

MML#1 – Working Towards Complete Streets



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MML#1 – Working Towards Complete Streets

(Crystal A. Proxmire, March 21, 2017)

Lansing, MI – Civic leaders came together Tuesday to learn about topics important to local governments including “Complete Streets.”

Representatives of Ferndale, Ann Arbor and Kalamazoo sat on a Michigan Municipal League’s Capitol Conference panel Tuesday to share what successes their communities have had with Complete Streets projects.

What are Complete Streets?

Having complete streets means that roadways are designed to be safe and welcoming for multiple forms of transportation, including cars, pedestrians, bicycles, public transit and accessibility for those in wheelchairs and walkers.

Ann Arbor Councilperson Chip Smith gave several reasons why Complete Streets are gaining popularity in municipalities of all sizes. These include:

- Improved Safety
- Better Social Health Outcomes



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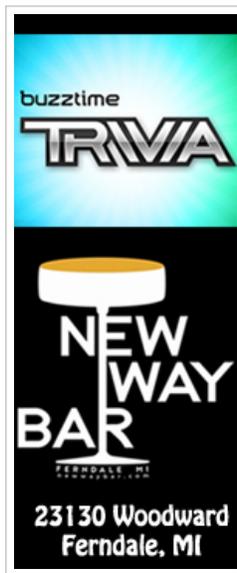
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In terms of safety, Michigan ranks 9th most dangerous for bicyclists with 24 deaths per year Smith said.

“One statistic that people notice is that crashes declined 70% in areas that became Complete Streets,” he said. “The other thing is there is safety in numbers. The more people biking on streets, the safer the streets become for everyone biking. As there are more bicyclists, drivers get used to looking for them.”

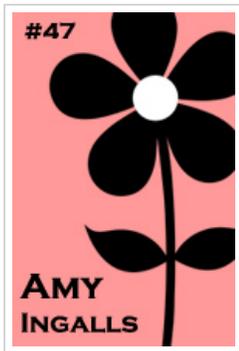


For pedestrians, he cited a 2003 study by King/Ewing that said “Designing intersestions for pedestrian travel can reduce pedestrian risk by 20%.”

“This is basic stuff like paint and lighting,” Smith said.

A study by Christopher Leinberger looked at increases in real estate values in correlation to Complete Street features, including increasing retail space value by \$9 per square foot, apartment rental rates by \$300 per month, and home values of \$82 per square foot.

Smith also talked about the need for people to get around who are unable to drive. “20% of our population have disabilities that limit daily activities,” he said. “In 10 years 1 in 5 Americans is going to be over 65.”



How to Build Complete Streets

Smith gave 9 steps in the Complete Streets process:

- 1 – Set a vision
- 2 – Include all modes
- 3 – Emphasize Connections
- 4 – Make it applicable to all phases of projects
- 5 – Specify and limit exceptions
- 6 – Use latest design standards and be flexible in changing old



standards

- 7 – Make sure it is context sensitive
- 8 – Set performance standards and collect data
- 9 – Include implementation steps

Ann Arbor

In Ann Arbor they went from 0 miles of bike lanes in 2000 to 60 miles today.





“All road work includes Complete Streets features,” Smith said. It used to be when bids ran high things like pedestrian islands, striping etc were the first to get cut...Now we make those a priority.”

Kalamazoo

Rebekah Kik, City Planner for Kalamazoo got hands on experience working with the public to understand the value of Complete Streets when the city decided to make changes to Portage Street.

Portage has an airport at one end and a downtown at the other end. The posted speed was 30, but the average speed was 42.



“Our vision was working with community members and business owners to discuss trade offs and street design,” she said. One cost savings was that by reducing the width of the road there were huge construction savings and savings on maintenance over time.

They had to choose between bike lanes and on-street parking. Ultimately they chose the bike lanes because they wanted people to feel safe biking and walking in the area. The idea went over well because she told people they could do the bike lanes relatively easily and see how they worked out before spending money on setting up the on street parking.



After the reduction of lanes and addition of bike lanes, they saw a 47% decrease in the number of crashes.

“Now you can hit every single green [light] if you go 30 miles per hour,” Kik said.

Her best advice is to be vocal about projects and celebrate success. “Let people know about accident reduction, celebrate this stuff.”

Another way the Kalamazoo community celebrated was with Slow Roll bike rides. People would meet in large groups and ride. “It’s one of those things – you feel uncomfortable doing something but you do it in a group and you feel more comfortable.”

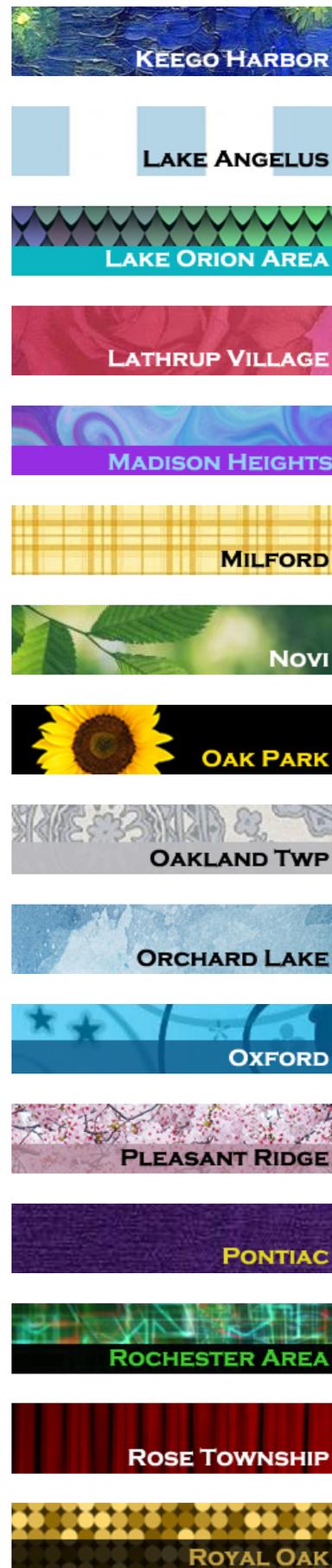
Ferndale

Ferndale City Planner Justin Lyons talked about how various small initiatives have been adding up to make Ferndale a mecca for Complete Streets features.

Ferndale adopted a Complete Streets ordinance in 2009 and has been using it actively since. “In the 90s Ferndale was a pass through city. Now it’s a destination,” Lyons said.

Working with neighboring communities Ferndale was able to get 142 bike route signs, 4 rapid flashing beacons, shared lanes markings, 3 wayfinding hubs that include bike repair stations, and new bike lanes.

“We created the Ferndale Moves! Website to be the hub for all our transportation initiatives,” Lyons said. He said improvements have required a lot of planning, but also



the right mindset. “Get ready to fail until it works,” he said. “Be flexible. Have contingency plans in case bids come back too high.”



In Ferndale they’ve encouraged employees to be innovative, including creative signage in the Downtown asking people to “walk your wheels” when Downtown, and the DPW retrofitting a sidewalk sweeper to do winter clearing of protected bike lanes and crosswalks.

“Our Mayor and City Manager are good about saying ‘don’t tell me why it will not work, though they will listen to that too, but tell me how we can make it work,” Lyons said.

Coming up next for Ferndale’s Complete Streets efforts is “Bike Month” in May, when the community will have several bike-related events and promotions to encourage multi-modal transportation.

Public Transit

While bike lanes and pedestrian crossing are part of the street design, public transit also plays a role in Complete Streets.

Smith talked about doing consulting in Pontiac and how Complete Streets are not just for leisure or the elderly, but also for people who need to get to and from school, shopping and work. “One of the issues we have in Pontiac is low walkability score and very poor access to public transportation. That makes it difficult for people to get to jobs,” he said. “I see too often that a car break down financially cripples entire families.”

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LAURA BERMAN

Streetscape and Complete Streets planning can ensure that buses, ride sharing services, electric cars, and self-driving cars can all have a place as well as pedestrians and cyclists.

The Michigan Municipal League has a variety of resources on Complete Streets. Check them out at

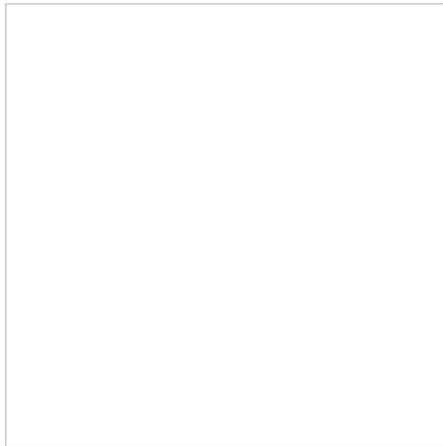
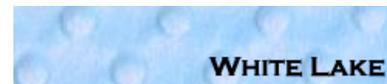
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http://www.mml.org/resources/information/complete_streets.html

The Michigan Municipal League 2017 Capital Conference took place March 21-22 in Lansing. Oakland County Times will be featuring stories from the conference over the next few weeks. If you’d like to sign up for daily headlines from Oakland County Times go to https://feedburner.google.com/fb/a/mailverify?uri=Oakland_County_115_News.

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**Current Conditions: Light Rain
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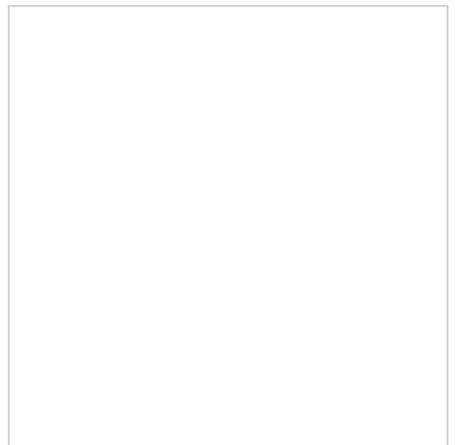
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Wind: SE at 9mph

Humidity: 96%

Windchill: 48°F

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What are those GREEN THINGS on the roads?

You may have noticed some new additions to 101st and E. They are blue bicycle lanes, right side lanes with bright green pavement. These are called buffered bike lanes, and the green markers indicate potential conflicts with vehicles and bicycles.

According to City of Toronto (P&A Deputy Director Mark Davis), the addition of buffered bike lanes keeps both drivers and riders safer on the road. "Think of them like caution signs."

Here's how they work: if you're driving a vehicle and you need to cross the bike lane (to make a turn, for example), use the green areas to do so. Never drive in a buffered zone area. If you're a cyclist, use caution and watch for vehicle turn signals when you approach a green patch—these areas indicate a higher likelihood of vehicle bicycle conflict.

Studies show that cyclists are five times more likely to be hit riding on a sidewalk than on a bicycle. Providing a space for riding makes cyclists more comfortable with road sharing, reduces conflicts, and makes everyone safer. "These modifications could potentially save a life."





About the author

Oakland County Times has written 11812 articles for Oakland County Times

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