

# Pedestrian Access

## PURPOSE

**To reduce greenhouse gas emissions by increasing walking and reducing driving.**

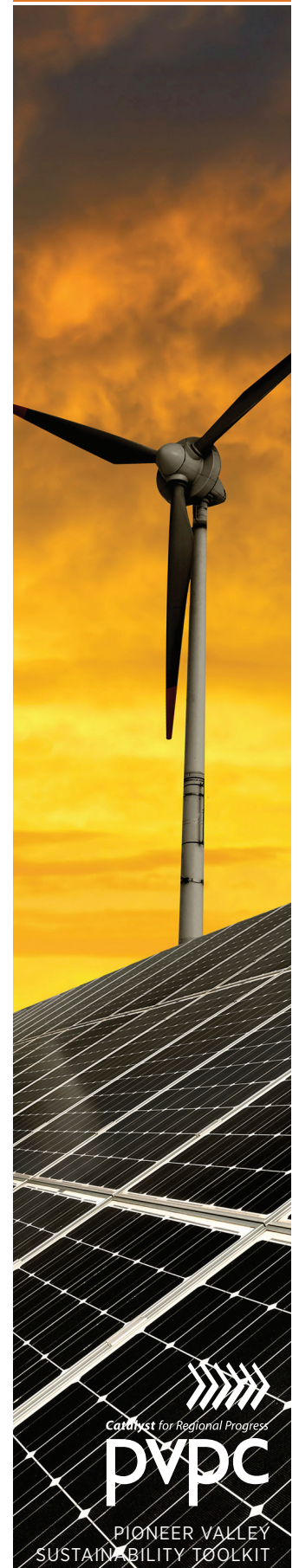
Transportation is one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In the Pioneer Valley, transportation accounts for about 31.8% of GHG—more than any other sector. Creating a transportation network that provides local residents with safe, convenient access to destinations by walking will reduce these emissions by replacing car trips with increased walking.

Promoting pedestrian access also provide residents with a low-cost alternative to driving, saving them money and reducing traffic congestion. As an easy way to exercise, walking also promotes mental and physical health. Regardless of the destination, every trip begins and ends by walking, meaning that promoting pedestrian access provides benefits to everyone.

## HOW IT WORKS

Municipalities can require private development to promote pedestrian access through the use of zoning and subdivision bylaws. In order to encourage walking, the following elements should be included in these regulatory documents. These elements can be included as a new, separate section of the bylaws, or integrated into existing text:

- » **Requiring sidewalks as part of all new development, on both sides of the street, so that pedestrians have safe places to walk. Sidewalks should be at least five feet wide with smooth, high-grip surfaces.**
- » **Limiting the number and width of driveways and curb cuts, in order to minimize the number of locations where pedestrians are at risk of getting struck by cars crossing the sidewalk.**
- » **Requiring appropriate streetscape design, including guidance about appropriate sidewalk design, street trees, benches, light fixtures, outdoor dining areas, signs, etc.**
  - a. Using design guidelines and/or form-based codes to require building development that contributes to a high-quality pedestrian realm. The regulations can encourage or require appropriate building massing, setbacks, and architectural detail including the use of awnings, windows, and varied building materials.



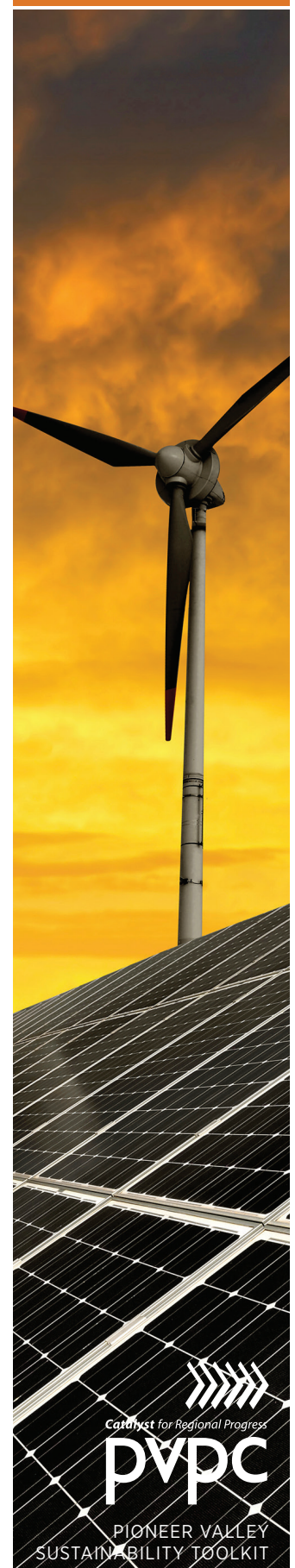
- b. Allowing for close proximity of different land uses, or mixed-use development, to enable travel between uses that only requires a short, easy walk.
- » Ensuring parking lots are safe for walking, by requiring clearly designated, raised sidewalks from the street to all building entrances, installing speed bumps or other traffic calming measures to reduce motorist speeds, requiring adequate tree cover to shade the parking lot, and providing bike parking.

Designing new subdivisions to encourage pedestrians, including providing a well-connected street grid with short blocks, rather than cul-de-sacs or dead ends, to minimize walking distances, providing sidewalks, requiring street trees, appropriate lighting, minimizing the width of new roads to slow car traffic, and providing traffic calming measures, where appropriate.

- » Specifying that the above items will be reviewed as part of the municipality’s site plan review process for new development projects.

Integrating pedestrian features into a municipality’s regular construction and maintenance of roads is another effective way to promote pedestrian access. Specific pedestrian features to be included are:

- » Installing traffic signaling at intersections that have pedestrian countdown timers and signals that allow pedestrians a chance to enter the street before motorists, so they are more visible to turning cars.
- » Providing designated mid-block pedestrian street crossings that have clear signage and prominent pavement markings.
- » Installing sidewalk bump outs at pedestrian crossings. Bump outs extend the sidewalk area and reduce the width of crossings, which increases safety and comfort for pedestrians.
- » Providing wayfinding signage that provides pedestrians with the direction, distance and time between popular destinations.
- » Installing traffic calming devices, such as speed bumps, reduced lane widths, and medians, that encourage motorists to drive more slowly.
- » Installing street lights that provide adequate street and sidewalk lighting. Adequate lighting is particularly important at locations with grade changes, potential obstacles in a pedestrian’s path, and where auto traffic crosses pedestrian paths. Lighting should minimize glare.
- » Installing street furniture, including bus shelters, bike racks, trees, trash cans, public art, and newspaper boxes that make the street visually interesting, provide opportunities for rest, and provide a sense of separation between roads and sidewalks.



Municipalities can also pass a Complete Streets policy, which promotes design and maintenance of streets and sidewalks that balances the needs of all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, users of mass transit, people with disabilities, the elderly, motorists, freight providers, emergency responders, and adjacent land users. A Complete Streets policy would be passed by the City Council or Select Board and take one of two forms:

- » A resolution, which is a non-binding, official statement of support for approaching community transportation projects as a way to improve access, public health, and quality of life.
- » An ordinance, which legally changes the municipal code to require the needs of all users to be addressed in new transportation projects.

Both resolutions and ordinances help promote pedestrian access. However, because resolutions do not require action, they are more likely to be neglected than a legally-binding ordinance.

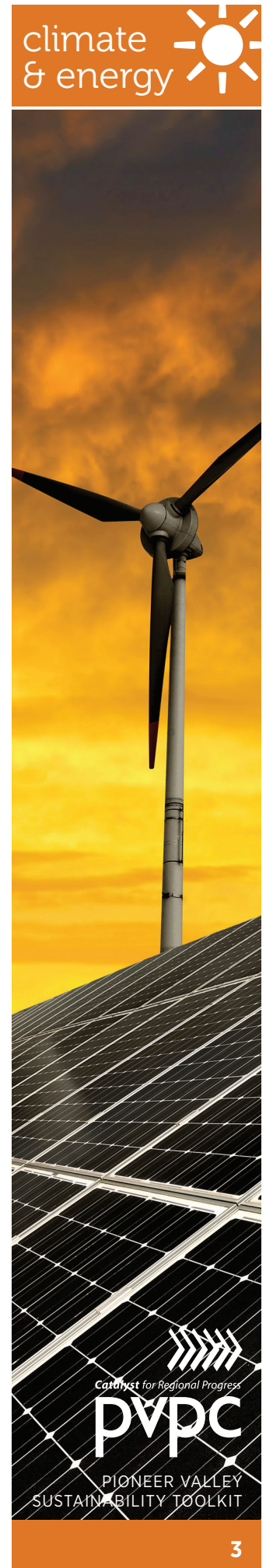
## EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY IMPLEMENTATION

### Springfield, MA

In 2014, the City of Springfield completed its first Complete Streets Plan, which recommends a network of roadways throughout the city to receive upgraded accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians. The plan emphasizes pedestrian access improvements that can have the most impact for the least cost, such as pedestrian crossing pavement markings and wayfinding signage. The plan, developed for the City by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and MassBike, was funded through a grant from the Centers for Disease Control. As part of the plan, a sidewalk inventory was conducted that identified all existing sidewalks. The City is currently considering passing a Complete Streets policy in conjunction with completion of the plan. The City has also undertaken various pedestrian access improvements in recent years, such as installing new sidewalk ramps and pedestrian crossing markings on Main Street in downtown.

### Northampton, MA

The City of Northampton’s zoning ordinance requires all new development to prepare an interior traffic and pedestrian circulation plan that is designed to minimize conflicts and safety problems with motorists, as well as provide safe and adequate pedestrian access through the construction of sidewalks. The ordinance also requires that sidewalks connecting “from the building to the street be clearly delineated through materials and/or markings to distinguish the vehicular route from the non-vehicular route.” Sidewalk construction specifications are also included that require sidewalks to be a minimum of six feet in width and located on both sides of the street. In addition to these zoning



requirements, the City incorporated pedestrian access into the street design of Elm Street near Smith College, where there are multiple pedestrian crossings with medians, signage alerting motorists to the crossing, and prominently visible pavement markings. The City is also currently considering adding additional design specifications, such as sidewalk and crosswalk widths in parking lots, for internal pedestrian circulation within new developments.

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## LINKS TO MODEL BYLAWS OR MORE INFORMATION

THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION'S GUIDE TO DESIGNING SIDEWALKS AND TRAILS FOR ACCESS:

[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle\\_pedestrian/publications/sidewalks/](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/sidewalks/)

MODEL SIDEWALK REGULATIONS - PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION AND OTHERS:

[http://walkbikecny.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/20140617\\_Final\\_Reference\\_Manual\\_a\\_C.pdf](http://walkbikecny.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/20140617_Final_Reference_Manual_a_C.pdf)

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORTATION:

<http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/GreenDOT/PedestrianTransportation.aspx>

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION PEDESTRIAN PLAN:

<https://www.massdot.state.ma.us/planning/Main/StatewidePlans/PedestrianPlan.aspx>

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

413-781-6045

60 Congress Street, Floor 1

Springfield, MA 01104-3419

[www.pvpc.org](http://www.pvpc.org)

