

Evaluation of Complete Streets Policy Implementation by Metropolitan Planning Organizations: From Policy Adoption to Implementation

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Presentation Overview

- Complete streets policy background
- Study objectives
- Methodology
- Results
- Conclusion: Policy implications

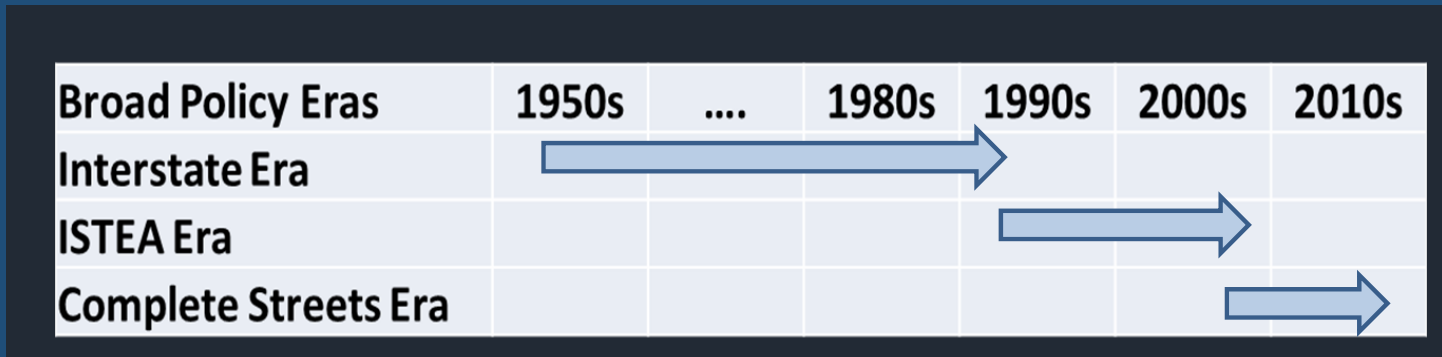
Safe Walking Streets: Not Rocket Science

- Design changes to promote walking surprisingly small:
 - well-maintained sidewalks
 - cross-walks at signalized intersections
 - extended walk times for signals
 - decreased crossing distances through use of medians
 - traffic calming
 - speed management (Kerr et al 2012)
- Question: If it is technically not difficult, why are policy changes so hard to implement?



National Background: 3 Eras of Transportation Policy

- US created intricate set of engineering standards for highways during Interstate era (1956-1991)
- 1991 ISTEA bill supposed to mark end of Interstate era, but highway orientation entrenched
- CS movement effort to make US a truly multimodal nation
- Process contested



Policy Problem

- CS policy diffusion has been rapid, but uneven
- Highway-orientation remains: Impact of CS policies on changing agency practices unclear (Lenhing 2011, Handy and McCann 2011).

Agency	# of CS Policies 2013	Unit of Govt.	
		Total	% with CS Policies
Municipality	482	19,492	2.47%
County	48	3,141	1.53%
Regional Planning Organization	51	918	5.56%
State	27	50	54.00%
Federal	0	1	0%
Total	608	23,602	2.58%

CS Implementation Study: Objectives

- MPOs: key regional transportation agency that can influence design guidance for federal transportation funding
- Study objectives:
 - 1) Describe scope of complete streets policy adoption and implemented at MPO level
 - 2) Describe the key opportunities and barriers to complete streets adoption and implementation at MPO level
 - 3) Analyze impact of local governmental and local advocacy support in relation to key complete streets policy indicators

CS Implementation Study: Methodology

- Crafted a targeted survey directed at all 385 MPOs across the nation (survey open April to June 2014)
- Questions targeted basic descriptive characteristics of policy implementation & extent and potential reasons for full or limited implementation of key complete streets policy metrics
- Survey results compiled and analyzed using SPSS
- Received 132 substantially completed responses from MPOs (response rate 34%)

CS Implementation Study: Results

- Examined region, size, and overall familiarity of CS
- Responses spread across country
- While larger MPOs have extensive capacity, most MPOs are small (Director, Engineering Support Staff, Admin Staff)
- Almost half (49.6%) of MPOs surveyed had 4 or fewer FTEs

Northeast	Midwest	South	West
18%	30%	33%	19%

Percentage of Responding MPOs by Census Region

CS Implementation Study: Results

3 Overarching findings:

1. CS familiarity connected to policy adoption

- Overall, 77% of responding MPOs “very familiar” with complete streets concepts
- Of MPOs with a CS policy (n=24), 92% were very familiar with CS
- Of MPOs without a formal CS policy (n=109), 25% were somewhat or not very familiar with CS
- Regional variation in familiarity:

CS Familiarity	Northeast	South	Midwest	West
Very Familiar	95.00%	65.00%	84.85%	80.95%
Somewhat Familiar	5.00%	33.33%	15.15%	19.05%
Not familiar at all	0.00%	1.67%	0.00%	0.00%

CS Implementation Study: Results

2. Formal adoption not translating into systematic implementation:
- Only 18% of responding MPOs reported that they had formally adopted a complete streets policy
 - Of those that had adopted CS policy, only 20% cited public health as an explicit goal of the policy
 - The most common barriers to policy adoption:

Top 3 Barriers to CS	% of Respondents Citing
Cost	80.33%
Lack of Political Will	48.33%
Lack of Local Capacity (Tie 3)	26.67%
Project Funding Process (Tie 3)	26.67%

CS Implementation Study: Results

- Examined 9 key CS policy measures drawn from literature
- Bicycle plan adoption only characteristic to be broadly implemented (cited by 67% of agencies)
- Level of familiarity appears to impact measure adoption

Level of Familiarity	Adopted NACTO	Rewrote Design	CS Checklist	Citizen Advisory	Rewrote Design	CS Data Collection	CS Training	Ped. Plan	Bicycle Plan
Very Familiar or Familiar	1.50%	9.02%	19.70%	22.56%	25.00%	25.56%	34.09%	39.39%	51.52%
Somewhat or Not Familiar	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	4.51%	3.79%	4.51%	6.82%	14.39%	15.91%
Total % Adopted	1.50%	9.02%	19.70%	27.07%	28.79%	30.08%	40.91%	53.79%	67.42%

CS Implementation Study: Results

3. Impact of political support for CS Important

- Hypothesis: agencies are more likely to adopt/implement CS policies when there is strong government/advocacy support (Lenhing 2011, Handy and McCann 2011)
- Asked respondents to rate level of support from:
 - a. Within Government: MPO director, MPO staff, elected officials, DPW, Planning, DOT, Elected officials, FHWA
 - b. Advocacy support: Bike, Pedestrian, Transit, Public health, Age-friendly, Smart growth
- Created advocacy and government support additive index: Each respondent could rate support of groups from 1 to 10



CS Implementation Study: Results

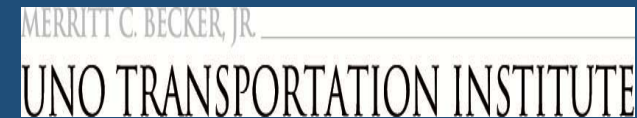
- Findings:
 1. Did not find statistically significant relationship with govt. networks and number of CS measures taken
 2. Advocacy networks: A simple linear regression to predict CS measures based on advocacy networks resulted in a significant regression equation ($p < .037$) with an R^2 of .076.
- Found that as perceived support within advocacy network increases, the number of CS measures increases
- Specifically, the model predicts that a 20 unit increase in advocacy index results in an increase on 1 additional CS measure taken by the MPO

Conclusions

- Found limited adoption (only 18% of responding MPOs) and weak implementation of measures
- Found widespread familiarity with CS (77%), but some regional differences
- Familiarity appears to influence adoption and measures taken
- Building coalitions/advocacy networks appears to be an important factor in CS measure implementation
- Need to refine models and explore in more depth
- Future research should include analysis of groups that may oppose CS measures

Thank You

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