

Executive Summary

The complete streets policy movement is gaining popularity across the United States, with increasing number of cities and regions implementing transportation policies designed to better consider the needs and safety of pedestrians, cyclists and transit users. While the term complete streets has not become commonplace in Canadian planning policy, Canadian cities are also making an attempt to better plan for users of all modes, ages and abilities.

The City of Kingston, Ontario has developed several policy and transportation initiatives over the past decade that show an increasing desire to foster a transportation environment that encourages modal shift. The City's Transportation Master Plan is one of these key documents. Without using the term complete streets, the Kingston Transportation Master Plan (KTMP) sets up a framework that is clearly designed to support growth of users of active transportation and public transit and shift the emphasis away from the private automobile. This report is an evaluation of the KTMP to determine how effectively it is creating a policy environment that supports the development of complete streets; that is, streets that serve all users equally in spite of modal choice, age or ability.

The tool used to evaluate the KTMP comes from an American organization called the National Complete Streets Coalition (NCSC). The NCSC conducted an evaluation of a number of complete streets policies across the United States looking for ten specific elements that they have determined best foster an environment where complete streets can be developed. The ten elements are vision, planning for all users and modes, network, jurisdiction, phasing, exceptions, design, context sensitivity, performance standards and implementation plans. To validate the evaluation, two additional Transportation Master Plans were also evaluated

using the toolkit. The Waterloo Transportation Master Plan represents a city of similar size and character to Kingston, and contains Canada's first real complete streets policy. The Fort Collins Transportation Master Plan also represents a similar city to Kingston, and was evaluated highly by the NCSC.

The KTMP was the lowest scoring plan of the three plans evaluated. While it effectively addressed a need to improve infrastructure for cyclists, pedestrians and users of public transit, it contained little in the way of implementation. New development was the only type of development targeted for infrastructure improvements geared towards cyclists, pedestrians and transit users, and it failed to include any best practice design guidelines or context sensitive solutions. The plan also did not set up any performance standards to measure if real changes were being made.

The primary recommendation for changes to the KTMP is to update the plan to include a complete streets section that can best address appropriate exemptions, performance standards and an implementation plan. Additional language changes throughout the remaining plan fill in the gaps that were identified and create a policy document that fosters the development of complete streets for the City of Kingston.

Transportation Master Plans are an effective place for a municipality to develop complete streets policies, which in many cases will simply further support the growing demand to shift the transportation focus away from private vehicles and make the road a space where all users feel safe and can make transportation choices that are better for their health and the environment.