

CARTS

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)

2018 – 2019 Application

In a brief narrative, describe the proposed project in detail and how the project benefits the affected community(ies). The narrative should include links to the goals and objectives of *Imagine Central Arkansas*. Projects with the greatest community benefits and supporting the regional vision will receive priority – 25 possible points. The narrative should not be lengthy; it should contain short, concise statements.

Note: Within the text of the narrative, (#) refers to a Goal, (#.#) refers to an Objective, and (pg. #) refers to a page number in the *Imagine Central Arkansas* May 2016 revision.

Summary: Little Rock's street designs are governed by our Master Street Plan.¹ City codes, resolutions, and ordinances can inform revisions to the Master Street Plan, but in practice, every time a street is built, widened, or resurfaced, the master plan rules its design. Our Complete Streets Ordinance² mandates Complete Streets, but its impact is limited without changing our master plan. Rather than attempt piecemeal revisions to the master plan, we propose to replace it with a Master Complete Streets Plan (hereinafter Plan) created by an outside firm with expertise in Complete Streets design. Other communities have found this approach promotes rapid and informed implementation. *Imagine Central Arkansas (Imagine)* recognizes the importance of master plan revisions to promote change **(2.6 and 2.7 Notes, pg. 65)**.

Benefits of Complete Streets: As articulated in *Imagine* and more recently in ArDOT's Bicycle and Transportation Plan³, our community wants more transportation options, i.e. Complete Streets **(2, 4.3, 4.3.2, 5.3.2)**. Making Little Rock's street grid safer and more welcoming to walking, biking, transit, and freight **(1.2.1)** will promote independence and equity for an aging population who may forgo driving **(pg. 31)**, young residents who are not yet old enough to drive, residents whose disabilities do not allow them to drive, and low income families who cannot afford to own vehicle(s) **(pg. 56)**. It will also increase physical activity **(5.2)** and health **(5)**⁴, sustainability **(3, 3.1, 3.1.2, 3.4, 3.4.3, 5.6, 5.6.3, 6.3.1)**, and quality of life/livability **(1.3)**.⁵ Finally, it will make our streets safer for all users **(5, 5.3.2, 5.4, 6.4.2)** and encourage economic investment and growth **(1, 1.2, 1.4)**⁴

The Plan: The contents of Complete Streets plans differ between municipalities because they serve community-specific functions and needs.^{6,7,8,9,10,11} The City of Little Rock's Plan will serve as our street master plan. It must therefore accomplish all current Master Street Plan functions such as typology specification and new proposed street locations (the latter will be transferred verbatim). A leading design firm has helped us envision what additional elements a Master Complete Streets Plan would contain. The attached "Menu of Potential Scope Tasks" is helpful for understanding those elements

¹ <https://www.littlerock.gov/media/1375/master-street-plan-12-2015.pdf>

² https://www.littlerock.gov/media/1374/complete_streets_ordinance_21029.pdf

³ http://arkansashighways.com/Trans_Plan_Policy/biking/Arkansas%20Bike-Ped%20Plan%20-%20FINAL%20-03312017.pdf

⁴ <https://www.littlerock.gov/for-residents/bikeped-little-rock/why-bikeped/health/>

⁵ <https://www.littlerock.gov/for-residents/bikeped-little-rock/why-bikeped/economic-investment/>

⁶ http://bostoncompletestreets.org/pdf/2013/BCS_Guidelines.pdf

⁷ <https://bikepedmemphis.wordpress.com/plans-and-publications/complete-streets-project-delivery-manual/>

⁸ <http://www.cityoflancasterca.org/home/showdocument?id=34921>

⁹ <http://rtcwashoe.wpenline.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Complete-Streets-Master-Plan.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.ojb.com/project/peoria-complete-streets-master-plan>

¹¹ <http://urbanengineers.com/projects/master-plan-for-new-britain>

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and the remaining narrative. Some tasks are critical for any Complete Streets plan, such as public participation, outreach, evaluation of existing conditions, safety and quality of service analyses, Complete Street typologies, and network recommendations. Other elements are not critical for *all* Complete Streets plans but may be critical for the success of a plan in Little Rock. The selected consulting firm will use its expertise to target available resources to optimize Plan efficacy for our city. The following reflects our take on impactful Plan elements for our city but may be revised after consultation:

Network recommendations in our Plan will include both improvements to our proposed on-street bicycle routes¹² and incorporate and improve upon an envisioned off-street trail network.¹³ We must allocate substantial resources to network recommendations. Even more so than other communities, we have a car-centric culture; success will depend on a significant investment in education of multiple stakeholder types, including site visits, during and after the Plan's creation. Our community is not familiar with many innovative bicycle, pedestrian, and transit designs; investment in communicating best practices will be required. Land use analysis will be essential for our Plan to meet the needs of different regions **(4.1)** and an equity analysis will ensure we target areas where people are least likely to have access to a car for transportation **(e.g. pg. 56)**. Design guidance is a core component of most Complete Streets plans and will be important for considering streets as public spaces as well as transportation corridors. Perhaps most importantly, our Plan needs elements that bridge planning and implementation, such as prioritization, identification of funding sources, an implementation plan, and evaluation criteria. We intend to create a Plan with the financial support provided, but **the level of support will determine the breadth and depth of Plan tasks and ultimately the quality and impact of the Plan**. The following discussion of Plan benefits assumes full funding:

Plan Benefits: The Plan would be transformative, making Complete Streets implementation an integrated part of CLR policy. Processes in creating the Plan may be as important as its final product. It will guide implementation by including a timetable, benchmarks, and identification of internal and external funding sources to speed implementation **(6.2)**. The primary benefits are:

- 1) *Public Participation/Consensus-Building:* Like *Imagine*, the Plan will invite residents to envision transportation, but at a finer scale (e.g. considering individual streets). The process will involve all stakeholders to create immediately actionable consensuses.
- 2) *Expertise:* Complete Streets best practices are rapidly evolving. The Plan will be written by the experts *creating* evidence-based Complete Streets guidelines.
- 3) *Education:* Plan synthesis will create educational opportunities through both public forums **(5.4.4)** and peer-to-peer exchanges in which City staff and elected officials discuss Complete Streets implementation in their disciplines' vernaculars.
- 4) *Pedestrians:* the Plan will include our first pedestrian plan **(2.6, 5.2.1) (pg. 34)** and will give greater priority to the pedestrian modality (e.g. the Master Street Plan only requires sidewalks on one side of Collector and Residential streets) **(4.3.1)**.

¹² http://maps.littlerock.state.ar.us/webapps/LR_Transportation_Plans_Viewer/

¹³ <https://www.littlerock.gov/media/1753/master-trail-plan-document-final.pdf>

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- 5) *Bicycle Route Planning*: Proposed routes in our Master Bike Plan were generated by advocates; several are considered impracticable by City staff. The Plan will propose a *feasible* network of bicycle facilities prioritizing routes that would only require resurfacing (vs. widening), resulting in more rapid implementation of an interconnected on-street bicycle network **(2.7, 5.2.2)**.
- 6) *Bike Lane Options for All Street Types*: The Plan will propose bike lane designs with the appropriate degree of traffic separation for each street type, promoting bicycle access to all properties, destinations, and adjacent streets in our city **(2.1)**.
- 7) *Transit*: The Plan will offer an opportunity for improved cooperation between CLR and Rock Region Metro to provide a better transit experience **(4.5.3, 4.7.3, 5.2.3)**.
- 8) *Prioritization*: Some areas would be given higher priority such as:
 - a. Safe Routes to Schools: Little Rock Public Schools will not transport students within 1-2 miles of schools. The Plan will prioritize implementation near schools.
 - b. Equity: Greater attention will be given to transportation options in low income areas and near child and senior attractions **(4.7)**.
 - c. Connections: Relatively short bicycle and pedestrian facilities that will bridge existing facilities will be prioritized to create intact corridors **(4.5.1)**.
- 9) *Place-Making and Typology*: Our Master Street Plan does not consider place-making. The Plan will better consider streets as public spaces **(1.3.2, 2.1, 2.2, 5.4.1)**.

Impact/Need: While *Imagine* creates a compelling vision, we have a long way to go to realize it. Among 52 metro areas, we have the worst walkability and the most vehicular miles traveled.¹⁴ The Little Rock metro area is the 14th most dangerous metro area to walk in the country¹⁵ and we only have bike lanes on 5% of our streets.¹⁶ Given the scope of our challenges, perhaps more than individual project construction, municipalities need to manage their street assets differently. Enabling the largest city in Arkansas to implement Complete Streets would have a lasting effect on how the state manages street systems and would set an example for others. This project would have a substantial return on investment.

If funded, the Plan will take many of the transportation concepts discussed in *Imagine* and make them CLR policy not for a single project but indefinitely. If the intention of this grant is to implement guidance articulated in *Imagine*, the Plan may be the project most in line with that goal.

¹⁴ <http://www.metroplan.org/sites/default/files/media/longRangePlan/2014-12-ICA-AppendixI-LivabilityIndex.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://www.littlerock.gov/media/2323/dangerous-by-design-2016.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.littlerock.gov/media/1287/league-report-card-for-little-rock.jpg>