

VALDOSTA-LOWNDES METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

BACKGROUND

The Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization (VLMPO) supports the creation of a multimodal, safe, efficient transportation system that ensures accessibility to all roadway users in the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Area (this area's boundary is shown in Exhibit A). The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) and the local jurisdictions that comprise the VLMPO have already constructed numerous projects that provide this accessibility. Such projects range from low-cost striping and signage improvements associated with roadway resurfacing projects to more significant enhancements installed in and along roadways during reconstruction projects, as well as the construction of multi-use trails.

A statewide Complete Streets Design Policy (*Design Policy Manual*, Chapter 9) was adopted by GDOT on September 20, 2012, calling for the Department to “routinely incorporate bicycle, pedestrian, and transit accommodations into transportation infrastructure projects as a means for improving mobility, access, and safety for the traveling public.”¹

At the federal level, the FAST Act, signed into law on December 4, 2015, was the first federal transportation bill ever to include Complete Streets provisions.²

At the local level, the VLMPO's *2040 Transportation Vision Plan* (adopted September 2, 2015) includes a Complete Streets Strategy, requiring that all locally-sponsored projects receiving federal funding through the MPO should be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained, to the greatest extent possible, so that all users and all modes, of all ages and abilities, can travel safely and independently.³ In addition, projects awarded GDOT TE or TAP funds are exempt from this policy due to their specific inclusion within the GDOT Complete Streets Policy.

¹ Georgia Department of Transportation. 2018. *Design Policy Manual*. Revision 5.6, 9/6/2018. <http://www.dot.ga.gov/PartnerSmart/DesignManuals/DesignPolicy/GDOT-DPM.pdf> (accessed September 28, 2018).

² Smart Growth America. (No date.) “Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.” <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/Complete-Streets-FAST-Act-One-Pager.pdf> (accessed June 22, 2018).

³ Valdosta-Lowndes MPO. 2015. *2040 Transportation Vision Plan*, pp. 29-30.

Another important planning document, the *Common Community Vision for Greater Lowndes County* (adopted January 29, 2014), calls for “the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes for people and freight” as well as for improvements in the safety of the transportation system.⁴

The 2016 Comprehensive Plan for Lowndes County and the Cities of Dasher, Hahira, Lake Park, Remerton, and Valdosta calls for a range of improvements in the transportation system in order to better accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and all other users and modes.⁵ The comprehensive plans of other counties that are partially within the VLMPO area (Berrien, Brooks, and Lanier Counties) also call for similar improvements.

There is a widely recognized need for better accommodation of non-motorized travel modes throughout the VLMPO area. An estimated 8.35 percent of households in Lowndes County have no vehicle available.⁶ Besides those residents of the region who use non-motorized travel modes out of necessity, there are also many residents who use non-motorized travel modes by choice, whether for reasons of health or simply for personal enjoyment. In addition, some corridors and areas are in need of improved accommodation for motorized travel modes, including freight. The safe, equitable accommodation of all users and all modes is a key element of the Complete Streets concept.

In addition, like many other communities in the United States, residents of the VLMPO area experience health problems related to a lack of exercise. Studies in similar areas have shown that improvements in the transportation system tend to lead to more people using active transportation modes, with associated higher levels of exercise and improved health outcomes.⁷

By adopting, in the form of a policy, the Complete Streets principles that are already being called for and implemented through local, state, and federal plans, policies, and laws, the VLMPO will affirm its commitment to the safe and efficient accommodation of all users in the MPO area’s transportation system, and will continue to build a safe, efficient multimodal transportation system that accommodates all roadway users.

VISION AND INTENT

The vision guiding this Complete Streets Policy is that the VLMPO will continue to create and improve an equitable, well-balanced, efficient, safe, interconnected

⁴ Southern Georgia Regional Commission. 2014. *A Common Community Vision for Greater Lowndes County*, p. 5.

⁵ Greater Lowndes County. 2016. *Greater Lowndes Comprehensive Plan Update for Lowndes County and the Cities of Dasher, Hahira, Lake Park, Remerton, and Valdosta*, p. 19 ff.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, American FactFinder 2016 five-year estimates (www.census.gov).

⁷ For example: Mueller, Natalie, et al. 2015. “Health impact assessment of active transportation: A systematic review.” *Preventive Medicine* 76:103-114; and Giles-Corti, Billie. 2010. “The co-benefits for health of investing in active transportation.” *NSW Public Health Bulletin* 21(6):122-127.

transportation network where all roadway users of all ages and abilities (including but not limited to pedestrians, bicyclists, mobility aid users, seniors, children, automobile drivers, freight drivers, and public transit users) can travel safely and comfortably, and where sustainable transportation options are available to everyone.

Further, the intent of this policy is to continue improving connectivity and coverage for all transportation modes in the VLMPO area's transportation network, and to work towards creating a complete, connected network for all travel modes. Currently, automobile users experience gaps in connectivity, areas of recurrent traffic congestion, and corridors that lack signal synchronization. There are many gaps in the sidewalk network. The community has a few miles of bicycle facilities (lanes and trails) that are not well connected, as well as some roadways that are designated as state bicycle routes but that lack bicycle accommodations. Accommodations for freight traffic are sub-optimal on some major freight corridors.

COMPLETE STREETS POLICY

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

In the development and operation of the transportation network, special attention should be paid to the safe accommodation of all roadway users and modes, of all ages and abilities. Moreover, special attention should be paid to improving conditions in areas of the community that are currently, or have been, underinvested and underserved.

Recognizing the importance of coordination between land use and transportation decisions, the surrounding community's current and expected transportation, land use, and utility needs (including broadband) should be considered continually and comprehensively in the development and operation of the transportation network.

The various agencies and jurisdictions within the VLMPO area, and their partner agencies, should coordinate and work together to implement the vision and intent of this policy and fulfill its requirements.

APPLICABILITY

The requirements of this Complete Streets Policy may apply to all new construction, retrofit/reconstruction, resurfacing, maintenance (including pavement marking maintenance), and ongoing locally-sponsored projects within the VLMPO area that will use Federal funds as part of the VLMPO planning process, with the understanding that GDOT's commitment of Federal funds to a project may not necessarily cover additional scope items that are outside a project's stated purpose and need.

PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

The following requirements may apply to any locally-sponsored roadway project within the VLMPO area that will use Federal funds programmed through the VLMPO

Metropolitan Transportation Plan and/or Transportation Improvement Program, including Lump Sum projects.

1. Any roadway which is to be newly constructed or completely reconstructed should be designed and constructed to consider:
 - a. Provide for the safety and convenience of all users of all ages and abilities, including but not limited to pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and freight users; and
 - b. Address the needs of all users both along roadway corridors and crossing the corridors.
2. Any project in which an existing roadway surface is to be restored or rehabilitated, and any remediation of deficient or non-existent sidewalks, should be reviewed for the potential of making the roadway a complete street. Consideration may include an evaluation of whether the scope of work needed to make a complete street is reasonable and economically feasible in relation to the scope of the proposed roadway maintenance or improvement.

DESIGN STANDARDS

The latest and best design criteria and guidelines should be used in the implementation of all projects to which this policy applies. The Complete Streets design solutions that are used should complement the context of the community. The resources listed below are examples of recommended design standards as of the adoption of this policy. The latest and best design standards are subject to change as materials are updated and new resources become available.

- American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), *Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets* (7th edition, 2018).
- AASHTO, *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities* (4th edition, 2012).
- Georgia Department of Transportation, *Design Policy Manual* (Revision 4.21, 6/1/2017), Ch. 9: Complete Streets Design Policy.
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways* (MUTCD). 2009 edition with Revisions 1 and 2 incorporated (May 2012).
- National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), *Urban Street Design Guide* (2013).
- NACTO, *Urban Bikeway Design Guide* (2nd edition, 2014).

EXCEPTIONS

Any exception to applying this Complete Streets Policy to a specific roadway project must be approved by the VLMPO Complete Streets Subcommittee. The VLMPO Complete Streets Subcommittee shall be comprised of representatives from Lowndes County Engineering Department, City of Valdosta Engineering Department, GDOT Office of Planning, and GDOT District 4. Documentation of the reason for the exception, and supporting data, shall be made publicly available.

The VLMPO Complete Streets Subcommittee may allow an exception to this Complete Streets Policy under the following circumstances:

- a. Ordinary maintenance activities designed to keep assets in serviceable condition (e.g. mowing, cleaning, sweeping, or spot repair), but not involving resurfacing, pavement marking maintenance, or reconstruction.
- b. The project involves a roadway that bicyclists and pedestrians are prohibited by law from using.
- c. There are extreme right-of-way, topographic, or natural resource constraints.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of the VLMPO Complete Streets Policy will proceed as follows:

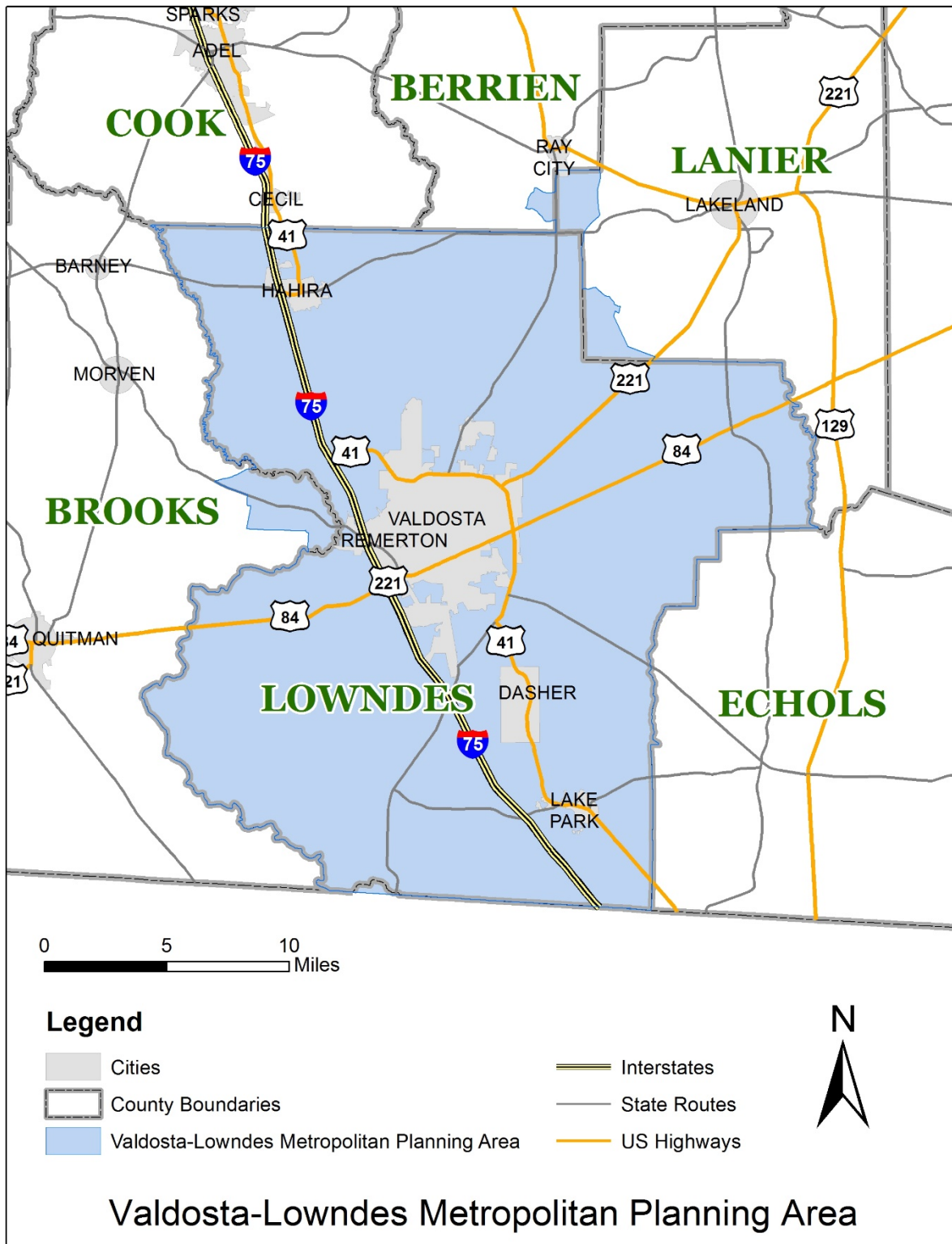
- VLMPO staff will make the Complete Streets policy a routine part of everyday operations and may approach all transportation projects and plans as an opportunity to improve the transportation network for all users of all abilities while working in coordination with all jurisdictions.
- VLMPO staff will document the Complete Streets elements to be implemented as part of each applicable project.
- The VLMPO will continue to monitor the construction of a comprehensive network of bike and pedestrian infrastructure and identify key projects that could help to eliminate any gaps within that network.
- The VLMPO will continue to discuss the latest and best Complete Streets principles and practices with staff, elected officials, engineers, and other decision-makers.
- The VLMPO will encourage local governments to incorporate Complete Streets elements into transportation projects and to adopt local Complete Streets policies.
- The VLMPO will seek out appropriate funding sources for successful implementation of Complete Streets policies.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

In order to assess and quantify the effectiveness and successful implementation of this Complete Streets Policy, a range of performance measures will be tracked and reported on annually by the VLMPO.

The performance measures used may be those performance measures that are listed in the current VLMPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan. These performance measures are hereby incorporated by reference into this Complete Streets Policy.

Exhibit A. Valdosta-Lowndes MPO Area Boundary Map



RESOLUTION FY2020 - 2

VALDOSTA-LOWNDES METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION POLICY COMMITTEE

RESOLUTION TO adopt the Complete Streets Policy

WHEREAS, the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization (VLMPO) supports the creation of a multimodal, safe, efficient transportation system that ensures accessibility to all roadway users in the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Area;

WHEREAS, the Georgia Department of Transportation has adopted a Complete Streets Design Policy, and the Federal Government has passed the first federal transportation bill ever to include Complete Streets provisions;

WHEREAS, the VLMPO's *2040 Transportation Vision Plan* already includes a Complete Streets Strategy, requiring that all local projects receiving federal funding through the MPO shall be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained, to the greatest extent possible, so that all users and all modes, of all ages and abilities, can travel safely and independently;

WHEREAS, the Comprehensive Plans of jurisdictions that are within the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Area call for a range of improvements in the transportation system in order to better accommodate pedestrians, bicyclists, and all other users and modes;

WHEREAS, there is a widely recognized need for better accommodation of non-motorized travel modes throughout the VLMPO area;

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization's Policy Committee does hereby adopt the Policy known as the "Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization Complete Streets Policy."

See attachments.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of a Resolution adopted by the Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy, Technical Advisory, and Citizen's Advisory Committees at a joint meeting held on **September 4, 2019**.



Mark Barber, City Manager, City of Valdosta
Chair, Valdosta-Lowndes Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Committee