Complete Streets Coalition Brainstorm  
December 2019

The following ideas came up during the Chicagoland Complete Streets Coalition brainstorm of common barriers and solutions that can help advance complete streets – an overall summary and detailed notes are below. The following three questions were asked during the brainstorm:

1) **Barriers** - What barriers do communities face improving walking and biking conditions or achieving Complete Streets on state, county, and local roads? What additional barriers do high-need communities face?

2) **Solutions** - What policies or legislation (state, regional) could best help municipalities advance Complete Streets? What policies could directly impact higher need communities?

3) **Actions** - What can the Complete Streets Coalition do to advance these ideas and solutions?

1) **Barriers to Complete Streets:**

- Lack of staff capacity (local municipalities, IDOT)
- Access to funding (local match, limited resources, knowledge of funding sources)
- Lack of understanding/attitudes (community, decision makers)
- Lack of communication and community engagement
- Competing priorities
- Land-use decisions (auto-centric, disconnected)
- Differing road jurisdictions and coordination between agencies
- Weak implementation of CS policies

2) **Solutions to advancing Complete Streets:**

- Build staff capacity
  - Imbedded planners in local municipalities
  - More support for IDOT grant administration process
  - Provide funding to more groups who have capacity to develop plans, studies, etc.

- More, wide-reaching education
  - Education to help decision makers and community understand the benefits of complete streets – Mayors Caucus, COGs, Municipal League, chambers, local affairs.
  - Grants to provide training/professional development opportunities around complete streets development and implementation.

- Improve funding access and opportunity
  - Provide more clarity around what types of grants are available to fund complete streets projects.

  - Applications:
    - Eliminate local match for walk/bike treatments
    - Allow exceptions for Phase 1 Engineering requirement
- Broaden grant eligibility to more organizations
- CS policy mandate or points for funding from MPO/COG
- Do away with grant cycles
  - In addition to funding road projects, dedicated funding for communication, education, advocacy, and technical assistance.
- Improve coordination - Legislation to address disconnect between complete streets policies at different levels of government.
- Developers – Create policy that requires complete streets in new development.
- Get on Climate Change legislative agenda

3) Actions the Coalition can take:

- Work with planning liaisons to craft messaging around Complete Streets for COGs and COMs.
- Create one-pagers on Complete Streets for different audiences with crafted messages.
- Identify CS success stories, present to communities and decision makers.
- Help communities with ITEP applications – host workshop (online or in-person).
- Use networks to share funding sources and new opportunities with communities (add planning liaisons to CS Coalition google group listserv).
- Work with Metropolitan Mayors Caucus and form a group of mayors who are champions for Complete Streets.
- Get Coalition involved as IDOT develops ITEP funding guidelines – discuss funding solution ideas outlined above.

**DETAILED NOTES**

1) Barriers

- Funding
  - Limited resources
  - Need to upfront costs for projects and then get reimbursed by grant
  - Local match for complete streets treatments
  - Knowledge of available funding and access to it
  - Communities unable to find funding for sidewalks, residents required to contribute
- Capacity
  - IDOT who distributes funding / project clearing house
  - Local communities, especially high need communities without a dedicated planner
  - Lots of plans but weak implementation – need for follow-up assistance
  - Lack of capacity for funding, technical, advocacy
  - Weak implementation, need for follow-up assistance
- Lack of Understanding/Attitudes
  - Lack of familiarity with Complete Streets concepts (government, community)
  - General lack of education and communication
  - Skeptical of complete streets
  - NIMBY-ism
  - “It’s a Chicago thing, not a statewide issue”
  - Demonstrating the value of a project or plan is difficult to do
o Empathy – not understanding others’ experiences

• Priorities
  o Auto-centric mind-set (police, public works, decision makers) - bike/ped not prioritized
  o Competing priorities
  o Political will – knowing versus doing
    o Potholes get money

• Land use patterns
  o Poor development/sprawl
  o Lack of connectivity
  o Right-of-way and parking trade-offs
  o Hyper-local decision making that does not consider networks and connectivity
    o Developers driven by profit

• Communication/Engagement
  o Hard for advocates to know about projects and get their ideas heard
  o Poor community engagement
  o Powerless people not catered to.
  o Lack of outreach with IDOT – often they get involved after a lot of work has already been done, if they reject your request, you have to start from scratch
  o Identifying local mobility needs of high-need communities and making design options relevant

• Poor data – crash data, ADA access, pedestrian, health

• Lack of cohesive policies between local, state, and federal agencies
  o Different road jurisdictions makes work more complicated
  o Lack of ordinances – Complete Streets policies are often resolutions

2) Solutions

• Capacity
  o Provide support for right-sizing staff to agency needs
  o More imbedded planners for municipalities
  o Develop policies that utilize capacity
  o Need Czar at IDOT for $50 million bike/ped funding

• Education
  o Learning collaborative
  o Spread the communication on the benefits of Complete Streets
  o Collect and disseminate data, tell a story to different audiences
  o Once a CS project is implemented, work with community to educate
  o Better terminology is needed, connect with values
  o CS outreach managers by region
  o Grants that allow professional development/training on Complete Streets
  o Education at community level and decision making level
  o Education of public and decision makers (encourage advocacy, e.g Climate Reality)
  o Resources/education to help decision makers understand the benefits of complete streets – Mayors Caucus, COGs, Municipal League, chambers local affairs
• Connect peer communities

**Funding and Resources**

• Applying for funding
  
  ▪ Allow exceptions for Phase 1 Engineering requirement for ITEP funding (especially for high need communities, it is a huge cost burden)
  
  ▪ Eliminate match for phase 1 engineering
  
  ▪ Reduce local match for walking/biking treatments for high need communities
  
  ▪ Change how we make funding accessible (projects, engagement, partnerships)
  
  ▪ Rethink how cycles require preparedness for apply for funding – do we do away with cycles?
  
  ▪ MPOs assign points for CS based project in programming or mandate Complete Streets policies to apply for federal funding (MPOs, COGs)
  
  ▪ Restructure IDOT’s grant administration and application process (e.g. use Michigan DOT’s model) to ensure project is feasible and support is offered as needed.

• Prioritize high need communities
  
  ▪ Use programming and policy to seek equitable outcomes for disadvantaged communities – help communities gain access to capital or staff to move capital.

• Fund other areas of the CS process
  
  ▪ Dedicated funding for communication and education as well as projects
  
  ▪ Fund advocacy organizations that influence decision makers
  
  ▪ Rededicate funding to support ongoing technical assistance
    
    ▪ Get resources to high-need communities, connect them to technical assistance and funding

• Coordination - Legislation to address disconnect between policies at different levels of government (local vs county vs state)

• Developers – Create development ordinances with CS design standards

• Climate Change
  
  ▪ Get on Climate Change agenda – early input in upcoming legislation/policies on environment
  
  ▪ Increase visibility – get on agenda of local sustainability efforts

• Highways .. can we just not?

3) **Actions**

• Meet with Council of Mayors
  
  ▪ Work with planning liaisons to craft messaging around Complete Streets for COGs and COMs
  
  ▪ Be concise
  
  ▪ One-pagers for different audiences with crafted messages – ask planning liaisons what is needed
  
  ▪ Make presentations to deliver to organizations that education mayors and elected officials

• Create more cohesive agenda around Complete Streets in the region
• Identify success stories and connect with others
• Technical assistance for complete streets – online and in-person
• Experiential learning or video
• Clarify funding opportunities
• Help communities with applications – provide application support through workshops, education, training
• Educate entities on how to spend funds (position statement)
• Be ‘in the room’ when IDOT develops guidelines for $50 million
• Coalition members push action alert for a legislative ask related to Complete Streets
• Find Champion Mayors
  o Have them get together
  o Have CS Coalition reach out as a group
  o Work through Metro Mayors Caucus