



**An Executive Summary of  
A Case Study of Transportation Policy for the Public's Health;  
Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania**

**2018**

Funding is provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Health through the Preventive Health Services Block Grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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### **Introduction**

Complete streets policies lay the foundation for safe and convenient travel for all persons by all modes of transportation. These policies have the potential to yield an increase in opportunities for active transportation and to, ultimately, improve the health of the communities impacted. To gain an understanding of the status of, as well as the perceived opportunities and obstacles to adopting and implementing complete streets policies in Pennsylvania, WalkWorks conducted a survey of municipalities throughout the state. The survey examined the policies adopted – to-date, and interviewed representatives of those communities that have adopted policies. This document summarizes a case study, which details the findings of the survey. It includes some of the more salient results of the survey and addresses complete streets policies – adopted, implemented and being contemplated – in Pennsylvania. The complete case study is available on the [WalkWorks website](#).

In an effort to obtain a baseline of the extent to which the concept of complete streets is understood and being considered in Pennsylvania, a 20-question survey was directed to all municipal entities in Pennsylvania in the fall of 2017. The Pennsylvania Municipal League, Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs, and Pennsylvania Association of Township Supervisors generously disseminated notification of the electronic survey to their respective members. The survey began with 339 individuals responding to question #1; 156 individuals responded to the final question. See Appendix for *A Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania* and a diagram reflecting the flow in which respondents were directed to questions.

Throughout the remainder of this document, references to “policy” are generic. When used, the term refers to practices or written policies, resolutions, executive orders and ordinances adopted by a community.

### **Hypothesis**

A well-developed complete streets policy should optimize multimodal transportation, thereby maximizing walkability and bikeability to, ultimately, increase physical activity and improve the health of the residents of the commonwealth.

### **Discussion**

The study was reported in three parts with the intention of informing WalkWorks and others about the status, gaps and potential of complete streets policies in Pennsylvania. Through its network of partners, WalkWorks was aware of ten policies formally adopted by cities, boroughs and townships at the start of the study. At least four of the ten policies are of jurisdictions associated with 13 survey respondents answering “yes” when asked whether they have policies and proceeded to answer further survey questions. This was determined as they were among the 156 respondents identifying themselves or the areas they represent.

1) *Results of survey of municipalities in Pennsylvania*

The following pages provide a condensed illustration of the responses to the survey and relevant findings from the ten known policies as well as discussions with representatives of communities with adopted policies. For details, see the [case study](#) in its entirety.

<b>Table 1</b> <b>Complete Streets Survey</b> <b>Verbatim Responses to:</b> <u>Please share the major objective of your policy.</u>	
To maintain our streets and provide walking and bicycle paths whenever and wherever possible.	
Creation of new streets that are multi-modal, recognizing the importance of bicyclist and pedestrian amenities, active transportation, recreational aspects, and transit incorporation.	
To service all adopted ordained roads in the township.	
To develop transportation systems that serve all transportation modes including pedestrian, bicycles, vehicles and parking.	
All streets are to be complete for pedestrian, bicycle, and alternative modes of transportation where appropriate and regularly monitored.	
Parking along streets	
Evaluate and include various modes of transportation throughout municipality by providing interconnected routes to major areas of interest.	
To shift the discussions around planning and development to put a higher priority on safe/equitable mobility.	
Adopted a Complete Streets Policy to better integrate physical activity into the daily lives of those who live in and visit the borough through an increased emphasis on various active transportation modes.	
The Complete Streets policy is developed to provide guidance to decision makers, engineers, and planners to ensure that multimodal elements are incorporated into all transportation improvement projects.	
To better integrate physical activity into the lives of those who live in and visit the City through an increased emphasis on active transportation modes which will contribute to improved health, reduced traffic congestion, improved air quality, reduced emissions of greenhouse gases and more economically vibrant communities.	
To keep the motoring public safe.	
To encourage consideration of all users in planning and engineering transportation projects that prioritize pedestrians, bicycles, cars and trucks in that order. To improve walkability, safety and access to a healthy life style.	

Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

<b>Table 2</b> <b>Responses of the 13 Indicating Their Communities Have Passed</b> <b>Complete Streets Policies</b>	<b>Number</b>	
	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
Is encouraging physical activity or promoting public health an explicit goal of the policy?	11	2
Does the policy allow for exceptions?	9	4
Is land use a factor in selecting specific streets and/or appropriate design treatments?	8	5
Does the policy prioritize projects and/or include a method for prioritization?	2	11

<b>Table 3</b> <b>Average Level of Support Perceived to Given by Category</b>	
<b>Category of Support</b>	<b>Average</b>
MPO/RPO	4.43
Elected Officials	4.38
Bicycle advocacy group	4.22
Planning department	4.17
Pedestrian advocacy group	4.13
Public works department	4.08
Public health	4.00
Transit group	3.83
PennDOT	3.80
AARP	3.67

1 = "impedes or does not support at all"; 5 = "fully supports"

Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

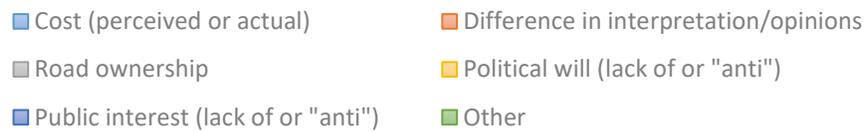
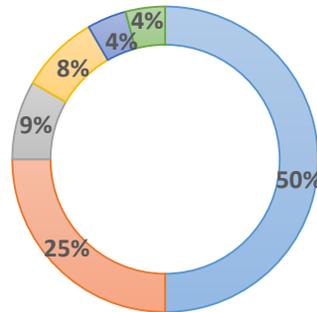
<b>Table 4</b> <b>Number of Respondents Indicating Their Communities Have Measures In-Place in Support of Complete Streets and/or Multimodal Transportation</b>	
<b>Measure</b>	<b>Number</b>
Adoption of a pedestrian plan	29
Adoption of a bicycle plan	28
A formally adopted complete streets resolution	23
A formally adopted complete streets policy	22
A complete streets checklist and/or performance metrics	20
A citizen advisory committee for complete streets/multi-modal/active transportation	19
Training to enhance staff skills based related to complete streets policy implementation	16
Agency policies and procedures to serve all transportation modes	15
Design guidelines to serve all modes	14
Data collection policy that includes users and modes over time	9
Adoption of NACTO design guidelines	7
Other	24

Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

<b>Table 5</b> <b>Of the 13 Reporting Adopted Policies, Number of Respondents by Elements Subject to the Policy</b>	
<b>Elements Subject to Policy</b>	<b>Number</b>
Design	10
New construction	10
Rehabilitation projects	9
Maintenance and operation	8
Planning	8
Project selection	5
Overlay projects	4
None of the above	2

Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

Barriers to Implementing Complete Streets Policies: What barriers, if any, exist that are preventing or may prevent implementation of complete streets in your jurisdiction?



Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

Table 6 Reason for Not Adopting Complete Streets Policies; Number by Categorized Responses	
No discussion/not familiar	54
Rural area/no streets	18
Discussion/consideration	12
Interested/would like more information	10
Policy is under development	8
Not interested	2

Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

In addition to the above, respondents were invited to comment on "...interested, though challenges inhibit action toward a complete streets policy" as well to make general comments. A complete list of the verbatim responses can be found on Tables 7 and 8 of the [case study](#). The majority of the responses can be categorized as: cost/lack of funds; state-owned roads; and rural versus urban and suburban. Both Table 6, above, and these comments suggest that information and education of the meaning and possibilities of complete streets would be warranted.

## 2) *An overview of complete streets policies in Pennsylvania*

As previously mentioned, at the time of the writing of the case study, WalkWorks identified ten complete streets policies in Pennsylvania and guidance developed by two counties for their municipalities considering complete streets policies. The ten policies are those that the National Complete Streets Coalition lists in its inventory. Communities are not required to file policies with the Coalition nor is there a designated repository of policies in Pennsylvania. See Table 7.

**Table 7**  
**Elements\* of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania (as of February 2018)**

Jurisdiction	Intent	Health	# Modes	Age/Abilities	New/Re-Construct.	Exempts.	Network	Design Guide	Perf. Meas.	Impl.
Borough	√	√	4	√	√	√	√	√	√*	√
Borough	√	√	4	√	√	X	√	X	X	√**
Borough	√	√	5	√	X	√	√	√	√	√**
City	X	√	6	√	√	√	√	√	X	X
City	√	√	4	√	√	X	√	√	X	X
City	X	√	4	√	√	X	√	√	X	√
City	√	√	5	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
City	√	√	5	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
City	√	√	6	√	X	√*	X	X	√	√**
Township	√	√	4	√	√	X	√	X	X	X

Source: Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania. 2017.

\*Defining the elements:

Intent – Unequivocal intent (i.e., "shall" or "will" – not "will consider")

Health – Reference to health benefits and/or increasing opportunities for physical activity

# Modes – The number of modes mentioned (e.g., walking, biking, public transportation, motor vehicles)

Age/abilities – Specifically states application to persons of all ages and all abilities

New/reconstruction – Some do not specify application of policy to reconstruction

Exemptions – Exceptions and responsibility for approval

Network – Reference to connectivity, interconnectedness

Design Guidance – Identifies design guidance (e.g., AASTHO, NACTO, PennDOT, "best available")

Performance measures – List of measures (e.g., inventory or linear feet of sidewalks, crash data, % of pop. walking to work/children biking to school, new transit stops)

Implementation – Specification of activities (e.g., incorporating policy in plans, staff development/training, educating public, instituting data collection)

√\* - Referenced, though not specified

√\*\* - Lists a range of starting points, such as, though not limited to incorporating the policy in planning documents and seeking funding for implementation

For the most part, the ten policies share much in common. They all include language indicating that comprehensive plans, subdivision and land use ordinances and related documents will be updated in accordance with the adopted policies. None identifies projects or includes timelines. A sample of unique aspects among the policies are:

- A complete streets task force, appointed by the mayor, will be developed to promote and advance both the vision and implementation details of the policy.
- The planning commission, "in coordination with Borough staff, shall prepare and provide...an annual report on the consistency with the policy."
- One policy details exceptions. It states that, to receive consideration, a written request to the Director of Planning must show the project meets at least one of the listed criteria.

*3) Interviews with representatives involved with the development and/or implementation of complete streets policies in their respective communities*

Telephone interviews were conducted with representatives of three of the ten communities that have adopted complete streets policies to determine the extent of implementation. In summary:

- While the concept of complete streets required orientation, there were no significant challenges or obstacles to adopting the policies.
- Public input was obtained at meetings of the respective borough councils; special forums or separate opportunities for the public to provide input were not offered.
- In the case of two of the communities, both of which adopted their policies long before the third, there have not been any requests for exceptions/exemptions.
- Several of the policies indicate that, to optimize implementation, there will be training opportunities for decision makers, planners, public works personnel and others.
- Two of the three communities are carrying out to their complete streets policies. The third candidly shared, “I don’t know what to do now...what the next steps are.”

### Conclusion and Recommendations

This information gained from the study is considered a baseline. There is much more to learn from those who have yet to develop policies as well as from those who have adopted policies. Analysis of the responses to the survey indicates a widespread lack of understanding regarding complete streets; several expressed that they would like to learn more. Below are some follow-up suggestions:

- Conduct an enhanced survey in 12-18 months. Topics that should be considered are:
  - The degree of familiarity with complete streets, today v. one year ago;
  - Whether one has attended training(s) or workshops related to complete streets and, if not, whether these might be useful (and whether basic or intermediate would be warranted);
  - Whether technical assistance, pertaining to implementing the policies, would be useful; and
  - More about the support (or lack thereof) from elected officials and others.
- Offer workshops, designed for elected officials and planners, on walkable/bikeable communities, including the meaning and value of complete streets and their applicability. Consider focusing on rural and suburban areas, represented by 77 percent of the respondents.
- Consider whether offering trainings to decision makers, planners, and public works personnel is warranted in an effort to ensure optimal implementation.
- Survey metropolitan and rural planning organizations and counties regarding plans to assist the communities within their jurisdictions.
- Distribute a separate survey, focusing on implementation, to communities with adopted policies.
- Contact the National Streets Coalition to determine whether it has considered evaluating the extent to which the implementation of complete streets polices is making a difference.

Finally, in reference to the hypothesis that well-developed complete streets policies will optimize multimodal transportation, it may be too soon to assess whether the policies are leading to increased physical activity. In conjunction with some of the above suggestions, more detailed discussions should be held with communities – planners, elected officials and members of the public, in order to enlighten others who are considering complete streets policies. This may be an opportunity for the Department of Health and PennDOT to work with communities to collect baseline data, prior to adoption of the policies, and measure the same elements 3-5 years after the policies have been in place. Tracking the understanding and transition of the policies will provide valuable information to the agencies and metropolitan and rural planning organizations assist communities in determining opportunities, barriers, timing and strategies related to complete streets.



**Appendix to**  
**Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania;**  
**A Case Study of Transportation Policy for the Public's Health**



## Survey of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania

### Background

WalkWorks, an initiative of the Pennsylvania Department of Health in partnership with Pitt Public Health, aims to increase opportunities for physical activity. By engaging community-based partners, WalkWorks plans, implements and markets walking programs utilizing the built environment. By early 2018, partners will have developed 75 walking routes of 1-2 miles in 17 counties – all of which are utilized by individuals as well as organized walking groups, which provide the social support that evidence has shown to be effective in getting people to walk who might not otherwise do. Further, WalkWorks promotes relevant policies to further optimize and maximize the walkability and bikeability to, ultimately, improve the health of the commonwealth.

### Introduction to Survey

The design of our streets is critical to a multimodal transportation system. Streets can and do influence the health and quality of life of community residents. To this end, WalkWorks is studying the value of as well as opportunities and barriers and to adopting and implementing Complete Streets policies, the implications of future policies in the state and innovative efforts. We are requesting assistance from all municipalities – even if you do not have a current policy. The study will examine variables, such as, though not limited to: the current status of complete street policies; whether the policy was adopted by local legislation or resolution; whether it is reflected in a plan, design manual, ordinance; whether the policy includes a timeline and budget for implementation; and community input during development and/or implementation. Its purpose is to help determine the extent to which complete streets policy adoption – in Pennsylvania – is making a difference in the implementation of projects and, thus, a valuable mechanism for communities to use to enhance opportunities for physical activity.

Please complete this survey or, if you feel that you are not the appropriate person to complete the survey, please forward this request to the most appropriate person in your municipality. Note that it is important that we hear from everyone – including those municipalities that do not currently have policies in place.

Thank you, in advance, for your assistance with our work to make Pennsylvania more walkable, bikeable and healthier!

### Link

#### Screening Questions

1. Which level of government do your responses represent?
  - A. County
  - B. Municipal
  - C. Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. If "B," what is the governing structure of your municipality?
  - A. Township
  - B. Borough
  - C. City
  - D. Home Rule
  - E. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. How would you classify your community?
  - A. Suburban
  - B. Urban
  - C. Rural
  - D. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Please check all that apply and indicate the year(s) in which the measure(s) in support of complete streets and/or multi-modal transportation was/were put into place.
  - A. A formally adopted complete streets policy \_\_\_\_
  - B. A formally adopted complete streets resolution \_\_\_\_
  - C. A complete streets checklist and/or performance metrics \_\_\_\_
  - D. Agency policies and procedures to serve all transportation modes \_\_\_\_
  - E. Design guidelines to serve all modes \_\_\_\_
  - F. Adoption of NACTO design guidelines \_\_\_\_
  - G. Training to enhance staff skills based related to complete streets policy implementation \_\_\_\_
  - H. Data collection policy that includes users and modes over time \_\_\_\_
  - I. A citizen advisory committee for complete streets, multi-modal, active transportation, etc. \_\_\_\_
  - J. Adoption of a bicycle plan \_\_\_\_
  - K. Adoption of a pedestrian plan \_\_\_\_
  - L. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Has your governing body adopted a policy, resolution or ordinance related to Complete Streets?  
 Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
  
6. If you have adopted a complete streets policy or resolution, please answer the following:
  - A. What is the major objective of your policy? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. Is improved street connectivity an explicit goal of policy? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_
  - C. Of the following, which – if any – are subject to the policy? (check all that apply)
    - Planning \_\_\_\_
    - Project selection \_\_\_\_
    - Design \_\_\_\_
    - New construction \_\_\_\_
    - Rehabilitation projects \_\_\_\_
    - Maintenance and operation \_\_\_\_
    - Overlay projects \_\_\_\_
    - Other \_\_\_\_\_

- D. Does the policy include a timeline and/or budget? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
- E. Is encouraging physical activity or promoting public health an explicit goal of the policy?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
- F. Is land use a factor in selecting specific streets and/or appropriate design treatments?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
- G. Does the policy prioritize projects and/or include a method for prioritization? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
- H. Does the policy allow for exceptions? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
7. What barriers, if any, exist that are preventing or may prevent implementation of complete streets in your jurisdiction (check all that apply)?
- A. Cost (perceived or actual) \_\_\_
  - B. Lack of local capacity \_\_\_
  - C. Road ownership \_\_\_
  - D. Political will (lack of or "anti") \_\_\_
  - E. Public interest (lack of or "anti") \_\_\_
  - F. Differences in interpretation \_\_\_
  - G. Different opinions with regard to priorities \_\_\_
  - H. Organizational culture \_\_\_
  - I. Other \_\_\_\_\_
8. Does the jurisdiction or the policy reference a minimum lane width for specified roadways?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
9. If yes to the above, was the standard lane width adjusted based on the complete streets policy? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
10. Indicate the level of support for complete streets initiatives you have received from the following (with 1=impedes or does not support at all, 10=fully supports, NA if not applicable):
- A. PennDOT \_\_\_
  - B. MPO/RPO \_\_\_
  - C. Elected officials \_\_\_
  - D. Planning department (local or county) \_\_\_
  - E. Local public works department \_\_\_
  - F. Bicycle advocacy group \_\_\_
  - G. Pedestrian advocacy group \_\_\_
  - H. Transit group \_\_\_
  - I. AARP \_\_\_
  - J. Public health \_\_\_
  - K. Other \_\_\_\_\_
11. Please share any efforts that you consider especially innovative and/or you believe would be of interest to this study.
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

12. If you do not currently have a complete streets policy, in any form, we would very much appreciate learning whether there has been discussion about development of such and anything that you deem would inform our study with regard to that discussion.

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It would be most helpful to the study if you would please share the municipality for which you are responding as well as your email address. If you elect not to do so, your completed survey is still very important to us.

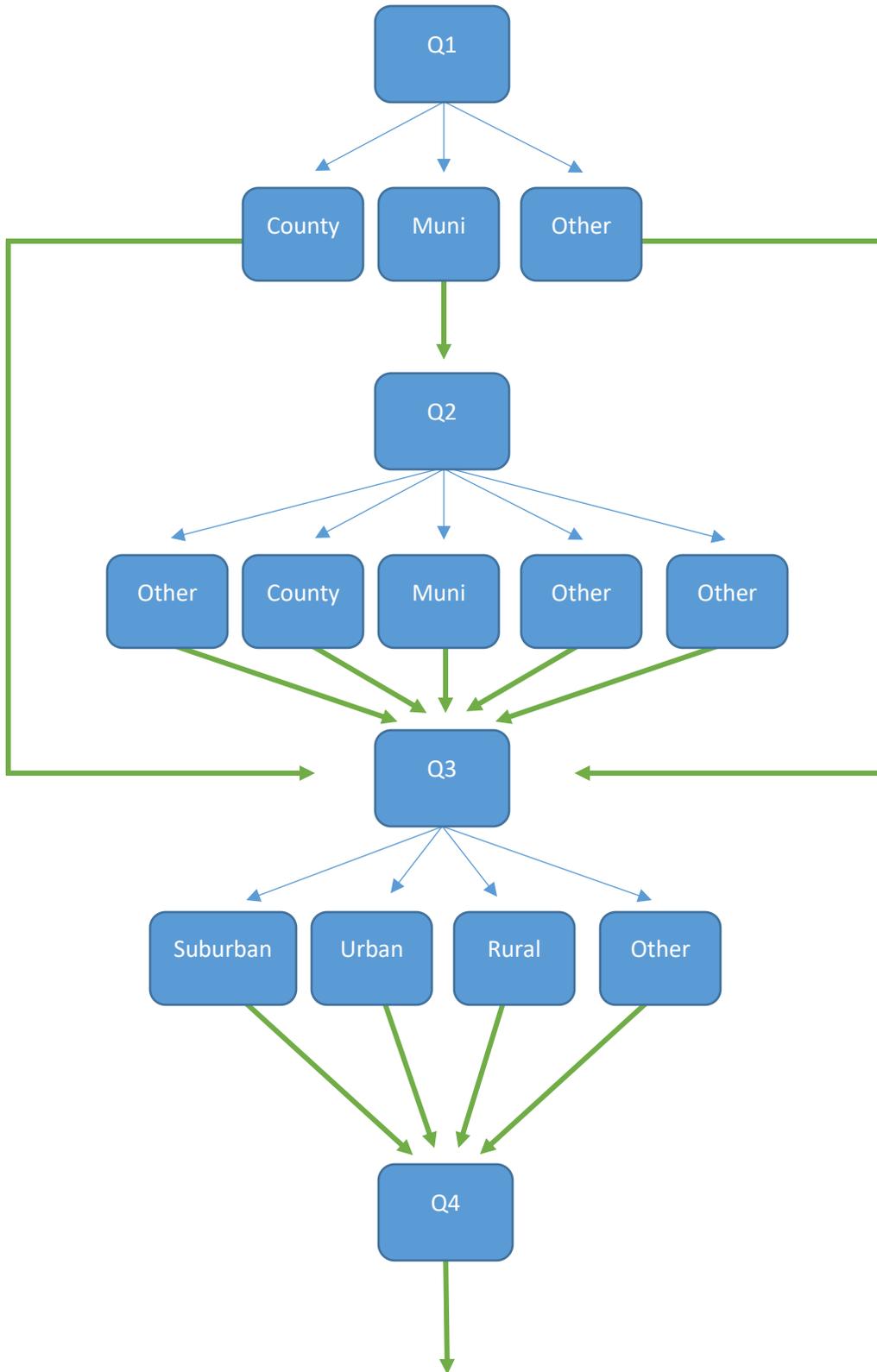
Borough/Township/City: \_\_\_\_\_

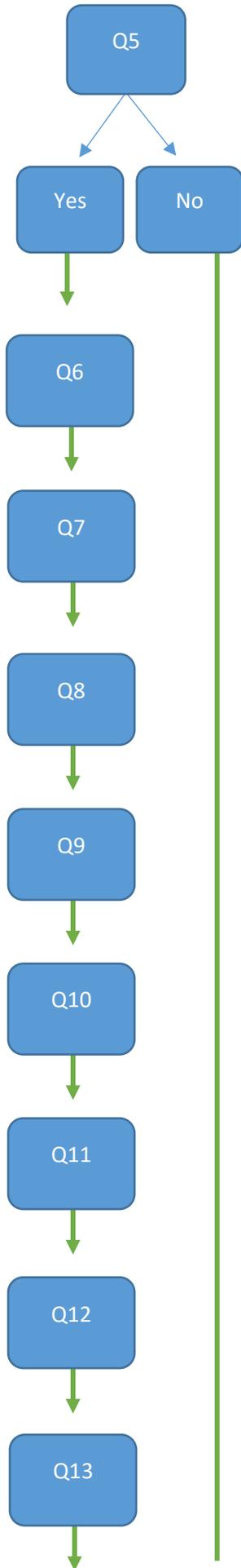
Name/email address: \_\_\_\_\_

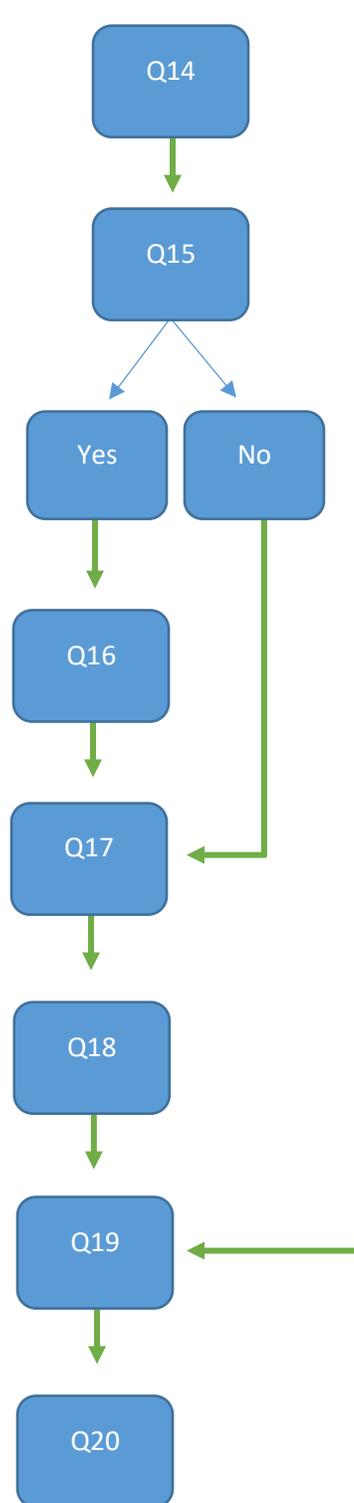
Again, we thank you so much for your time and participation. If you have any questions or would like to receive a copy of the completed study, please feel free to email Carol Reichbaum at [carolr@pitt.edu](mailto:carolr@pitt.edu).

# Status of Complete Streets Policies in Pennsylvania

## Survey Flow







—> Specifies answers, which determine next questions to be addressed

—> Indicates next question, depending on response