

Planning/Policy/ Programming

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Project Title: The Effects of Complete Streets Policies and Projects on Local Business Development and Growth in California

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DRISI provides solutions and knowledge that improves California's transportation system.

The Effects of Complete Streets Policies and Projects on Local Business Development and Growth in California

This research examines how complete streets projects influence travel choices, local business activity, and patterns of land use in communities across California. Using a combination of data analysis and community perspectives, the study will assess how changes to street design affect walking, biking, transit use, and economic conditions near project sites. It will also explore how agencies view complete streets initiatives and how differing policies shape planning and development decisions. The findings will provide a clearer understanding of the broader impacts of complete streets and offer guidance for future transportation and economic planning efforts.

WHAT IS THE NEED?

There is still limited research on how complete streets projects and related policies affect nearby businesses and the economic health of local communities. We also don't yet have a clear picture of how these changes influence the way people travel, whether they walk, bike, take transit, or drive.

This research is needed to fill those gaps. By understanding how complete streets shape both transportation choices and local economic conditions, agencies will be better equipped to make informed decisions about future street improvements.

WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The research team will use both qualitative and quantitative methods to understand how people find and use transit information. This will include gathering input from riders and non-riders, studying how individuals plan their trips, and observing how they respond to real-time updates from apps, websites, signage, and transit staff.

The team will also assess the strengths and weaknesses of different information tools to identify common patterns in how

people make decisions. Throughout the project, they will work with partner transit agencies to collect data and develop insights that can help improve how agencies share information with the public.

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

The goal of this research is to understand how complete streets policies and projects affect local communities. First, the study will look at how these projects influence the way people travel; for example, whether they encourage more walking, biking, or transit use. Next, it will examine how being close to a complete streets project may affect nearby businesses, such as whether it helps attract new businesses or supports long-term economic activity. Finally, the research will explore how transportation agencies and local governments view these projects and how they think complete streets shape neighborhood growth and land-use decisions.

By combining data analysis with interviews or other qualitative methods, the study will provide a more complete picture of how complete streets work in practice. The findings will help planners, policymakers, and business leaders make informed decisions and refine complete streets policies to better support thriving, resilient communities.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT?

This research will give the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and its local partners a clearer understanding of how complete streets projects influence both transportation choices and the economic conditions of the surrounding area. By using a mix of data analysis and community input, the study will provide practical insights to help agencies refine complete streets policies so they better support local business activity, strengthen economic resilience, and improve the overall experience for people traveling through these corridors.

For Caltrans, the findings will be especially valuable in shaping statewide policies and identifying any

potential economic challenges that may arise when redesigning streets to support walking, biking, and transit. A deeper understanding of how complete streets affect nearby businesses will help Caltrans make more informed decisions, coordinate effectively with local governments, and deliver projects that meet transportation goals while supporting healthy, thriving communities.

Ultimately, the research will offer evidence-based guidance that benefits both Caltrans and its partners as they work to create safer, more vibrant, and economically sustainable streets across California.

WHAT IS THE PROGRESS TO DATE?

Project kicked off 2/27/26 and first quarterly is upcoming.

IMAGES



Image 1: A complete streets project in Long Beach, CA
(Source: Caltrans)