



The **Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network** is a collaborative group of individuals and associations working with and for Wisconsin's older adults to shape public policy to improve their quality of life.

Core member organizations:

Aging and Disability Professionals Association of Wisconsin (ADPAW)

Alzheimer's Association
SE Wisconsin Chapter

Wisconsin Adult Day Services Association (WADSA)

Wisconsin Association of Area Agencies on Aging (W4A)

Wisconsin Association of Benefit Specialists (WABS)

Wisconsin Association of Nutrition Directors (WAND)

Wisconsin Association of Senior Centers (WASC)

Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging (WIHA)

To: Hon. Alberta Darling, Senate Co-Chair Joint Committee on Finance,
Hon. John Nygren, Assembly Co-chair Joint Committee on Finance, and
Joint Committee on Finance Members

From: Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network

Date: May 7, 2015

Subject: Complete Streets Policy

The members of the Wisconsin Aging Advocacy Network request the budget item repealing the Complete Streets policy be removed from the budget. Complete Streets - Transportation Administrative Rule 75 was enacted in 2011 and is commonly referred to as Complete Streets. This statutory provision generally requires the Department of Transportation (DOT) to ensure that bikeways and pedestrian ways are established as part of all new highway construction and reconstruction projects funded in whole or in part from state or federal funds (Legislative Fiscal Bureau, 2015-17 Budget Summary, Page 450, #10).

Older Adults and Complete Streets

Our abilities and needs change throughout our lives. Our built environment and infrastructure should be planned with these changes in mind and not be exclusive to one phase of our lives. Complete Streets are part of multi-modal planning and design for safe use of roadways and paths for all users and will be critically important as our state continues to age quickly.

Changing demographics - One out of 5 individuals was over the age of 60 in 2010 according to the Department of Administration. By 2040, that number will increase to 1 out of 3 with some counties having half of their populations over the age of 60. On average, we outlive our driving ability by 7-10 years, that's a long time to be using alternative modes of transportation. Alternative modes include public transportation, biking and walking. About 9% of all trips taken by those over age 65 are walking trips. Among older adults who don't drive (almost all of whom are women), walking accounts for almost one out of every four trips, and its importance increases with age.

Complete streets are uniquely designed for each community and look different in rural versus urban settings. Complete street projects ensure infrastructure investments for long-term benefits that help older adults remain active and living in their communities.

Not only does Complete Streets infrastructure benefit the older population, but similar infrastructure we now consider ordinary, like curb cuts and other accommodations initially designed for individuals with disabilities, help young children, parents with strollers, bikers and even those traveling by vehicle. At any age, most people do not exclusively use cars to get around, we use a combination of walking, buses, bikes and cars for their daily activities.

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Safety - According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration data from 2012, older adults are overrepresented in fatal crashes accounting for 17% of all traffic fatalities. The Center for Disease Control reports older adults over 65 account for 20% of all pedestrian fatalities. Also significant are the number of injuries. Data from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System—All Injury Program (NEISS-AIP) were analyzed to gather more information about adults ages 65 and older who were non-fatally injured on a public roadway from 2001 to 2006. Findings showed the majority (92.5%) of older adult non-fatal pedestrian injuries were the result of an older adult falling or being hit by a motor vehicle. More than 9,000 older pedestrian fall-related injuries each year involved a curb—such as an older adult tripping on a curb.

Roadways designed using Complete Streets guidelines are safer for all road users, those on foot and those on wheels. Reducing speeding through roadway design decreases collisions and fatalities by car users and those who walk. Pedestrian improvements like curb cuts and highly visible pavement markings also prevent injury and reduce emergency room visits.

Economic impact - In order for older adults to remain active and engaged in the local community and economy, they need a means to get around safely. Older adults without transportation take 65% fewer social, family or religious trips and 59% fewer trips shopping and out to eat. Without access, they have the potential for early admission to long term care facilities that can be significantly more expensive than remaining in their own homes.

The Governor's budget estimates approximately \$7.4 million dollars savings by repealing the Complete Streets policy, however, in a March 2015 memo, the Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB) estimated that approximately 0.7% of total highway construction expenditures go towards Complete Streets projects, which is about \$1.2 million state dollars annually statewide. However, the LFB indicates that it is difficult to attain an exact number because Complete Streets features are not always separated in the construction costs.

The paper does not address the potential money savings of Complete Streets designs including reduced wear and tear on the roads due to slower traffic speeds and less congestion, increased longevity of the road pavement due to larger shoulders and reduced need for expensive retrofits. It also does not account for the reduced costs of healthcare through access to preventative appointments and increased physical activity. Combined, these factors can result in Complete Streets investments saving communities money.

Health outcomes - People without transportation options go to the doctor 15% fewer times than those with transportation. With the significant rise in chronic conditions such as Alzheimer's disease and kidney disease requiring dialysis and rise in home and community based long term care services, the need for transportation options will continue to grow. Healthcare systems are shifting their focus to prevention activities. Having safe places to walk and be active helps older adults improve their health and wellness for better and less costly health outcomes.

Collectively, we want people to live as independently as possible; to take care of their daily needs, their health and continue to contribute to the community through working and purchasing goods. To do this, we need investment in infrastructure for all road users, and that begins with policies like Complete Streets. The savings to the budget as a result of repealing Complete Streets will be minimal if at all quantifiable, while the long term benefits for the economic development and health of the community are substantially greater. We urge legislators to remove the repeal of this important policy.

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