



# City of Palo Alto

(ID # 6042)

## Planning & Transportation Commission Staff Report

---

**Report Type:**

**Meeting Date: 9/9/2015**

**Summary Title: Adoption of NACTO Design Guidelines**

**Title: Recommendation that City Council Adopt Resolution Adopting NACTO Urban Street Design and Urban Bikeway Design Guides**

**From: Sarah Sayed, Senior Planner Transportation**

**Lead Department: Planning & Community Environment**

### **Recommendation**

Review the proposed Resolution (Attachment A) and recommend that the City Council adopt the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Street Design Guide and Urban Bikeway Design Guide as supplements to the City of Palo Alto Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

### **Executive Summary**

Adopting the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) street design guides will provide additional support in the City's efforts to introduce complete street ideas into the design and operation of streets by providing design guidance on transportation infrastructure. City staff will continue to work proactively with the community to provide convenient, safe, and context-sensitive facilities that promote increased use by people who walk and bicycle. When NACTO guidance or other design guidance is used, the City will continue to utilize sound planning and engineering judgment when determining the best solution for a local need.

### **Background**

Streets often fail to provide their surrounding communities with a space where people can safely walk, bicycle, drive, take transit, and socialize. Complete Streets integrates people and place in the planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of our transportation networks. Cities are leading the movement to redesign and reinvest in our streets as cherished public spaces for people, as well as critical arteries for traffic.

The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) facilitates the exchange of transportation ideas, insights and best practices among cities, while fostering a cooperative approach to key issues facing cities and metropolitan areas. The NACTO Urban Street Design Guide and Urban Bikeway Design Guide offer a vision for improving the safety and livability of our streets for people who walk, bicycle, drive, and ride transit. The guidance and flexibility

articulated in these guides serve as an additional tool for planning modern city streets to safely accommodate current and future residents, workers and visitors within limited space.

In September 2014, Governor Jerry Brown signed Assembly Bill 1193, the Protected Bikeways Act. AB 1193 eliminates a requirement previously imposed on local agencies to follow Caltrans bikeway design rules on local streets and roads. AB 1193 grants cities flexibility to use alternative design standards, such as those published by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), on locally-owned streets and roads. Prior to utilizing alternative designs, the law requires all of the following conditions be met:

- (1) The alternative criteria have been reviewed and approved by a qualified engineer with consideration for the unique characteristics and features of the proposed bikeway and surrounding environs.
- (2) The alternative criteria, or the description of the project with reference to the alternative criteria, are adopted by resolution at a public meeting, after having provided proper notice of the public meeting and opportunity for public comment.
- (3) The alternative criteria adhere to guidelines established by a national association of public agency transportation officials.

## **Discussion**

The City of Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan, Climate Action Plan, and Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan establish clear support and priority for investing in non-motorized transportation, improving access to transit, and reducing dependence on single-occupant vehicles to improve the overall efficiency of the transportation system.

The passage of the Protected Bikeways Act in September 2014 requires that if a local agency wishes to use an alternative design standard, that this design standard be adopted by resolution at a public meeting.

Adopting the NACTO street design guides will provide additional support in the City's efforts to introduce complete street ideas into the design and operation of streets by providing design guidance on transportation infrastructure. City staff will continue to work proactively with the community to provide convenient, safe, and context-sensitive facilities that promote increased use by people who walk and bicycle. When NACTO guidance or other design guidance is used, the City will continue to utilize sound planning and engineering judgment when determining the best solution for a local need.

Attachment A provides a proposed Resolution to adopt the NACTO Design Guidelines.

The NACTO Guides may be reviewed or ordered online as outlined in Attachment B. A hardcopy is available *for review only* at the City of Palo Alto Transportation Division, 250 Hamilton Avenue, 5<sup>th</sup> floor.

## NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide

The NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide is based on the experience of the best cycling cities in the world. To create the guide, the authors conducted a worldwide literature search of design guidelines and real-life experience and worked closely with a panel of planning professionals from NACTO member cities, as well as traffic engineers, planners, and academics.

Most of these treatments are not directly referenced in the current version of the AASHTO Guide to Bikeway Facilities, although they are virtually all (with two exceptions) permitted under the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). In August 2013, the Federal Highway Administration issued a memorandum officially supporting use of the document. All of the NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide treatments are in use internationally and in many cities around the United States.

For each treatment in the Urban Bikeway Design Guide, NACTO provides three levels of guidance:

- Required: elements for which there is a strong consensus that the treatment cannot be implemented without.
- Recommended: elements for which there is a strong consensus of added value.
- Optional: elements that vary across cities and may add value depending on the situation.

NACTO emphasizes that treatments must be tailored to the individual situation with thorough documentation of decisions. To assist with this, the NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide links to companion reference material and studies.

## Palo Alto Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee Review

Staff brought a draft proposed Resolution to the Palo Alto Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee (PABAC) for input on August 4, 2015. PABAC members suggested minor edits to the Resolution which have been incorporated by staff.

## **Policy Implications**

Adoption of the NACTO Design Guides as supplementary guidelines is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, Bicycle + Pedestrian Transportation Plan, and Climate Action Plan.

## **Environmental Review**

Adoption of this resolution does not meet the definition of a project, therefore no environmental review is required.

### **Attachments:**

- Attachment A: Resolution to Adopt NACTO Urban Street and Bikeway Design Guidelines (PDF)
- Attachment B: Design Guides (PDF)

NOT YET APPROVED

Resolution No. \_\_\_\_

Resolution of the Council of the City of Palo Alto Adopting the National  
Association of City Transportation Officials Urban Street Design and Bikeway  
Design Guidelines

**RECITALS**

- A. The City of Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan, Climate Action Plan, and Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan establish clear support and priority for investing in non-motorized transportation, improving access to transit, and reducing dependence on single-occupant vehicles to improve the overall efficiency of the transportation system.
- B. The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Street Design Guide available at <http://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide> and Urban Bikeway Design Guide available at <http://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/> offers supplementary guidance on complete streets to cities nationally.
- C. The NACTO Urban Street Design Guide and Urban Bikeway Design Guide offer a vision for improving the safety and livability of our streets for people who walk, bicycle, drive, and ride transit. The guidance and flexibility articulated in these guides serve as an additional tool for planning modern city streets to safely accommodate current and future residents, workers and visitors within limited space.
- D. The State Department of Transportation (Caltrans) has endorsed NACTO guides to “put additional tools in the tool box for both Caltrans staff and local agencies to reference when making project decisions on facilities for which they are responsible.”
- E. The NACTO Urban Street Design Guide and Urban Bikeway Design Guide are intended as supplemental guidelines and do not create mandatory requirements.
- F. The City of Palo Alto will work proactively with the community to provide convenient, safe, and context-sensitive facilities that promote increased use by people who walk and bicycle.
- G. When NACTO guidance or other design guidance is utilized, the City of Palo Alto will continue to utilize sound planning and engineering judgment when determining the best solution for a local need.
- H. The Palo Alto Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee and Planning and Transportation Commission have transmitted their recommendations.

NOT YET APPROVED

NOW, THEREFORE, the Council of the City of Palo Alto RESOLVES as follows:

SECTION 1. The Council hereby adopts the NACTO Urban Street Design Guide and Urban Bikeway Design Guide referenced in Paragraph B above, and as amended from time to time, as supplements to the City of Palo Alto Bicycle Plan.

SECTION 2. The Council finds that the adoption of this resolution does not meet the definition of a project under Public Resources Code Section 21065, thus, no environmental assessment under the California Environmental Quality Act is required.

INTRODUCED AND PASSED:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTENTIONS:

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

APPROVED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Senior Assistant City Attorney

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Manager

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Planning and Community  
Environment

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Administrative Services

## NACTO Urban Street Design Guide

Please visit:

<http://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/>

## NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide

Please visit:

<http://nacto.org/publication/urban-bikeway-design-guide/>