ITE – the ‘Go To’ in Complete Streets

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ISSUE: HOW SHOULD ITE LEVERAGE ITS KNOWLEDGE BASE TO EXPAND ITS ROLE IN THE COMPLETE STREETS MOVEMENT?

Knowledge Base Questions

What do we know about the needs, wants, and preferences of ITE’s stakeholders that is relevant to this decision?

There are many stakeholders concerned with complete streets from public officials to developers, as shown below. Each group has a number of needs and wants to fulfil a number of different purposes. Specific examples include: an engineer looking for design guidance to apply an innovative technique within a small municipality or a citizen who is concerned about the street use in front of their house and wants to propose a solution.

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What do we know about the current realities and evolving dynamics of our environment that is relevant to this decision?

Current Realities

i. Much of the current transportation system is primarily focused on moving automobiles safely and efficiently. As a result, many areas lack adequate facilities for other modes of transportation such as transit, bicycles and pedestrians.

ii. There are many different users and modes of transportation that utilize the transportation system and they all need to be served at some capacity.

iii. The majority of transportation system facilities are in public space and should serve the greater needs of the public. Decision makers and designers have a responsibility to the public to be sure all of their needs are being fairly met.

iv. Funding is always an issue; there is never enough money to construct everything and there are differing opinions on how money should be spent on the transportation system (e.g. should more money be spent on streetscape elements at the expense of adding capacity, parking, bike lanes, etc.)

v. Certain modes of travel compete within the same physical space (e.g. personal vehicles, commercial vehicles, buses, bicycles, and pedestrians can all compete for the same space on the public right of way).

vi. Different communities have different needs/goals/wants.

vii. There are still many professionals who are holding fast to the “old” way of thinking and primarily focus on planning and designing for automobiles.

viii. New developments that are currently being planned, designed and constructed are still auto-oriented which does not encourage multi-modal travel.

ix. In much of the developed world, the automobile is still the primary mode of transportation but this is changing in many urban and suburban areas.

x. The complete streets concept requires changing transportation planning, design, maintenance, and funding decisions. A complete streets policy ensures that projects are planned and designed to meet the needs of every community member, regardless of their age, ability, or how they travel. Many agencies have been through this policy development process and have been successful in implementing good policies that invoke the complete streets concepts.

Evolving Dynamics

i. In the last 15 years there has been an increasing focus on reducing urban sprawl and the recentralization of cities.

ii. Development of transit oriented communities helps to reduce urban sprawl and encourages the use of multiple modes of transportation.

iii. Technology is constantly changing and the use of technology in the transportation field is changing the efficiency, use, and safety of transportation.
iv. There has been a steady rising cost of fuel and an increased awareness of the environmental impacts from our long history of auto-dependency.

v. Obesity is a current health crisis in much of the developed world. There is a push to be more health conscious and many transportation professionals are embracing this by placing more of an emphasis on walking and bicycling modes of transportation.

vi. Several advocacy and professional organizations, including ITE have begun to champion the complete streets concept.

**What do we know about the “capacity” and “strategic position” of ITE that is relevant to this decision?**

**ITE’s Capacity**

i. ITE has nearly 17,000 members that consist of transportation professionals who are involved at many different levels of transportation infrastructure projects: decision making, planning, design, and implementation. There is a large capacity to have a very strong influence on transportation projects.

ii. ITE has an extensive amount of published material that is/could be relevant to the complete streets concept and could be revised (as necessary) and repackaged for distribution with minimal effort.

**ITE’s Strategic Position**

i. ITE has a diverse membership of transportation professionals from all aspects of planning, design and implementation and from all over the world. As a result, ITE has a wide reach to both receive information as well as disseminate information. This gives ITE the opportunity to set the standards consistently and to be very influential internationally.

ii. By being the “go to” source ITE can help standardize and eliminate unnecessary variability in planning, design and implementation practices, in the US and at an international level.

iii. ITE is in a position to develop well rounded engineers and planners who are uniquely equipped to plan and design for all transportation needs.

iv. ITE has the connections and relationships to showcase that it is an association that can be a valuable and trusted source of information for complete streets.
What are the ethical implications?

i. ITE must be cognoscente of work that has already been done by other associations and embrace some of their methodologies and recommendations while tactfully challenging others. This should be done in a way such that ITE is seen as a partner and an asset to other associations, rather than an adversary.

ii. ITE should differentiate itself from other advocacy groups and professional organizations like the National Complete Streets Coalition in a way that allows ITE to continue to foster its relationship with them.

iii. A significant effort should be made to educate the ITE membership that embracing complete streets concepts does not make all of the current recommended practices and guidelines irrelevant. Complete streets concepts should complement, and be incorporated into, established guidelines.
Given the information provided above, the following section outlines possible actions ITE could pursue to solidify its position as a leader in the complete streets movement. Not all of ITE’s possible actions are listed in this document. The following items discussed were felt to be the most viable and could provide the most opportunity by leveraging ITE’s current position.

**Action A: Become the “go to” source for complete streets**

**EXAMPLE:** ITE will develop a new website dedicated to complete streets that will serve as the foundation of ITE approved complete streets information. Through this website, ITE will embrace the complete streets movement and will begin to make a concerted effort to provide the most relevant, useful, and up to date information regarding complete streets. The information will be thoroughly reviewed, organized, standardized and presented in a user friendly manner.

**Advantages:** This effort would result in the development of a new website that would serve as the information hub initially for all of ITE’s complete streets information and, in time, for all relevant information pertaining to complete streets. ITE’s current website has significant information in numerous locations and refers to information on other professional organizations and advocacy groups, but the information is not presented in an organized manner.

**Disadvantages:** While developing a website as a “go to” source could be accomplished with relatively fewer resources, on-going maintenance of this website could be challenging and time consuming effort. If this option is chosen, it is very important to maintain the content of this website.

**Action B: Reaching out to Academia**

**EXAMPLE:** ITE will create a program to provide support to universities and colleges in teaching complete streets methodology and concepts. ITE will develop videos, presentations, curriculums, and webinars focused on complete streets methodologies.

**Advantages:** This effort will give ITE the opportunity to teach complete streets concepts to students just entering the transportation profession. Different perspectives of the goal and emphasis of the transportation system sometimes makes it difficult for “new” concepts involved in complete streets to be embraced. The older generations of transportation professionals were taught and have practiced many years with the perspective that transportation systems were to be constructed with a maximum capacity for automobiles. An educational program targeted at students and young professionals will help create an environment within the transportation profession where complete streets concepts will be more readily accepted and implemented. An educational program
developed by ITE would also serve as an opportunity for students to become familiar with ITE, especially at colleges/universities that do not have a student ITE chapter.

**Disadvantages:** While a program such as the one described would be very beneficial, it will require a lot of effort and expense. In order to develop a successful educational program for complete streets concepts, ITE must first establish itself as a qualified complete streets resource. Also, ITE does not possess official status to directly force these courses into Academia.

**Action C: Removing the Barriers in ITE Policies**

EXAMPLE: ITE will begin amending current ITE guidelines, recommended practices, and policies that create barriers in the implementation of complete streets concepts. ITE will revise the Traffic Engineering Handbook and the Transportation Planning Handbook removing these potential barriers in the guidelines. ITE will also review all ITE policies and amend as necessary to support complete streets concepts.

**Advantages:** ITE will begin to establish and clearly state their position of support for complete streets concepts.

**Disadvantages:** It will be a long and difficult process for ITE to find consensus within its diverse membership to change longstanding policies and guidelines.

**Action D: Reaching out and Partnering with Advocate Organizations**

EXAMPLE: ITE will form a technical council for complete streets concepts. The technical council will then create a network of complete streets supporters by reaching out and establishing working relationships with complete streets advocate organizations. It is recommended that the following organizations are contacted initially: Smart Growth America, Urban Land Institute, Project for Public Spaces, and Congress for New Urbanism. Other organizations should also be contacted as momentum is established. The resulting complete streets advocacy team could begin working together to strongly advocate in various forums for complete streets.

**Advantages:** This will give ITE the opportunity to help lead the complete streets movement by being the common thread among all the major players within complete streets advocacy. ITE could leverage this relationship to help establish consistency and standardized methodologies, recommended practices, design and implementation of complete streets among all the organizations and ultimately throughout the transportation profession.

**Disadvantages:** Even though ITE has invested a lot of resources and has participated in several other organizations listed above, ITE is not yet seen as a leader in the Complete Streets movement. Due to this perception, ITE may have to implement other actions before getting positive results with this option.
**Recommended Action to Address the Issue**

**Action A: Become the “go to” source for complete streets**

It is essential for the advancement of the complete streets concept that all of the currently available information be sorted, sifted, and pooled together in a single location. Therefore ITE should focus its’ efforts on becoming the “go to” source for complete streets information by developing a website dedicated to the topic.

The first step to becoming the “go to” source for the complete streets concept is to develop a logical, concise and consistent way to organize the wealth of information already available. A website could serve as the foundation for that organizational process. The website would shape the way people view complete streets by providing relevant information, educational materials, supporting documentation, standard practices, lessons learned, and contacts to other organizations. It should serve as the vehicle for ITE to advance the complete streets concept by simply presenting all the information available on the subject in a usable manner. The following seven building blocks should serve as the headings that are found on the homepage of the website:

- About
- Toolbox
- Fact Sheets
- Training
- Success Stories
- Publications
- Resources

**About** – The purpose of this page is to state ITE’s commitment to complete streets, give a brief summary of what complete streets are and to draw the visitor in to the other topics which would be listed as links. This home page gives the mission statement of ITE’s dedication to “promote the development of comprehensive transportation infrastructure that is inclusive of all modes of travel” (ITE Website, Bicycle and Pedestrian Council, Transit Council, Transportation and Planning Council). This page should include a position statement/message from the President/Board that explains how ITE supports and seeks to advance the complete streets initiative. This page would also contain basic background, fact information and principles and would include a short video summarizing this information. This home page would also provide a link to the Complete Streets page on the ITE Community giving visitors a direct link into that successful interactive part of the ITE website.

**Complete Streets Toolbox** – This is ITE’s opportunity to become the “go to” source for complete streets. Currently, there isn’t a single location where transportation professionals can find comprehensive information on best complete street planning and design practices. ITE has an opportunity to fill this void with the complete streets toolbox. This section should contain ITE approved information for implementing complete streets concepts. Practitioners should be able to find information to assist them...
in not only developing proper complete streets policy, but also in advancing the complete streets concepts through the planning and implementation processes.

The toolbox should also address the implementation of the complete streets concept. ITE should provide a resource guide along with a complete streets checklist that will assist an agency through this process. Several agencies have created similar guides and checklists. A couple of the more clear and extensive guides that have been developed by other agencies include: the Minnesota Department of Transportation (“Complete Streets Implementation Resource Guide for Minnesota Local Agencies”), and the New Jersey Department of Transportation (“A Guide to Creating a Complete Streets Implementation Plan”). Both of these documents provide clear instruction on the proper steps to take through the implementation process developed (and updated) by agencies that have gone through the implementation process. ITE should review these two documents and any others found through a literature research and develop a Complete Streets Guide that incorporates much of what these agencies have done. ITE could team with these agencies to develop a guide to provide in the complete streets toolbox. A checklist can also be provided as part of the guide or as a stand-alone item and should be broken into sections such as Policy, Planning, Design, Construction, and Post Construction. This checklist could be created based on a review of the checklists that have already been created by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission located in the San Francisco Bay area, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, and the New York Department of Transportation.

Various libraries should be kept in the toolbox to provide references to things such as examples of policies that have been adopted, standards that have been created, contacts for agencies who have implemented complete streets, contacts to professionals who have overseen the implementation of complete streets, etc. These libraries will be a valuable resource to users of the website and can help to direct them to additional sources of information.

**Fact Sheets** – Fact sheets with an overview of best complete streets design practices for both new construction and retrofits that are endorsed by ITE should be provided. A photograph of a typical application as well as a plan-view sketch should be included with each fact sheet. This should be a combination of design practices developed by ITE and design practices developed by other organizations such as the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) and the Complete Street Coalition. This section should also reference design guides and reports such as ITE’s Design Walkable Urban Thoroughfares: A Context Sensitive Approach and NACTO’s Urban Street Design Guide and Urban Bikeway Design Guide.

**Training** – Full implementation of complete streets concepts will require an extensive amount of training, not only throughout agencies but also for anyone that does business with the agencies such as consultants, contractors, developers, and property owners. In order to aid in this process, ITE should prepare materials for this educational process.

This is another opportunity for ITE to fulfill a need and become the “go to” source for complete streets planning and design. ITE can work with its members, other associations and advocacy groups and perhaps team with the Federal Highway Administration to create a complete streets design training materials and presentations. This material would summarize much of what is contained in the Complete Streets
Toolbox and would be used by members to moderate a one or two day seminar. This page would also contain a calendar of upcoming training events and links to upcoming or recorded webinars on the topic.

**Success Stories and Lessons Learned** – There are many great examples of successful implementations of complete streets planning and design and it is important to share these successes and lessons learned during the course of these projects in a searchable library. Each case study should have a brief write up, illustrations and/or pictures and contact information and/or links to more detailed information if it is available. Each case study should be developed similar to the fact sheets that ITE has developed for the Context Sensitive Solutions portion of the website (www.ite.org/css). It is important to make this interactive by encouraging ITE members to submit content for review by ITE. The website committee can work with ITE Staff to review articles published previously (in ITE Journal or similar publications) and contact specific agencies to gather this information.

Additionally, the following agencies have implemented complete streets concepts and may be willing to work with ITE to create a lesson’s learned document and also for which case study documents can be developed include: Charlotte (NC), Denver (CO), Los Angeles (CA), Boston (MA), Washington D.C., Austin (TX), Bellingham(WA), Dubuque(IA), Pasadena (CA), Florida DOT, New Jersey DOT, New York State DOT, and Minnesota DOT.

**Publications** – Complete Streets is a very broad subject and many include related topics such as traffic calming, bicycle and pedestrian design, context sensitive solutions, and smart growth. While this material may be readily available, foreknowledge of their context and linkage to complete streets may not always be present. As such, this section would consist of a searchable library of links to publications, articles and presentations from ITE conferences, ITE Journal or other relevant sources on related topics and applications to complete streets. As with other sections, it would be important to make this interactive and current by encouraging ITE members to submit content for review from a representative committee.


**Resources** – There are a lot of allies in the complete streets arena and it is important that ITE recognizes other organizations that have contributed to the vast amount of research and resources available. This section would contain links to other websites or special interest groups that champion the complete streets movement. This should also include links to representative City, County and State agency complete street policies and guidelines. A list of contacts that would be willing to provide additional information could be provided as well.
A marketing effort for the complete streets concept should also be undertaken. ITE should develop its own brand similar to the ‘Complete Streets’ brand to serve as an umbrella for all other labels sharing similar ideas and features such as Complete Streets, Road Diet, Great Streets, Main Streets, Placemaking, Better Block, and New Urbanism.

Along with the ITE’s term or brand, a logo should be developed to help differentiate material that has been approved by ITE as an accepted document and endorses the complete street concept. This marketing effort will be important for the advancement of the complete street concept because it will help build the ITE brand of the subject without excluding work that has already been conducted. This will be a way to be the central hub for all the information and give ITE the ability to ensure consistency and relevancy.

Aesthetics of the website are also important. The website should be linked to the ITE website but should have its own distinctive look and branding. Additionally, a website will only remain useful and relevant if it is consistently monitored and updated. It will therefore be important to create a Complete Streets Council with dedicated members who are passionate about the complete streets movement. This committee should be responsible for keeping up with this evolving subject, reviewing articles and research submitted by ITE members, and working with ITE Staff to update the various sections of the website. Over time, users will become confident in the material that is provided through the website and will trust its relevancy.