

Newburyport Complete Streets Project Prioritization Plan 2019 OVERVIEW

A “Complete Street” is one that is designed to provide and encourage safe options for all users and travel modes, so that pedestrians and bicyclists of all ages and abilities can move safely and comfortably on a street along with motorists (as opposed to a street corridor that is primarily for motorized vehicles). Modifying and designing streets with these principles, in a way that is sensitive to the streetscape and Newburyport’s historic resources, will enhance people’s travel between home, school, parks, stores, work and other destinations, and contribute to the livability and quality of life in our community as well as people’s safety, health, and the community’s overall economic viability.

The Newburyport City Council adopted a Complete Streets policy with the goal of making places in our community safer and more livable, promoting public health, and trying to reduce traffic congestion and environmental impacts. In general, our community’s transportation network is dominated by motor vehicles, and we have just begun in recent years to focus on a more balanced approach. There are many potential Complete Streets projects for us to pursue in the coming years, a process that is constrained by available resources and competing priorities. The City is trying to take a network approach that prioritizes transportation infrastructure projects that connect important destinations and address streets with known safety and/or pedestrian and bicycle connectivity problems.

The City’s goal for any Complete Streets work in our community is to provide safer, universally accessible, pleasing streetscapes and transportation corridors that are sensitive to and compatible with the historic resources and character of the area. The primary elements of the national historic register district are the buildings themselves, and upgrades to the public right-of-way should not obscure architectural details or overwhelm or significantly distract from the contributing structures. The streetscape is the sum of its parts. Careful consideration of multiple factors, including historic resources, accessibility, pedestrian safety, emergency vehicle operation, multiple stakeholders, and existing laws and regulations, should result in beneficial projects. Our streetscapes have evolved markedly from the nineteenth century in order to meet contemporary needs (asphalt pavement, roadway markings, utility poles and lines, piecemeal evolution of sidewalks and curb cuts, etc.). In addition to making streets safer for all users, Complete Streets projects will serve to promote the historic uses of walking and bicycling that preceded the advent of the automobile in our streets. Complete Streets projects should improve the character and view along our historic streetscapes and complement the corridor’s primary historic resources.

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation established the Complete Streets Funding Program in 2016 which requires communities to establish Project Prioritization Plans in order to be eligible to apply for construction funding of up to \$400,000. The City received a grant of \$35,000 from the state to hire a consultant to develop the required plan, and contracted with the consultant TEC, Inc. The City and the consultant have gathered input regarding potential projects and priorities from existing plans, data and studies, as well as from neighbors, citizen groups, municipal commissions, staff, City Councilors, and others, and participants at public meetings.

The Project Prioritization Plan lists nearly four dozen projects. These potential projects are estimated to cost in the range of approximately \$400,000 or less, along with a couple of projects that would cost more. Please note that the plan does not focus on individually ranking specific projects. All the projects identified on the list are worthwhile transportation projects, and the consultant has divided the list into three priority tiers (higher,

medium, and lower) based on criteria such as expressed public interest, proximity to desirable destinations, safety, the number of people served, the number of modes of transportation addressed, and project feasibility and viability.

The Plan has been submitted to the state for approval by MassDOT, allowing the City to make applications for Complete Streets project construction funding in May 2019 as well as in other future Complete Streets funding rounds, plus apply for other local, state, federal, and private funding sources in the coming years.