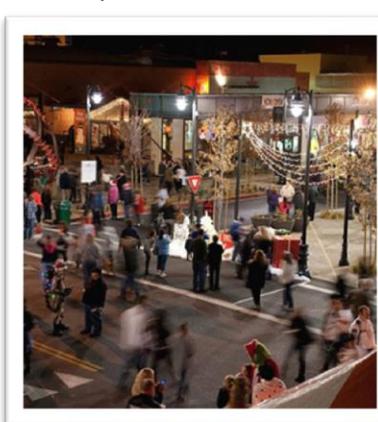


ECONOMIC VITALITY

Attracting new developments and encouraging growth; supporting and nurturing existing businesses; promoting a mix of uses that complement each other

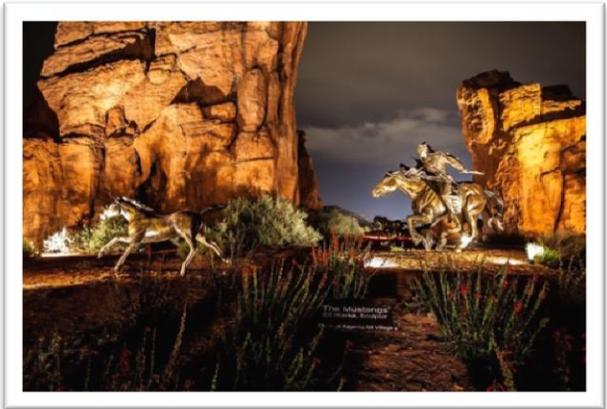
1. Include traffic calming measures (see Safety value) that slow vehicular speeds [in locations] and that encourage people to visit retail and commercial districts by walking, biking and taking transit
2. Build wider sidewalks that accommodate bump-outs, landscaping, bike racks and seating areas and encourage building placements to front property lines with rear parking access in commercial zones.
3. Provide spaces (plazas, squares, walkways & parklets) with adequate signage that encourage locals and tourists to linger and shop.
4. Provide flexibility for public/private partnerships to attract more business & customers
5. Develop flexible design guidelines that can be applied to the scale of development considered; encourage the development of open spaces that attract pedestrian activity and use of the space.

Economic vitality refers to designing streets that act as catalysts for future economic development which will simultaneously produce a setting which is active, vibrant and conducive to commerce while allowing the movement of all modes of transportation. The City of Lancaster, CA is an example of \$10 million community investment in street lighting, landscaping, street pavers, and trees that lead to a revitalization of their downtown. More than \$125 million in private sector investments resulted with 40 new businesses and 800 new jobs. Area revenue went up 119% in 2012 only five years after completion in 2007.



STREET AESTHETICS	
Facades, building forms, and street-scapes that are scaled appropriately, pleasing in appearance, and welcoming to residents and visitors alike	
1.	Develop appropriately scaled and attractive public spaces that interrelate with all modes of travel
2.	Enhance the importance of nearby land uses by building road sections with multi-modal options
3.	Encourage the local municipalities and San Juan County to develop entryway signage or monuments and include landscaping and art for downtowns and neighborhoods
4.	Ensure that road cross sections complement, enhance & encourage attention to facade treatments, building forms, street-scapes and underground utilities

Whether you are moving in the rural parts of the County, or commercial corridors or urban centers, streets leave a lasting impression on our minds about the places we live or wish to experience. Some important questions to ask about local street and regional roads in regards to aesthetics are Where do top-quality examples exist in the region? Where do we want to see improvements made? What specific treatments would make vast improvements to street aesthetics? What mechanisms are in place locally or regionally that address maintenance issues? What group of constituents can help make these wishes a reality? How can improved aesthetics enhance economic development?



7.4 STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING COMPLETE STREETS

The Complete Streets Advisory Group will outline several strategies for funding projects, maintenance and implementing policies in the Complete Streets Design Guidelines.

The Farmington MPO will coordinate the Complete Streets Plan. Activities will include:

- Develop a prioritization process for regional complete street projects
- Seek federal funding and work with the local entities and NMDOT to obtain it
- Monitor and update the Complete Streets Plan as necessary
- Ensure the plan is consistent with the MTP and other comprehensive transportation plans
- Assist with development review to ensure new subdivisions and businesses follow approved policies
- Consult with local organizations and the general public who are involved with pedestrian movement, transit, public health, safety and design, & decision makers
- Identify and seek available grants