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With new policy, Windsor Heights commits to designing streets for all users

The Windsor Heights City Council on Monday adopted a complete streets policy to help ensure its streets are safe for travel by all people, including those who walk, bike, drive, ride public transit or require mobility aids.

By adopting a complete streets policy, Mayor Diana Willits said the city has made a commitment to its residents and businesses to consider the needs of all people – including children, the elderly and people with specific mobility needs – whenever designing or redesigning a new or existing street.

“People of all ages and abilities live in Windsor Heights, and they should be able to move around their community safely and comfortably regardless of how they travel,” she said. “It’s not only the right thing to do – it’s a smart way to attract people and businesses, increase property values, and empower residents to lead more healthful lives. People want to live in walkable cities.”

U.S. Transportation Secretary Anthony Foxx challenged U.S. mayors to take significant action in 2015 to make streets safer for all people, and one of his recommendations was adopting complete streets policies. “Complete streets” is a term used to describe streets designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit riders.

A model policy has been developed by Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization for metro-area governments to consider adapting to their communities. The MPO, in partnership with Wellmark Foundation, is also developing a one-time grant program for complete streets projects as part of its Complete Streets Initiative. The effort helps meet the goals established in the region’s long-term transportation plan, Mobilizing Tomorrow, as well as The Tomorrow Plan, the region’s long-term plan for sustainable development over the next 40 years.

The City of Windsor Heights is the first metro-area government to adopt a complete streets policy in response to Secretary Foxx’s challenge. Three metro cities had previously adopted complete streets policies, including Des Moines, Carlisle and Norwalk.

More information about the MPO’s Complete Street Initiative is available at www.dmampo.org/complete-streets.

The Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) acts as a regional forum to ensure coordination between the public and local, state, and federal agencies in regard to planning issues and to prepare transportation plans and programs. The MPO develops both long- and short-range multimodal transportation plans, selects and approves projects for federal funding based upon regional priorities, and develops methods to reduce traffic congestion.