



AASHTO

# Guide for the Development of BICYCLE FACILITIES

Fifth Edition

AASHTO

American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials

2024





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Washington, DC 20004  
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# Foreword

The fifth edition of AASHTO's *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities* (2024) is based on extensive research and represents a major rewrite of the previous edition.

The revised chapters include those on bicycle planning, bicyclist operation and safety, design of shared use paths, and maintenance and operations. The design of on-road facilities has been split into several new chapters to incorporate a variety of new design options. The chapter on bicycle parking facilities has been expanded to cover bike share siting and end-of-trip facilities.

The new chapters cover guidance for choosing a bikeway type; elements of design for all bikeway types; design of separated bike lanes and side paths; bicycle boulevard planning and design; design of shared lanes and bike lanes; traffic signals and pedestrian hybrid beacons; bicycle facility design at interchanges, alternative intersections, and roundabouts; rural area bikeways and roadways; structures; and wayfinding systems for bicyclists.

An [Abbreviated Table of Contents](#) with links has been added to make it easier for the reader to navigate this much-larger edition. Each chapter includes linked callouts to its own detailed reference list, many entries of which include weblinks to the source material.

—AASHTO Publications

# Preface

Bicycle facility design has changed dramatically in the 12 years since the publication of the fourth edition of the *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*, and this new edition is intended to reflect this evolution. This Guide was developed with the recognition that people from a wide range of backgrounds are bicycling or interested in bicycling. A truly multimodal system will not just accommodate bicycle travel but will genuinely encourage it. Making bicycling a safe, useful, and attractive way to travel is also a key component to reducing transportation-related carbon emissions.

This fifth edition brings us back to our roots in focusing on bikeways that the average bicyclist will find comfortable. In 1974, the AASHTO Standing Committee on Engineering Operations published the *Guide for Bicycle Routes*. Fifty years ago, that document proposed many of the concepts—such as bike lanes that are physically separated from cars—that you'll find reintroduced in this edition. The story of how our industry moved away from separated facilities is too long for this preface, but you can find it in “A Historical Perspective on the AASHTO *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities* and the Impact of the Vehicular Cycling Movement” (*Transportation Research Record* 2672, Issue 13). Suffice to say, the underlying vehicular cycling philosophy found in previous editions of this manual has been set aside, which is why this document is so much different—and longer—than the fourth edition.

The development of this Guide is based on extensive research into every aspect of bicycling. We took a data-driven approach that lays out the clear case for refocusing our efforts on bicycle facilities that are comfortable and usable for people of all ages and abilities. That wouldn't have been possible without the continued contributions of the ever-growing bicycle (and pedestrian) research community. The body of knowledge around these two modes of transportation has drastically expanded in the last 20 years, and we cannot thank them enough.

In the past, some may have believed that dedicated bicycle facilities were unsafe, but modern research has shown that this is not the case. Studies cited in this Guide clearly indicate that drivers and bicyclists both prefer clear delineation and a little extra space between these two modes. [Chapter 2](#) synthesizes this research and illustrates that well-designed bikeways generally improve bicyclist safety and, according to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), “Bicycle Lanes align with the Safe System Approach principle of recognizing human vulnerability—where separating users in space can enhance safety for all road users.”

While most bicyclists are primarily concerned with cars and trucks, they also frequently interact with pedestrians. This Guide complements the *AASHTO Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities* (2021). Although it is not the authoritative resource for guidance on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), every chapter addresses accessible design of pedestrian facilities as they relate to and interact with bikeways.

As the American readoption of these concepts continues to evolve, we hope that the philosophy and concepts in this Guide will prove to be lasting. Practitioners should not let the perfect be the enemy of the good, however, and the Guide is written in recognition that most design elements have a range of potential values that may be appropriate or acceptable depending on context. [Section 1.4](#) explains how to apply the design range concept, which is then incorporated throughout the Guide. [Chapter 4](#) then builds on the guidance from FHWA's *Separated Bike Lane Planning and Design Guide* (2015) and provides strategies to apply flexibility and evaluate trade-offs between different types of facilities. The Guide recognizes that preferred bikeways that physically

separate bicyclists from motorists may not always be feasible. It is anticipated that shared lanes and bike lanes (Chapter 9) will remain a critical component of American bicycling infrastructure as we continue our iterative approach to retrofitting bicycle networks onto our streets and highways.

Bicycle facilities also exist in a unique place in our transportation system; they are often a mix of geometric design elements and traffic control devices. As a result, this Guide includes a substantial amount of information about signals, signs, and pavement markings used to designate or enhance bicycle facilities. This Guide is intended to be used in conjunction with the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD; FHWA, 2023). FHWA released the 11th edition of the MUTCD while this Guide was already in the middle of publication and, as a result, a few traffic control devices shown in this document may not be fully consistent with current MUTCD guidance and standards.

The Committee on Design and the Technical Committee on Nonmotorized Transportation would like to extend a special thank you to Bill Schultheiss and the team at Toole Design Group for their tireless commitment to both this project and the advancement of bicycle facility design practices nationwide.

—AASHTO Committee on Design Technical Committee on Nonmotorized Transportation

# Abbreviated Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1-1
Chapter 2: Bicyclist Operation and Safety .....	2-1
Chapter 3: Bicycle Planning .....	3-1
Chapter 4: Guidance for Choosing a Bikeway Type .....	4-1
Chapter 5: Elements of Design.....	5-1
Chapter 6: Design of Shared Use Paths.....	6-1
Chapter 7: Design of Separated Bike Lanes and Side Paths .....	7-1
Chapter 8: Bicycle Boulevard Planning and Design .....	8-1
Chapter 9: Design of Shared Lanes and Bike Lanes .....	9-1
Chapter 10: Traffic Signals and Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons .....	10-1
Chapter 11: Bicycle Facility Design at Interchanges, Alternative Intersections, and Roundabouts .....	11-1
Chapter 12: Rural Area Bikeways and Roadways.....	12-1
Chapter 13: Structures .....	13-1
Chapter 14: Wayfinding Systems for Bicyclists .....	14-1
Chapter 15: Maintenance and Operations .....	15-1
Chapter 16: Bicycle Parking, Bike Share Siting, and End-of-Trip Facilities .....	16-1

# Detailed Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>1-2</b>
1.1. Design Imperative for Bicycle Facilities .....	1-2
1.2. Purpose .....	1-2
1.3. Design Flexibility .....	1-3
1.4. Use of Values in the Guide .....	1-3
1.4.1. Minimum Range .....	1-5
1.4.2. Recommended Values Range .....	1-6
1.4.3. Maximum Range .....	1-6
1.4.4. Additional Guidance Considerations .....	1-6
1.5. Scope .....	1-7
1.6. Relationship to Other Design Guides and Manuals .....	1-7
1.6.1. <i>Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways (MUTCD)</i> .....	1-7
1.6.2. <i>A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets (the Green Book)</i> .....	1-8
1.6.3. Compliance with ADA and Accessibility Guidelines .....	1-9
1.6.4. <i>Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities</i> .....	1-10
1.7. Structure of This Guide .....	1-11
1.8. Definitions .....	1-11
<b>Chapter 1 References</b> .....	<b>1-17</b>
<b>Chapter 2: Bicyclist Operation and Safety</b> .....	<b>2-2</b>
2.1. Introduction .....	2-2
2.2. Safety of Bikeways and Shared Lanes .....	2-2
2.2.1. Relationship between Perceived Comfort and Substantive Safety .....	2-2
2.2.2. Safety in Numbers .....	2-3
2.2.3. Bicyclist Crash Data .....	2-3
2.2.3.1. Data Source Considerations .....	2-3
2.2.3.2. <i>Highway Safety Manual</i> Considerations .....	2-4
2.2.3.3. Overall Findings .....	2-5
2.2.4. Bicyclist Fatality Data .....	2-7
2.2.5. Contributing Factors of Crashes Involving Bicyclists .....	2-9
2.2.5.1. Motor Vehicle Speed .....	2-9

2.2.5.2. Freight and Other Large Vehicles..... 2-10

2.2.5.3. Wrong-Way Bicycling..... 2-10

2.2.5.4. Parked Vehicles ..... 2-10

2.2.5.5. Sidewalk Bicycling ..... 2-11

2.2.5.6. Bicycling during Dusk and Evening Hours ..... 2-11

2.2.5.7. Other Crashes ..... 2-12

**2.3. Bicyclist Design User Profiles ..... 2-12**

2.3.1. Highly Confident Bicyclist ..... 2-13

2.3.2. Somewhat Confident Bicyclist ..... 2-14

2.3.3. Interested but Concerned Bicyclist ..... 2-14

**2.4. Bicyclist Safety and Performance Characteristics ..... 2-14**

2.4.1. Children..... 2-15

2.4.2. Teens and Young Adults ..... 2-15

2.4.3. Adults ..... 2-16

2.4.4. Older Adults..... 2-16

2.4.5. People with Disabilities..... 2-17

2.4.6. Baseline Performance Characteristics for Design..... 2-18

**2.5. Design Vehicle and Bicyclist Operating Criteria ..... 2-19**

2.5.1. Types of Bicycles (Shapes and Sizes)..... 2-19

2.5.1.1. Bicyclist Minimum Turning Radius Considerations ..... 2-19

2.5.2. Electric Assist Bicycles, Electric Scooters, and Other Power-Driven  
Mobility Devices..... 2-20

2.5.2.1. Definition and Regulation of Electric Assist Bicycles..... 2-20

2.5.2.2. Types of Electric Assist Bicycles and Characteristics ..... 2-21

2.5.2.3. Electric Scooters and Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices ..... 2-22

**2.5.3. Bicyclist Operating Space ..... 2-23**

2.5.3.1. Physical Space ..... 2-23

2.5.3.2. Lateral Shy Distances ..... 2-24

2.5.3.2.1. Intermittent Vertical Elements..... 2-24

2.5.3.2.2. Traffic Signs, Signposts, and Pushbuttons ..... 2-24

2.5.3.2.3. Continuous Vertical Elements ..... 2-25

2.5.3.2.4. Curb and Gutter ..... 2-25

2.5.3.3. Vertical Clearance ..... 2-26

2.5.3.4. Operating Space ..... 2-26

**2.6. Operating Principles for Bicyclists ..... 2-28**

2.6.1. Bicyclists’ Lateral Position on the Roadway..... 2-28

2.6.1.1.	Ride on the Right Provisions .....	2-28
2.6.1.2.	Safe Passing Statutes .....	2-29
2.6.1.3.	Bicycling in the Same Direction of Motor Vehicle Traffic .....	2-29
2.6.1.4.	Intersection Destination Positioning for Turns.....	2-29
2.6.2.	<b>Bicyclists' Use of Bikeways.....</b>	<b>2-31</b>
2.6.3.	<b>Bicyclists' Use of Sidewalks and Crosswalks .....</b>	<b>2-32</b>
2.6.4.	<b>Bicyclists Operating Two Abreast .....</b>	<b>2-32</b>
2.7.	<b>Guiding Principles for Bicyclist Safety .....</b>	<b>2-32</b>
<b>Chapter 2 References .....</b>		<b>2-35</b>

## **Chapter 3: Bicycle Planning .....** **3-2**

3.1.	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3-2</b>
3.2.	<b>Bicycle Planning Principles .....</b>	<b>3-2</b>
3.2.1.	Safety .....	3-3
3.2.2.	Comfort .....	3-3
3.2.3.	Connectivity.....	3-4
3.2.4.	Legibility.....	3-5
3.3.	<b>Primary Considerations for Bicycle Planning .....</b>	<b>3-6</b>
3.3.1.	Geographic Scale .....	3-6
3.3.2.	Trip Distance .....	3-7
3.3.3.	Trip Purpose.....	3-7
3.3.3.1.	Utilitarian Trips.....	3-7
3.3.3.1.1.	Work Trips .....	3-7
3.3.3.1.2.	School Trips.....	3-8
3.3.3.1.3.	Non-Work Trips .....	3-8
3.3.3.2.	Social and Recreational Trips .....	3-8
3.3.3.2.1.	Mountain Bike Trips .....	3-9
3.3.3.2.2.	Visitor Trips.....	3-9
3.3.3.3.	Planning for Non-Discretionary Bicycling.....	3-10
3.4.	<b>Planning for Desired Outcomes .....</b>	<b>3-10</b>
3.4.1.	<b>Designing for the Intended Users.....</b>	<b>3-10</b>
3.4.1.1.	Low-Stress Bicycle Network.....	3-10
3.4.1.2.	Baseline Bicycle Network .....	3-11
3.4.1.3.	Traffic-Tolerant Bicycle Network .....	3-11
3.4.2.	<b>Bicycle Mode Share Goals .....</b>	<b>3-12</b>

- 3.4.3. Other Goals and Performance Measures ..... 3-13
- 3.5. **Deciding Where Bikeways Are Needed ..... 3-13**
- 3.6. **Integrating Bicycle Facilities with Transit: First- and Last-Mile Connections ..... 3-15**
- 3.7. **Bike Parking and End of Trip Support ..... 3-16**
- 3.8. **Types of Transportation Planning Processes ..... 3-16**
- 3.8.1. Comprehensive Transportation Plans ..... 3-16
- 3.8.2. Bicycle Master Plans ..... 3-17
- 3.8.2.1. Coordination with Other Documents and Planning Processes ..... 3-17
- 3.8.2.2. Typical Plan Contents ..... 3-18
- 3.8.3. Transportation Impact/Traffic Studies ..... 3-19
- 3.8.4. Small-Area and Corridor-Level Planning ..... 3-19
- 3.8.5. Campus Plans ..... 3-19
- 3.8.6. Safety Audits and Safety Action Plans ..... 3-20
- 3.9. **Technical Analysis Tools That Support Bicycle Planning ..... 3-21**
- 3.9.1. Data Collection ..... 3-21
- 3.9.1.1. Methods of Counting Bicycles ..... 3-22
- 3.9.1.2. Traffic Monitoring Guide ..... 3-22
- 3.9.1.3. Behavior Analysis ..... 3-23
- 3.9.2. **Quality of Service and Bicycle Level of Service Tools ..... 3-23**
- 3.9.2.1. Bicycle Level of Service ..... 3-23
- 3.9.2.2. Level of Traffic Stress ..... 3-24
- 3.9.2.3. Qualitative Indices ..... 3-25
- 3.9.3. Safety Analysis ..... 3-25
- 3.9.4. Bicycle Travel Demand Analysis and Volume Estimation ..... 3-26
- 3.9.5. Equity Analysis ..... 3-27
- 3.9.6. Cost–Benefit Analysis ..... 3-27
- 3.10. **Public Input ..... 3-28**
- Chapter 3 References ..... 3-29**

**Chapter 4: Guidance for Choosing a Bikeway Type ..... 4-2**

- 4.1. Introduction ..... 4-2
- 4.2. **Project Performance Goals and Objectives ..... 4-2**
- 4.2.1. Project Limits and Bikeway Connectivity ..... 4-3
- 4.2.2. Context ..... 4-3

4.2.3.	Selecting a Bicyclist Design User Profile.....	4-4
4.2.4.	Safety and Crash Data.....	4-5
<b>4.3.</b>	<b>Selecting the Preferred Bikeway Type .....</b>	<b>4-5</b>
4.3.1.	Streets in Urban Core, Urban, Suburban and Rural Town Contexts .....	4-6
4.3.2.	Rural Roadways.....	4-7
4.3.3.	Conditions Where Increasing Separation from Motor Vehicles Is Appropriate .....	4-9
<b>4.4.</b>	<b>Strategies to Achieve the Preferred Bikeway .....</b>	<b>4-10</b>
4.4.1.	Design Flexibility .....	4-11
4.4.2.	Example Strategies for Constrained Rights-of-Way .....	4-11
4.4.2.1.	Traffic Analysis Approach.....	4-11
4.4.2.2.	Narrowing Travel Lanes .....	4-12
4.4.2.3.	Removing Travel Lanes .....	4-12
4.4.2.4.	Reorganizing Street Space .....	4-13
4.4.2.5.	Making Changes to On-Street Parking.....	4-13
4.4.2.5.1.	Removing Parking on One Side .....	4-13
4.4.2.5.2.	Converting Diagonal Parking to Parallel Parking .....	4-14
4.4.2.5.3.	Converting Parallel Parking to Reverse-Angle Parking on One Side .....	4-14
4.4.2.6.	Reducing Bikeway Widths.....	4-14
4.4.2.7.	Reducing Motor Vehicle Traffic Volumes and Speeds .....	4-14
<b>4.5.</b>	<b>Evaluating Design Alternatives and Trade-offs to Select a Bikeway.....</b>	<b>4-14</b>
4.5.1.	Evaluate Bikeway Alternatives Against Project Objectives .....	4-15
4.5.2.	Example of Trade-off Considerations Between Common Bikeway Types .....	4-15
4.5.2.1.	Conventional Bike Lanes (Option A) .....	4-17
4.5.2.2.	Two-Way Separated Bike Lane (Option B).....	4-18
4.5.2.3.	One-Way Separated Bike Lane (Option C) .....	4-18
4.5.2.4.	Side Path (Option D).....	4-19
4.5.3.	Selecting the Next Best Facility When the Preferred Bikeway Is Not Feasible .....	4-20
<b>Chapter 4 References .....</b>		<b>4-22</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Elements of Design .....</b>		<b>5-2</b>
5.1.	Introduction.....	5-2
5.2.	Design User .....	5-2
5.3.	Design Speed .....	5-2
5.3.1.	Design Speed Considerations at Conflict Point.....	5-3
5.3.2.	Acceleration and Deceleration.....	5-4

5.3.3. Considerations for Posted and Operating Speeds on Roadways .....5-4

**5.4. Understanding Assignment of Right-of-Way ..... 5-5**

**5.5. Sight Distance ..... 5-6**

5.5.1. Criteria for Measuring Sight Distance ..... 5-7

5.5.2. Stopping Sight Distance .....5-8

5.5.3. Intersection Sight Distance.....5-10

**5.5.4. Determining Sight Triangles ..... 5-10**

5.5.4.1. Sight Distance and Approach Clear Space for Bikeways at Roadway Intersections ..... 5-11

5.5.4.1.1. Case S—Right-Turning Motorist across Separated Bike Lane or Side Path..... 5-13

5.5.4.1.2. Case T—Left-Turning Motorist across Separated Bike Lane or Side Path ..... 5-13

5.5.4.1.3. Case U—Through Motorist Crossing of a Separated Bike Lane or Shared Use Path ..... 5-16

5.5.4.1.3.1. U1—Near-Side Crossing ..... 5-16

5.5.4.1.3.2. U2—Far-Side Bikeway Crossing from the Minor Road ..... 5-16

5.5.4.1.3.3. U3—Mid-Block Shared Use Path Crossing of an Uncontrolled Roadway ..... 5-19

5.5.4.1.4. Case V—Bicyclist Crossing an Uncontrolled Roadway from a Stop-Controlled Minor Road .... 5-22

5.5.4.2. Sight Distances for Pedestrians and Bicyclists at Non-Roadway Intersections..... 5-25

5.5.4.2.1. Case W—Shared Use Path Crossing of Another Shared Use Path..... 5-25

5.5.4.2.2. Case X—Bikeway Crossing of a Walkway ..... 5-25

5.5.4.3. Sight Distance at Horizontal Curves ..... 5-27

**5.6. Surface and Geometric Design Elements ..... 5-29**

5.6.1. Surface Considerations..... 5-29

5.6.2. Horizontal Alignment and Tapers..... 5-31

5.6.3. Cross Slope ..... 5-33

5.6.4. Vertical Alignment..... 5-33

**5.7. Characteristics of Intersections ..... 5-33**

**5.8. Intersection Design Objectives..... 5-35**

5.8.1. Minimize Exposure to Conflicts ..... 5-35

5.8.2. Reduce Speeds at Conflict Points..... 5-38

5.8.3. Communicate Right-of-Way Priority ..... 5-38

5.8.4. Providing Adequate Sight Distance ..... 5-38

5.8.5. Transitions to Other Facilities ..... 5-39

5.8.6. Accommodating Persons with Disabilities ..... 5-39

**5.9. Evaluating Bicycle and Pedestrian Roadway Crossings ..... 5-39**

5.9.1. Evaluation of Right-of-Way Assignment..... 5-40

5.9.1.1. Volume Assessment..... 5-41

5.9.1.2.	Considerations for Crossings with No Control.....	5-41
5.9.1.3.	Considerations for Yield or Stop Control.....	5-41
<b>5.9.2.</b>	<b>Evaluations of Uncontrolled Roadway Approaches to Bicycle Crossings.....</b>	<b>5-42</b>
5.9.2.1.	Factors That Impact Motorist Yielding Rates.....	5-42
5.9.2.2.	Evaluate Crossing Opportunities.....	5-43
5.9.2.2.1.	Recommended Crossing Opportunities.....	5-43
5.9.2.2.2.	Gap Studies and Crossing Delay.....	5-44
5.9.2.3.	Apply Countermeasures to Improve Yielding.....	5-45
5.9.2.3.1.	Tier 1 Countermeasures.....	5-46
5.9.2.3.2.	Tier 2 Countermeasures.....	5-47
5.9.2.3.3.	Tier 3 Countermeasures.....	5-48
<b>5.9.3.</b>	<b>Evaluation of a Traffic Control Signal or Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon.....</b>	<b>5-48</b>
5.9.3.1.	Pedestrian and Bicycle Count Considerations for MUTCD Warrants and Guidelines.....	5-48
5.9.3.2.	MUTCD Traffic Control Signal Warrants.....	5-49
5.9.3.3.	MUTCD PHB Guidelines.....	5-49
<b>5.10.</b>	<b>Geometric Design Treatments to Improve Intersection Safety.....</b>	<b>5-50</b>
5.10.1.	Medians, Pedestrian Refuge Islands, and Hardened Centerlines.....	5-50
5.10.1.1.	Medians and Pedestrian Refuge Islands.....	5-50
5.10.1.2.	Median Islands and Hardened Centerlines.....	5-52
5.10.2.	Curb Extensions.....	5-53
5.10.3.	Curb Radius.....	5-53
5.10.4.	Mountable Truck Aprons.....	5-54
5.10.5.	Raised Crossings.....	5-56
5.10.6.	Multiple Threat Crossing Solutions.....	5-58
5.10.7.	Bicycle Ramps.....	5-59
5.10.8.	Directional Indicators.....	5-61
<b>5.11.</b>	<b>Warning and Regulatory Traffic Control Devices.....</b>	<b>5-62</b>
5.11.1.	Bike Lane Regulatory Signs.....	5-63
5.11.2.	Bicycle and Pedestrian or Bicycle Crossing Warning Signs.....	5-63
5.11.3.	Yield Here to/Stop Here For Pedestrians/Bicyclists Sign.....	5-64
5.11.4.	In-Street and Overhead Crossing STATE LAW Signs.....	5-65
5.11.4.1.	In-Street Crossing.....	5-65
5.11.4.2.	Overhead Street Crossing.....	5-66
5.11.5.	Turning Vehicles Yield to Pedestrians/Bicyclists Signs.....	5-66
5.11.6.	Active Warning Beacons.....	5-67

5.11.7. Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons..... 5-68

5.11.8. Wrong Way Bicycling Sign ..... 5-69

5.11.9. Blank-Out Signs..... 5-69

5.11.10. Except Bicycles Plaque ..... 5-70

5.11.11. Bicycles Yield to Pedestrians ..... 5-70

5.11.12. Bicycles Merge Sign..... 5-70

**5.12. Pavement Markings..... 5-71**

5.12.1. Stop Lines ..... 5-71

5.12.2. Yield Lines ..... 5-72

5.12.3. Centerlines ..... 5-72

5.12.4. Lane Lines ..... 5-72

5.12.5. Edge Lines ..... 5-73

5.12.6. Bike Lane Symbol..... 5-73

5.12.7. Intersection Bicycle Crossing Markings..... 5-73

5.12.7.1. Bicycle Lane Extension Markings..... 5-73

5.12.7.2. Bicycle Crossings with Parallel Pedestrian Crossings..... 5-74

5.12.7.3. Shared Use Path and Pedestrian Crosswalks ..... 5-75

5.12.8. Bicycle Boxes ..... 5-76

5.12.9. Two-Stage Bicycle Turn Box..... 5-80

5.12.10. Advance Word or Symbol Markings..... 5-82

5.12.11. Green-Colored Pavement ..... 5-83

**5.13. Bicycle Travel Near Rail Lines..... 5-83**

5.13.1. Design Principles for Railroad Crossings ..... 5-84

5.13.2. Skew Angle..... 5-84

5.13.3. Consideration for Roadways with Streetcar Operations..... 5-87

**5.14. Other Design Features ..... 5-89**

5.14.1. Barriers, Railings, and Fences..... 5-89

5.14.2. Lighting ..... 5-90

5.14.3. Drainage..... 5-92

5.14.4. Utilities ..... 5-93

**Chapter 5 References ..... 5-95**

<b>Chapter 6: Design of Shared Use Paths .....</b>	<b>6-2</b>
6.1. Introduction.....	6-2
6.2. Shared Use Path Users .....	6-3
6.3. Side Path Considerations.....	6-4
6.4. Path Width Considerations .....	6-4
6.4.1. Social Function of Shared Use Paths.....	6-4
6.4.2. Shared Use Path Level of Service.....	6-5
6.4.3. Recommended Shared Use Path Widths .....	6-7
6.4.4. Separation of Pedestrians and Bicyclists .....	6-10
6.4.4.1. Land Use Considerations Where Separation is Desirable.....	6-10
6.4.4.2. Volume Thresholds Where Separation is Desirable .....	6-10
6.4.4.3. Separation Strategies .....	6-11
6.4.4.4. Accessibility Considerations .....	6-12
6.4.5. Shared Use Path Design Considerations with Power-Driven Mobility Devices, Mopeds, Motorcycles, Snowmobiles, Inline Skaters, and Equestrians Activity.....	6-13
6.5. Design Speed .....	6-14
6.6. General Design Considerations.....	6-15
6.6.1. Shy Distance, Clearances, and Shoulders .....	6-15
6.6.1.1. Shared Use Path Shoulders .....	6-15
6.6.1.2. Vertical Clearances to Overhead Elements .....	6-16
6.6.1.3. Clearances to Continuous Vertical Elements .....	6-16
6.6.1.4. Clearances to Intermittent Vertical Elements.....	6-16
6.6.2. Surface Considerations.....	6-17
6.6.3. Horizontal Alignment.....	6-17
6.6.3.1. Calculating Minimum Horizontal Curve Radius Using Lean Angle.....	6-17
6.6.3.2. Calculating Minimum Horizontal Curve Radius Using Superelevation .....	6-18
6.6.3.3. Tapers and Path Widening at Constrained Corners .....	6-19
6.6.4. Vertical Alignment.....	6-20
6.6.4.1. Grades .....	6-20
6.6.4.2. Vertical Curves.....	6-21
6.6.5. Cross Slope and Superelevation .....	6-22
6.6.6. Drainage.....	6-23
6.6.7. Barriers Near Hazardous Conditions.....	6-24
6.6.8. Lighting .....	6-25
6.6.9. Considerations for Pavement Markings on Shared Use Paths .....	6-26

6.6.9.1.	Center Lines .....	6-26
6.6.9.2.	Edge Lines .....	6-26
6.6.9.3.	Obstruction Markings.....	6-27
6.6.9.4.	Marked Crosswalks .....	6-28
6.6.9.5.	Stop and Yield Lines .....	6-28
6.6.9.6.	Advance Word or Symbol Markings.....	6-28
6.6.9.7.	Narrow Path Conditions .....	6-28
<b>6.6.10.</b>	<b>Considerations for Traffic Control Signs on Shared Use Paths .....</b>	<b>6-29</b>
6.6.10.1.	Shared Use Path Crossing Assembly.....	6-29
6.6.10.2.	Traffic Control Regulatory Signs, Signals, and Beacons.....	6-29
6.6.10.3.	Intersection and Advance Traffic Control Warning Signs .....	6-30
6.6.10.4.	Guide Signs .....	6-30
6.6.10.5.	Warning Signs .....	6-30
<b>6.7.</b>	<b>Shared Use Path Intersections and Transitions .....</b>	<b>6-30</b>
6.7.1.	Reducing Speeds on Path Approaches to Intersections .....	6-31
6.7.2.	Curb Ramps and Aprons .....	6-31
6.7.3.	Shared Use Path Widening at Intersections .....	6-33
6.7.4.	Intersection of Two Shared Use Paths .....	6-33
6.7.5.	Transitions to Other Facility Types .....	6-33
6.7.6.	Crossing Realignment .....	6-34
6.7.7.	Examples of Mid-Block Shared Use Path Crossings .....	6-34
6.7.8.	Restricting Motor Vehicles.....	6-39
6.7.8.1.	Bollard Design .....	6-40
6.7.8.2.	Bollard Placement .....	6-40
6.7.8.3.	Bollard Markings .....	6-41
6.7.8.4.	Railroad Crossings.....	6-42
<b>6.8.</b>	<b>Design Considerations to Promote Personal Security .....</b>	<b>6-42</b>
<b>6.9.</b>	<b>Shared Use Path Entrance and Wayside Amenities .....</b>	<b>6-43</b>
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>6-45</b>

**Chapter 7: Design of Separated Bike Lanes and Side Paths..... 7-2**

<b>7.1.</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>7-2</b>
<b>7.2.</b>	<b>General Design Considerations.....</b>	<b>7-2</b>
7.2.1.	Retrofit and Permanent Design Considerations .....	7-4
7.2.2.	Separated Bike Lane and Side Path Elevation.....	7-5

7.2.2.1.	Sidewalk-Level Separated Bike Lanes and Side Paths.....	7-5
7.2.2.2.	Street-Level Separated Bike Lanes and Side Paths .....	7-6
7.2.2.3.	Intermediate-Level Separated Bike Lanes .....	7-7
7.2.3.	<b>Determining One-Way vs. Two-Way Operation .....</b>	<b>7-8</b>
7.2.4.	<b>Determining Where to Locate the Separated Bike Lane .....</b>	<b>7-9</b>
<b>7.3.</b>	<b>Bike Lane Zone .....</b>	<b>7-11</b>
7.3.1.	Bike Lane Surface .....	7-11
7.3.2.	Curbs Adjacent to the Bike Lane Zone.....	7-12
7.3.3.	Shy Distance Considerations for Separated Bike Lanes and Side Paths.....	7-13
7.3.4.	Bike Lane Width.....	7-14
7.3.5.	Design Speed .....	7-17
<b>7.4.</b>	<b>Street Buffer Zone .....</b>	<b>7-18</b>
7.4.1.	Street Buffer Width .....	7-18
7.4.2.	Vertical Elements .....	7-19
7.4.2.1.	Raised Medians .....	7-21
7.4.2.2.	Continuous Concrete Barriers (or Other Rigid Barriers).....	7-22
7.4.2.3.	Vehicle Parking .....	7-22
7.4.2.4.	Flexible Delineator Posts .....	7-23
7.4.2.5.	Precast Curbs (or Parking Stops) .....	7-23
7.4.2.6.	Planters.....	7-24
7.4.2.7.	Rigid Bollards .....	7-25
<b>7.5.</b>	<b>Sidewalk Buffer Zone.....</b>	<b>7-25</b>
<b>7.6.</b>	<b>Considerations for Zone Widths in Constrained Locations .....</b>	<b>7-27</b>
<b>7.7.</b>	<b>Utility Considerations.....</b>	<b>7-27</b>
7.7.1.	Drainage and Stormwater Management.....	7-27
7.7.2.	Street Lighting .....	7-30
7.7.3.	Other Utilities .....	7-30
<b>7.8.</b>	<b>Landscaping Considerations .....</b>	<b>7-31</b>
7.8.1.	Landscaping .....	7-31
<b>7.9.</b>	<b>Separated Bike Lane and Side Path Intersection Design .....</b>	<b>7-32</b>
7.9.1.	Minimizing Exposure to Conflicts .....	7-32
7.9.2.	Reducing Speeds at Conflict Points .....	7-32
7.9.3.	Transitions between Elevations.....	7-33
7.9.4.	Right-of-Way Priority.....	7-33

7.9.5.	Sight Distance .....	7-34
7.9.6.	Restricting Motor Vehicles.....	7-36
7.9.7.	Elements of Protected Intersections .....	7-36
7.9.7.1.	Corner Island .....	7-39
7.9.7.2.	Forward Bicycle Queuing Area.....	7-40
7.9.7.3.	Motorist Yield Zone .....	7-40
7.9.7.4.	Pedestrian Refuge Median.....	7-41
7.9.7.5.	Pedestrian Crossing of Separated Bike Lane .....	7-42
7.9.7.6.	Pedestrian Curb Ramp.....	7-42
7.9.7.7.	Bicycle Crossing of Travel Lanes .....	7-43
7.9.7.8.	Pedestrian Crossing of Travel Lanes.....	7-43
7.9.7.9.	Bicycle Corner Radius .....	7-43
7.9.8.	Design Strategies for Protected Intersections in Constrained Conditions .....	7-43
7.9.8.1.	Bend-Out Deflection .....	7-44
7.9.8.2.	Bend-In Deflection .....	7-44
7.9.9.	Intersection Design with Mixing Zones.....	7-45
7.9.10.	Driveway Crossings .....	7-48
7.9.11.	Access Management.....	7-50
7.9.12.	On-Street Motor Vehicle Parking.....	7-50
7.9.12.1.	Accessible Motor Vehicle Parking .....	7-51
7.9.12.2.	Mid-Block Accessible Parking .....	7-51
7.9.13.	Loading Zones.....	7-52
7.9.14.	Transit Stops .....	7-54
7.10.	Transitions between Facilities.....	7-60
7.11.	Raised Bike Lanes .....	7-67
7.11.1.	Raised Bike Lane Elevation .....	7-67
7.11.2.	Width Considerations.....	7-69
7.11.3.	Raised Bike Lanes at Intersections .....	7-70
7.11.3.1.	Option 1 .....	7-71
7.11.3.2.	Option 2 .....	7-71
7.11.3.3.	Option 3 .....	7-71
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>7-72</b>

<b>Chapter 8: Bicycle Boulevard Planning and Design.....</b>	<b>8-2</b>
<b>8.1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>8-2</b>
<b>8.2. Bicycle Boulevard Principles.....</b>	<b>8-2</b>
8.2.1. Manage Motorized Through Traffic Volumes and Speeds .....	8-3
8.2.2. Prioritize Right-of-Way at Local Street Crossings.....	8-4
8.2.3. Provide Safe and Convenient Crossings at Major Streets .....	8-4
<b>8.3. Bicycle Boulevard Minimum Design Elements .....</b>	<b>8-5</b>
8.3.1. Route Identification .....	8-5
8.3.1.1. Wayfinding.....	8-5
8.3.1.2. Shared Lane Markings.....	8-5
8.3.1.3. Bicycles May Use Full Lane Signs .....	8-6
8.3.2. Reduced Speed Limits.....	8-6
8.3.2.1. Use of Regulatory Speed Limit Sign .....	8-6
8.3.2.2. Use of Advisory Speed Plaque .....	8-6
<b>8.4. Traffic Calming Strategies (Speed Management).....</b>	<b>8-6</b>
8.4.1. Creating Enclosure.....	8-7
8.4.1.1. Center Line Markings .....	8-7
8.4.1.2. Narrow (Yield) Streets.....	8-7
8.4.1.3. Neckdowns.....	8-8
8.4.2. Horizontal Deflection Treatments .....	8-8
8.4.2.1. One-Lane Pinch Points .....	8-9
8.4.2.2. Chicanes.....	8-9
8.4.2.3. Neighborhood Mini-Circles.....	8-10
8.4.3. Vertical Deflections.....	8-11
8.4.3.1. Speed Humps, Raised Crosswalks, and Speed Tables.....	8-12
8.4.3.2. Raised Intersection .....	8-12
8.4.3.3. Speed Cushions .....	8-13
<b>8.5. Traffic Diversion Strategies (Volume Management) .....</b>	<b>8-14</b>
8.5.1. Regulatory Signs .....	8-14
8.5.2. Major Street Medians.....	8-15
8.5.2.1. Median Crossing Purpose.....	8-15
8.5.2.2. Median Opening Size .....	8-15
8.5.3. Diagonal Diverter .....	8-15
8.5.4. Forced Turn .....	8-17
<b>8.6. Traffic Controls for Minor Street Crossings.....</b>	<b>8-19</b>

**8.7. Traffic Controls for Major Street Crossings ..... 8-19**

8.7.1. Traffic Signals ..... 8-19

8.7.2. Offset Intersection Treatments ..... 8-20

8.7.2.1. Bicycle Lane with Two-Stage Bicycle Turn Box ..... 8-20

8.7.2.2. Two-Way Separated Bike Lane or Side Path Connection ..... 8-20

8.7.2.3. Center Left-Turn Lanes ..... 8-22

**Chapter 8 References ..... 8-25**

**Chapter 9: Design of Shared Lanes and Bike Lanes ..... 9-2**

**9.1. Introduction ..... 9-2**

**9.2. Design User Profile Considerations ..... 9-2**

**9.3. Shared Lanes and Shared Roadways ..... 9-2**

9.3.1. Measuring Shared Travel Lane Width ..... 9-4

9.3.2. Limited Effectiveness of Wide Outside Lanes ..... 9-4

9.3.3. Markings for Shared Lanes ..... 9-5

9.3.3.1. SLM Placement in Travel Lanes <14 ft in Width on Streets without Parking ..... 9-6

9.3.3.2. SLM Placement in Travel Lanes ≥14 ft on Streets without Parking ..... 9-7

9.3.3.3. SLM Placement in Lanes adjacent to a Parking Lane ..... 9-7

9.3.3.4. Shared Lane Marking Guidance for Bicyclists Approaching or within Intersections ..... 9-8

9.3.3.5. Shared Lane Marking Longitudinal Placement Guidance ..... 9-9

9.3.4. Signs for Shared Roadways ..... 9-9

9.3.4.1. Bicycles May Use Full Lane Sign ..... 9-11

9.3.4.2. W11-1 Warning Sign with an IN LANE or ON ROAD Supplemental Plaque ..... 9-11

9.3.4.3. Active Beacons for Shared Lane Conditions with Higher Potential for Conflicts ..... 9-11

**9.4. Bicycle Lanes: General Considerations ..... 9-12**

9.4.1. Bicycle Lane Widths ..... 9-13

9.4.1.1. Bicycle Lane Surface Considerations ..... 9-13

9.4.1.2. Measuring Bicycle Lane Widths ..... 9-13

9.4.1.3. Range of Bicycle Lane Widths ..... 9-14

9.4.2. Markings for Bicycle Lanes ..... 9-15

9.4.3. Signs for Bicycle Lanes ..... 9-17

**9.5. Buffered Bicycle Lanes ..... 9-17**

**9.6. Bicycle Lane Considerations adjacent to Parking and Loading ..... 9-19**

9.6.1. Curbside Management or Parking Removal ..... 9-19

9.6.2. Loading Zone Considerations ..... 9-20

9.6.3.	Parking and Loading Lane Widths .....	9-20
9.6.4.	Bicycle Lanes adjacent to Parallel Parking and Loading .....	9-20
9.6.4.1.	Minimum Width Bike Lane Considerations .....	9-21
9.6.4.2.	Wider Bicycle Lanes .....	9-22
9.6.4.3.	Buffered Door Zone .....	9-22
9.6.5.	Bicycle Lanes adjacent to Diagonal Parking.....	9-22
9.7.	<b>Bicycle Lane Considerations at Bus Stops .....</b>	<b>9-25</b>
9.8.	<b>Advisory Bicycle Lanes (Experimental) .....</b>	<b>9-26</b>
9.9.	<b>Bicycle Lanes on One-Way Streets .....</b>	<b>9-30</b>
9.10.	<b>Bicycle Lanes on One Side of a Two-Way Street .....</b>	<b>9-31</b>
9.11.	<b>Counterflow Bicycle Lanes .....</b>	<b>9-32</b>
9.12.	<b>Bicycle Lanes at Intersections, Driveways, and Alleys.....</b>	<b>9-33</b>
9.12.1.	Dotted vs. Solid Approach Markings at Intersections .....	9-34
9.12.2.	Crossings of Alleys and Driveways Guidance .....	9-35
9.12.3.	Right-Turn Lane Considerations .....	9-35
9.12.3.1.	Bicycle Lane Ends to Develop a Right-Turn Lane.....	9-35
9.12.3.2.	Bicycle Lane Transitions to a Shared Right-Turn Lane.....	9-35
9.12.3.3.	Bicycle Lane Transitions to a Shared Through Lane .....	9-36
9.12.3.4.	Bicycle Lane Transitions to an Off-Street Bikeway or Sidewalk.....	9-36
9.12.3.5.	Bike Lane adjacent to a Right-Turn Only .....	9-37
9.12.3.6.	Through Lane Transitions to Right-Turn Only Lane or Auxiliary Lane .....	9-39
9.12.3.7.	Optional Through Right-Turn Lane and Right-Turn Only Lane.....	9-39
9.12.3.8.	Dual Right-Turn Only Lanes .....	9-41
9.12.4.	Left-Turn Lane Considerations .....	9-41
9.12.5.	Buffered Bike Lane Considerations at Intersections, Driveways, and Alleys.....	9-43
9.12.6.	Counterflow Bike Lanes at Intersections.....	9-43
	<b>Chapter 9 References .....</b>	<b>9-45</b>
	<b>Chapter 10: Traffic Signals and Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons .....</b>	<b>10-2</b>
10.1.	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>10-2</b>
10.2.	<b>Design Guidance for Traffic Signal Control.....</b>	<b>10-2</b>
10.2.1.	Considerations by Type of Control .....	10-3
10.2.2.	Signal Cycle Length Considerations .....	10-3
10.2.3.	Signal Coordination Considerations.....	10-3

10.2.3.1. Signal Cycle Lengths ..... 10-4

10.2.3.2. Progression Speed ..... 10-4

10.2.3.3. Counterflow Operations..... 10-5

**10.2.4. Traffic Signal Indication Options for Bicyclists ..... 10-5**

10.2.4.1. Pedestrian Signal Heads..... 10-5

10.2.4.2. Standard Traffic Signal Face Designated for Bicycle Use..... 10-7

10.2.4.3. Bicycle Signal Faces ..... 10-7

**10.3. Traffic Signal Phasing for Managing Conflicts..... 10-7**

**10.3.1. Types of Conflicts ..... 10-8**

10.3.1.1. Left-Hook Crashes ..... 10-8

10.3.1.2. Right-Hook Crashes..... 10-8

**10.3.2. Determining Phasing for Separated Bike Lanes and Side Paths ..... 10-9**

**10.3.3. Restricting Vehicle Movements..... 10-10**

**10.3.4. Managing Turn Conflicts ..... 10-10**

**10.3.5. Signal Phasing Schemes for Reducing Conflicts..... 10-11**

10.3.5.1. Exclusive Bicycle Phase ..... 10-11

10.3.5.2. Protected Bicycle Phase..... 10-12

10.3.5.3. Leading Bicycle Interval ..... 10-12

10.3.5.4. Concurrent Bicycle Phase with Permissive Vehicle Turns (No Bicycle Signal Face) ..... 10-13

10.3.5.5. Bicycle Signal Faces and Concurrent Vehicle Turns (Experimental) ..... 10-14

**10.4. Traffic Signal Timing for Bicyclists ..... 10-14**

**10.4.1. Green Time, Change Interval, and Clearance Intervals for Bicyclists ..... 10-15**

10.4.1.1. Bicycle Minimum Green..... 10-15

10.4.1.2. Yellow Change Interval..... 10-19

10.4.1.3. Red Clearance Interval..... 10-20

**10.4.2. Bicycle Green Extension ..... 10-22**

**10.5. Bicycle Signal Design Considerations ..... 10-22**

10.5.1. Size of Displays..... 10-22

10.5.2. Number of Displays..... 10-23

10.5.3. Visibility of Signals..... 10-24

10.5.4. Placement..... 10-24

10.5.5. Mounting Height..... 10-25

10.5.6. Considerations for Placement with Pedestrian Signal Equipment ..... 10-25

**10.6. Detection for Bicycles ..... 10-26**

10.6.1. Detection Techniques..... 10-27

10.6.1.1.	Pushbuttons for Bicyclists.....	10-27
10.6.1.2.	Inductive Loop Detection.....	10-30
10.6.1.3.	Video Detection Systems .....	10-30
10.6.1.4.	Microwave (Radar) Detection and Speed Sensing Systems .....	10-31
10.6.1.5.	Use of Detection in Counting.....	10-31
10.6.1.6.	Detector Confirmation Indication (Experimental).....	10-32
10.6.2.	Location of Detection and Detector Settings.....	10-32
10.6.3.	Signs and Markings for Detection .....	10-33
<b>10.7.</b>	<b>Design Guidance for Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons .....</b>	<b>10-34</b>
10.7.1.	Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon Considerations for Bicycle Traffic .....	10-34
10.7.1.1.	Stop Sign Control.....	10-35
10.7.1.2.	Pedestrian Signal Control.....	10-35
10.7.2.	Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon Timing Considerations .....	10-37
10.7.3.	Other PHB Design Considerations.....	10-38
<b>10.8.</b>	<b>Toucan Crossings with Traffic Signals .....</b>	<b>10-38</b>
10.8.1.	Geometric Design Features and Signal Equipment Placement Considerations .....	10-39
10.8.2.	Toucan Crossing Signal Timing Considerations.....	10-41
<b>Chapter 10</b>	<b>References .....</b>	<b>10-42</b>

## **Chapter 11: Bicycle Facility Design at Interchanges, Alternative Intersections, and Roundabouts..... 11-2**

<b>11.1.</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>11-2</b>
<b>11.2.</b>	<b>Basic Design Principles .....</b>	<b>11-2</b>
11.2.1.	Identifying Conflict Scenarios .....	11-3
11.2.2.	Bicyclist Routing and Delay .....	11-4
11.2.3.	Minimize Conflicts with Motor Vehicles.....	11-4
11.2.4.	Minimize Conflicts with Pedestrians.....	11-5
<b>11.3.</b>	<b>Exit and Entrance Ramps.....</b>	<b>11-5</b>
11.3.1.	Ramp Skew.....	11-5
11.3.1.1.	Potential Conflict Mitigation Treatments.....	11-6
11.3.2.	Bicycle Crossings of Ramps .....	11-6
11.3.2.1.	Entrance Ramps .....	11-6
11.3.2.2.	Exit Ramps and Merging Areas.....	11-10
11.3.2.3.	Additional Conflict Mitigation Treatments .....	11-12
11.3.3.	Merging and Weaving Areas.....	11-13

- 11.4. **Multiple-Threat Conditions** ..... 11-14
- 11.5. **Motorist Left Turns**..... 11-15
- 11.6. **Designs that Place Bicyclists in Constrained Areas**..... 11-15
- 11.7. **Conflicts between Bicyclists and Pedestrians in Shared Space**..... 11-17
- 11.8. **Channelized Right-Turn Lanes** ..... 11-18
- 11.9. **Alternative Intersection Design Considerations**..... 11-20
- 11.9.1. Expectations about Traffic Directionality..... 11-22
- 11.9.2. Unconventional Bicycle Routing..... 11-22
- 11.9.3. Multi-Stage Crossings ..... 11-22
- 11.9.4. Signal Timing for On-Street Bikeways ..... 11-23
- 11.10. **Roundabouts** ..... 11-23
- 11.10.1. Transitions to Separated Bikeways at Roundabouts ..... 11-23
- 11.10.2. Separated Bike Lanes at Roundabouts ..... 11-25
- 11.10.3. Shared Use Paths at Roundabouts..... 11-27
- 11.10.4. On-Street Bicycle Travel through Roundabouts ..... 11-27
- Chapter 11 References**..... 11-28

**Chapter 12: Rural Area Bikeways and Roadways ..... 12-2**

- 12.1. **Introduction**..... 12-2
- 12.2. **Safety Context of Rural Roads** ..... 12-2
- 12.3. **Design User Profiles** ..... 12-3
- 12.4. **Rural Bikeway Treatments** ..... 12-4
- 12.4.1. Shared Roadways and Shared Lanes..... 12-4
- 12.4.2. Signs for Shared Roadways ..... 12-5
- 12.4.3. **Paved Shoulders** ..... 12-5
- 12.4.3.1. General Benefits and Considerations..... 12-6
- 12.4.3.2. Widths of Paved Shoulders ..... 12-6
- 12.4.3.2.1. Shoulder Allocation in Constrained Locations..... 12-8
- 12.4.3.3. Shoulder Considerations at Railroad Crossings..... 12-8
- 12.4.3.4. Paved Shoulder Intersection Design..... 12-8
- 12.4.3.4.1. Shoulder Design with Bypass Lanes..... 12-10
- 12.4.3.5. Options for Enhancing Shoulder Conspicuity ..... 12-11
- 12.4.4. **Advisory Shoulders (Experimental)**..... 12-12
- 12.5. **Pavement Surface Quality on Rural Roadways** ..... 12-13

12.5.1.	<b>Rumble Strip Placement and Design</b> .....	12-13
12.5.1.1.	Shoulder Rumble Strip Placement.....	12-14
12.5.1.2.	Rumble Strip Design.....	12-15
12.5.1.3.	Shoulder Rumble Strip Gaps for Bicycle Crossings.....	12-16
12.5.1.4.	Considerations for Bicyclists' Safety on Roadways with Center Line Rumble Strips.....	12-17
12.5.2.	<b>Intersections with Unpaved Driveways, Streets, or Paths</b> .....	12-17
12.6.	<b>Shared Use Paths and Side Paths</b> .....	12-17
12.7.	<b>Design Considerations for Bridges, Viaducts, and Tunnels in Rural Areas</b> .....	12-18
12.8.	<b>Bicycle Travel Along Interstates, Freeways, and Limited-Access Highways</b> .....	12-18
12.9.	<b>Roundabouts</b> .....	12-19
<b>Chapter 12 References</b> .....		12-20

## **Chapter 13: Structures** ..... 13-2

13.1.	<b>Introduction</b> .....	13-2
13.2.	<b>General Design Principles for Structures</b> .....	13-2
13.2.1.	Roadway Structures with Bikeways.....	13-2
13.2.2.	Bikeway Structures.....	13-4
13.2.3.	Evaluating a Bridge, Underpass, or Tunnel for Bikeway Structures.....	13-6
13.2.4.	Separation from Motor Vehicles.....	13-6
13.2.5.	Personal Security Considerations.....	13-7
13.3.	<b>Design Details for Bridges</b> .....	13-7
13.3.1.	Bikeway Dimensions.....	13-7
13.3.2.	Considerations for Viewing Areas.....	13-8
13.3.3.	Railings, Barriers, and Fence Considerations on Bridges.....	13-8
13.3.4.	Joints and Transitions.....	13-9
13.3.5.	Additional Considerations for Independent Shared Use Path Bridges.....	13-10
13.4.	<b>Design Details for Tunnels and Underpasses</b> .....	13-11
13.4.1.	Bikeway Dimensions.....	13-11
13.4.2.	Separation of Motorized and Nonmotorized Vehicle Traffic.....	13-12
13.4.3.	Tunnel and Underpass Lighting.....	13-12
13.4.4.	Additional Considerations for Independent Shared Use Path Tunnels.....	13-14
13.5.	<b>Options for Retrofitting Existing Structures</b> .....	13-14
13.6.	<b>Connections to Nearby Facilities</b> .....	13-15
<b>Chapter 13 References</b> .....		13-18

**Chapter 14: Wayfinding Systems for Bicyclists ..... 14-2**

**14.1. Introduction..... 14-2**

**14.2. Core Wayfinding Principles ..... 14-2**

**14.3. When to Use Bicycle Wayfinding Signs..... 14-2**

**14.4. Design User Profile ..... 14-3**

**14.5. Bicycle Wayfinding Approaches ..... 14-4**

14.5.1. Destination-Based Wayfinding..... 14-4

14.5.1.1. MUTCD D Series..... 14-4

14.5.1.2. MUTCD Community Wayfinding Series ..... 14-4

14.5.1.3. NPS UniGuide Style..... 14-4

14.5.2. Route-Based Wayfinding..... 14-4

14.5.2.1. National Routes..... 14-5

14.5.2.2. State Routes..... 14-5

14.5.2.3. Local, State, or Nationally Significant Shared Use Paths ..... 14-6

**14.6. Bicycle Wayfinding Sign Assemblies..... 14-6**

14.6.1. Confirmation Sign Assemblies ..... 14-8

14.6.2. Advance Turn Sign Assemblies ..... 14-8

14.6.3. Junction Sign Assemblies ..... 14-9

**14.7. Supplemental Information..... 14-9**

14.7.1. Measuring Distance ..... 14-9

14.7.2. Abbreviations and Other Information ..... 14-10

**14.8. Supplemental Wayfinding Elements..... 14-10**

14.8.1. Mile Markers ..... 14-10

14.8.2. Information Signs and Map Kiosks..... 14-10

14.8.3. Street Name Signs ..... 14-10

14.8.4. Identification Signs..... 14-10

**14.9. Wayfinding Sign Design: Style and Branding..... 14-11**

14.9.1. Unique Community Wayfinding Signs..... 14-11

14.9.2. Lettering and Font Size ..... 14-11

**14.10. Wayfinding Sign Placement and Installation ..... 14-11**

14.10.1. Horizontal and Vertical Clearance..... 14-12

14.10.1.1. Mounting Height..... 14-12

14.10.1.2. Lateral Offset..... 14-12

14.10.2. Wayfinding Sign Placement at Intersections..... 14-13

14.11.	Wayfinding for Bicycle Detours and Work Zones .....	14-15
Chapter 14 References .....		14-17

## **Chapter 15: Maintenance and Operations..... 15-2**

15.1.	Introduction.....	15-2
15.2.	Maintenance Policy and Programs .....	15-3
15.3.	Designing for Ease of Maintenance.....	15-4
15.3.1.	Involvement of Maintenance Departments.....	15-4
15.3.2.	Life Cycle Cost Considerations .....	15-4
15.3.3.	Maintenance Expectations.....	15-5
15.3.4.	Accessibility Considerations for Shared Use Facilities .....	15-6
15.3.5.	Drainage.....	15-7
15.3.6.	Access for Equipment.....	15-7
15.3.7.	Visibility of Bikeways for Maintenance Personnel.....	15-8
15.4.	Maintenance Activities .....	15-9
15.4.1.	Surface Repairs.....	15-9
15.4.1.1.	Asphalt Patching.....	15-9
15.4.1.2.	Asphalt Crack Sealing and Crack Filling.....	15-10
15.4.1.3.	Fog Sealing .....	15-10
15.4.1.4.	Chip Sealing .....	15-11
15.4.1.5.	Slurry Sealing.....	15-11
15.4.1.6.	Microsurfacing .....	15-12
15.4.2.	Pavement Overlays .....	15-12
15.4.3.	Maintenance of Concrete Pavements .....	15-13
15.4.4.	Clearing and Sweeping.....	15-14
15.4.4.1.	Sweeping .....	15-14
15.4.4.2.	Snow and Ice Removal.....	15-14
15.4.4.2.1.	On-Street Bikeways and Shoulders.....	15-15
15.4.4.2.2.	Separated Bike Lanes (May Include On-Street or Curb-Separated Facilities) .....	15-15
15.4.4.2.3.	Shared Use Paths .....	15-16
15.4.5.	Vegetation Removal .....	15-16
15.4.6.	Traffic Signal Equipment.....	15-17
15.4.7.	Drainage Facilities.....	15-17
15.4.8.	Signs and Pavement Markings .....	15-17
15.5.	Temporary Traffic Control for Bicyclists (Maintenance of Traffic).....	15-18

15.5.1. Rural Highway Construction Applications ..... 15-19

15.5.2. Urban Roadway Construction Applications ..... 15-19

**Chapter 15 References..... 15-22**

**Chapter 16: Bicycle Parking, Bike Share Siting, and End-of-Trip Facilities ..... 16-2**

**16.1. Introduction..... 16-2**

**16.2. Planning for Bicycle Parking ..... 16-2**

16.2.1. Types of Bicycle Parking ..... 16-2

16.2.2. Basic Bicycle Parking Principles ..... 16-3

16.2.3. Assessing the Need ..... 16-3

16.2.4. Policy and Guidance ..... 16-5

16.2.5. Signage and Wayfinding..... 16-5

**16.3. Short-Term Parking..... 16-5**

16.3.1. Types of Short-Term Parking ..... 16-6

16.3.2. Location..... 16-6

16.3.3. Access ..... 16-6

16.3.4. Example Designs with Unique Considerations ..... 16-6

16.3.4.1. Sheltered Parking ..... 16-6

16.3.4.2. On-Street Parking ..... 16-8

**16.4. Long-Term Parking ..... 16-8**

16.4.1. Types of Long-Term Bicycle Parking Facilities ..... 16-8

16.4.1.1. Bike Rooms ..... 16-8

16.4.1.2. Bicycle Cages..... 16-8

16.4.1.3. Bike Lockers ..... 16-8

16.4.1.4. Bicycle Station..... 16-9

16.4.1.5. High-Capacity Bicycle Parking Facilities ..... 16-9

**16.4.2. Location..... 16-10**

**16.4.3. Access ..... 16-11**

16.4.3.1. Access Routes ..... 16-11

16.4.3.2. Floor Level..... 16-11

16.4.3.3. Elevators and Stairs ..... 16-11

16.4.3.4. Entrances..... 16-11

16.4.3.5. High-Capacity Rack Access..... 16-11

16.4.3.6. Layout ..... 16-11

16.4.3.7. Parking Garages..... 16-12

<b>16.5.</b>	<b>Rack Design.....</b>	<b>16-12</b>
16.5.1.	Rack Performance Criteria.....	16-12
16.5.2.	Recommended Racks.....	16-11
16.5.2.1.	Inverted U-Racks.....	16-12
16.5.2.2.	Post and Ring Racks.....	16-12
16.5.2.3.	Vertical Parking.....	16-13
16.5.2.4.	Tiered Parking.....	16-13
<b>16.5.3.</b>	<b>Not Recommended.....</b>	<b>16-13</b>
16.5.3.1.	Schoolyard Racks.....	16-13
16.5.3.2.	Wave Racks.....	16-14
16.5.3.3.	Wheelwell Racks.....	16-14
16.5.4.	Considerations for Decorative Racks.....	16-14
16.5.5.	Materials and Installation Surface.....	16-15
<b>16.6.</b>	<b>Short-Term and Long-Term Bicycle Parking Site Design.....</b>	<b>16-15</b>
<b>16.7.</b>	<b>Bike Parking at Special Events.....</b>	<b>16-18</b>
16.7.1.	Types of Event Parking.....	16-18
16.7.1.1.	Unattended.....	16-18
16.7.1.2.	Supervised Self-Parking.....	16-18
16.7.1.3.	Valet Parking.....	16-19
<b>16.8.</b>	<b>Bike Share Parking.....</b>	<b>16-19</b>
16.8.1.	Bike Share Technologies.....	16-19
16.8.1.1.	Smart Dock Systems.....	16-19
16.8.1.2.	Smart Bike Systems.....	16-20
16.8.1.3.	Dockless Systems.....	16-20
16.8.2.	Bike Share Placement Considerations.....	16-20
16.8.2.1.	General Placement Considerations.....	16-20
16.8.2.2.	On-Street Placement.....	16-21
16.8.2.3.	Sidewalk Placement.....	16-21
16.8.2.4.	Parking Lot Placement.....	16-23
16.8.2.5.	Parks, Plazas, and Public Property.....	16-23
<b>16.9.</b>	<b>Locker Rooms, Showers, and Repair Stations (End-of-Trip Facilities).....</b>	<b>16-24</b>
16.9.1.	Locker Rooms.....	16-24
16.9.2.	Showers and Shower Rooms.....	16-24
16.9.3.	Repair Stations.....	16-24
<b>Chapter 16</b>	<b>References.....</b>	<b>16-26</b>

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# List of Figures

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Figure 1-1: Design Range.....	1-4
Figure 1-2: Example Performance Trade-Offs Relative to Fitness of Purpose of Design Values.....	1-5

## Chapter 2: Bicyclist Operation and Safety

Figure 2-1: Risk of Bicyclist Injury Severity Relative to Motorist Impact Speed.....	2-10
Figure 2-2: Comfort Typology of Bicyclists .....	2-13
Figure 2-3: Typical Dimensions of Common Adult Bicycles.....	2-22
Figure 2-4: Typical Electric Assist Pedestrian Mobility Devices .....	2-23
Figure 2-5: Typical Adult Bicyclist Operating Space.....	2-27
Figure 2-6: Common Maneuvers for Bicyclists Turning Left at an Intersection.....	2-30

## Chapter 3: Bicycle Planning

Figure 3-1: Examples of Contrasting Connectivity.....	3-4
Figure 3-2: Photos of Bikes-on-Bus Service and Roll-on Rail Service .....	3-15
Figure 3-3: Example of Bicycle Master Plan Recommendations Map.....	3-19

## Chapter 4: Guidance for Choosing a Bikeway Type

Figure 4-1: Preferred Bikeway Type for Urban Core, Urban, Suburban, and Rural Town Contexts .....	4-7
Figure 4-2: Preferred Paved Shoulder Widths for Rural Roadways to Accommodate Highly Confident or Somewhat Confident Bicyclists .....	4-8
Figure 4-3: Common Bikeway Options within a 48-ft Cross Section .....	4-16

## Chapter 5: Elements of Design

Figure 5-1: Intersection Sight Distance: Case S .....	5-12
Figure 5-2: Intersection Sight Distance: Case T .....	5-15
Figure 5-3: Intersection Sight Distance: Case U1 .....	5-16
Figure 5-4: Intersection Sight Distance: Case U2 .....	5-18
Figure 5-5: Sight Triangle for Uncontrolled Mid-Block Path Crossing of an Uncontrolled Roadway: Case U3.....	5-20

Figure 5-6: Bicyclist Crossing from a Stop-Controlled Minor Road: Case V ..... 5-24

Figure 5-7: Bicyclist Crossing a Shared Use Path from a Shared Use Path: Case W ..... 5-25

Figure 5-8: Minimum Path-Walkway Sight Triangle: Case X..... 5-25

Figure 5-9: Pedestrian Crossing at Shared Use Path or a Separated Bike Lane  
Sight Triangle: Case X ..... 5-26

Figure 5-10: Diagram Illustrating Components for Determining Horizontal Sightline Offset ..... 5-27

Figure 5-11: Edge Taper vs. Facility Shift ..... 5-32

Figure 5-12: Crossing Locations Relative to Intersection Functional Area ..... 5-34

Figure 5-13: Comparison of Bicyclist Exposure to Motor Vehicles at Intersections ..... 5-37

Figure 5-14: Motorist Yielding at Uncontrolled Crossings Based on Roadway Characteristics ..... 5-43

Figure 5-15: Raised Refuge Median Design..... 5-52

Figure 5-16: Example of a Hardened Centerline ..... 5-52

Figure 5-17: Recessed Stop Line with Mountable Truck Apron..... 5-54

Figure 5-18: Mountable Truck Apron..... 5-55

Figure 5-19: Mountable Truck Apron at a Roundabout, Burlington County, NJ ..... 5-55

Figure 5-20: Raised Side Street Crossing ..... 5-57

Figure 5-21: Raised Driveway Crossing ..... 5-57

Figure 5-22: Multiple Treat Crash and Treatment to Address ..... 5-58

Figure 5-23: Bicycle Ramp Alignments..... 5-60

Figure 5-24: Sidewalk-Level Separated Bike Lane with Directional Indicator ..... 5-61

Figure 5-25: Bike Lane Sign..... 5-63

Figure 5-26: Advance Bicycle Crossing Warning and Bicycle Crossing Assembly Panel..... 5-64

Figure 5-27: Yield Here to (or Stop Here for) Bicyclists Signs..... 5-65

Figure 5-28: In-Street Crossing Signs..... 5-66

Figure 5-29: Turning Vehicles Yield to (or Stop for) Bicyclists Signs..... 5-67

Figure 5-30: Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons at a Crossing Location ..... 5-68

Figure 5-31: Wrong Way and Ride with Traffic Bicycling Signs ..... 5-69

Figure 5-32: Except Bicycles Plaque Signs..... 5-70

Figure 5-33: Bicycles Merging Sign..... 5-71

Figure 5-34: Yield Lines..... 5-72

Figure 5-35: Bicycle Crossing Pavement Markings..... 5-75

Figure 5-36: Bicycle Box Configuration across One Lane of Through Traffic..... 5-77

Figure 5-37: Bicycle Box Configuration across Multiple Lanes of Traffic..... 5-79

Figure 5-38: Two-Stage Bicycle Turn Box Pavement Markings ..... 5-81

Figure 5-39: Two-Stage Left Turn Box Placement..... 5-82

Figure 5-40: Correction for Skewed Railroad Grade Crossing—Separate Pathway ..... 5-85

Figure 5-41: Correction for Skewed Railroad Grade Crossing—Widened Shoulder ..... 5-86

Figure 5-42: Correction for Skewed Streetcar Crossing—Pavement Markings ..... 5-88

Figure 5-43: **Railing Designed to Accommodate Bicycle Handlebars** ..... 5-90

Figure 5-44: Example of Path Lighting ..... 5-91

Figure 5-45: Examples of Bicycle Compatible Drainage Grates ..... 5-93

## Chapter 6: Design of Shared Use Paths

Figure 6-1: People Walking and Bicycling Naturally Prefer to Socialize by Traveling Side-by-Side, Metropolitan Branch Trail, Washington, DC ..... 6-5

Figure 6-2: Constrained 8- to 10-ft Width Shared Use Path along an Active Rail Line, Portland, OR..... 6-10

Figure 6-3: Burke-Gilman Shared Use Path (2008) and Separated Paths (2021), Seattle, WA..... 6-11

Figure 6-4: Options for Separating Bicyclists and Other Wheeled Users from Pedestrians..... 6-12

Figure 6-5: Shoulders and Shy Distance on Shared Use Paths ..... 6-16

Figure 6-6: Shared Use Path Horizontal Alignment in Constrained Areas ..... 6-20

Figure 6-7: Use of Barriers Near Hazardous Conditions along Shared Use Paths..... 6-24

Figure 6-8: Example of LED Directional Lighting Along a Shared Use Path which Has Motion Sensors to Increase Brightness..... 6-25

Figure 6-9: Example of LED Directional Lighting at a Shared Use Path–Roadway Intersection ..... 6-25

Figure 6-10: Obstruction Marking at Edge of Shared Use Path..... 6-27

Figure 6-11: Path Curb Ramp and Apron ..... 6-32

Figure 6-12: Shared Use Path Crossing Realignment ..... 6-34

Figure 6-13: Shared Use Path Stops or Yields..... 6-35

Figure 6-14: Road Stops ..... 6-36

Figure 6-15: Multilane Road Uncontrolled with Advance Yield Line ..... 6-37

Figure 6-16: Multilane Road with Signals ..... 6-38

Figure 6-17: Bollard Approach Markings..... 6-41

## Chapter 7: Design of Separated Bike Lanes and Side Paths

Figure 7-1: Separated Bike Lane Zones ..... 7-3

Figure 7-2: Sidewalk-Level Separated Bike Lane ..... 7-6

Figure 7-3: Street-Level Separated Bike Lane ..... 7-7

Figure 7-4: Intermediate-Level Separated Bike Lane..... 7-8

Figure 7-5: Curb Types for Separated Bike Lanes..... 7-13

Figure 7-6: Bicyclist Shy Distance to Curb Types..... 7-14

Figure 7-7: Separated Bike Lane Width ..... 7-15

Figure 7-8: Vertical Elements in the Street Buffer Zone ..... 7-20

Figure 7-9: Sidewalk-Level Separated Bike Lane Designed to Operate as a Side Path, Minneapolis, MN ..... 7-26

Figure 7-10: Green Stormwater Infrastructure in an Urban Street Context ..... 7-28

Figure 7-11: Examples of Separated Bike Lane Drainage Options..... 7-29

Figure 7-12: Intersection Sight Distance—Single-Stage Crossing Scenario ..... 7-35

Figure 7-13: Protected Intersection Design for Separated Bike Lanes and Side Paths..... 7-37

Figure 7-14: Elements of Protected Intersections for Separated Bike Lanes and Side Paths ..... 7-38

Figure 7-15: Corner Island with Flexible Delineator Posts..... 7-39

Figure 7-16: Recessed Crossing at a Side Path Intersection ..... 7-41

Figure 7-17: Side Path Curb Ramps at Constrained Intersection..... 7-42

Figure 7-18: Bend-Out Example ..... 7-44

Figure 7-19: Bend-In Example with Existing Diagonal Curb Ramp..... 7-45

Figure 7-20: Angled Crossing Mixing Zone with Bike Lane ..... 7-47

Figure 7-21: Angled Crossing Mixing Zone with Shared Lane ..... 7-48

Figure 7-22: Accessible On-Street Motor Vehicle Parking at Intersections ..... 7-51

Figure 7-23: Accessible On-Street Motor Vehicle Parking Mid-Block ..... 7-52

Figure 7-24: Commercial Loading Zone..... 7-53

Figure 7-25: Accessible Loading Zone ..... 7-53

Figure 7-26: Example Configuration: Floating Transit Stop (Mid-Block)..... 7-55

Figure 7-27: Example Configuration: Floating Transit Stop with Intermediate-Level Separated Bike Lane (Far-Side) ..... 7-56

Figure 7-28: Example Configuration: Floating Transit Stop with Street-Level Separated Bike Lane (Mid-Block) ..... 7-57

Figure 7-29: Example Configuration: Floating Transit Stop with Sidewalk-Level Separated Bike Lane (Near-Side) ..... 7-57

Figure 7-30: Example Configuration: Transit Stop in Constrained Conditions..... 7-59

Figure 7-31: Example Configuration: Floating Transit Stops (Near-Side) ..... 7-60

Figure 7-32: Transition to Shared Lane ..... 7-61

Figure 7-33: Transition to Conventional Bike Lane ..... 7-62

Figure 7-34: Transition to Conventional Bike Lane on Intersecting Street..... 7-63

Figure 7-35: Transition from One-Way to Two-Way Separated Bike Lanes at Protected Intersection ..... 7-64

Figure 7-36: Transition from One-Way to Two-Way Separated Bike Lanes with Two-Stage Bicycle Turn Box.....	7-65
Figure 7-37: Transitions between Offset Intersections with Two-Way Separated Bike Lanes.....	7-66
Figure 7-38: Transitions between Two-Way Separated Bike Lanes and Shared Lanes.....	7-67
Figure 7-39: Intermediate-Level and Sidewalk-Level Raised Bike Lanes.....	7-70
Figure 7-40: Raised Bike Lane Transitions at Intersections .....	7-71

## Chapter 8: Bicycle Boulevard Planning and Design

Figure 8-1: Motorist Passing Events Based on ADT—20 mph Posted Speed Limit .....	8-3
Figure 8-2: Example Two-Way Yield Street.....	8-7
Figure 8-3: Neckdown with Horizontal Lane Shift.....	8-8
Figure 8-4: One-Lane Pinch Point Example.....	8-9
Figure 8-5: Example of a Chicane Treatment on a Two-Way Street Created by a Median and Curb Extensions .....	8-10
Figure 8-6: Example of a Chicane Treatment Created by Alternating Parking from One Side of the Street to the Other.....	8-10
Figure 8-7: Example of a Mini-Traffic Circle.....	8-11
Figure 8-8: Vertical Approach Profiles of Vertical Traffic Calming Features .....	8-12
Figure 8-9: Typical Geometry for a Speed Hump and Speed Table (Raised Crosswalk).....	8-13
Figure 8-10: Typical Geometry for a Speed Cushion .....	8-14
Figure 8-11: Example of a Median Used to Divert Traffic at a Major Street Crossing .....	8-16
Figure 8-12: Example of a Median Used to Create a Diagonal Diverter at Intersection of Two Local Streets .....	8-17
Figure 8-13: Example of a Forced Turn.....	8-18
Figure 8-14: Example of Connecting Offset Bicycle Boulevard Segments Using Bike Lanes and Two-Stage Bicycle Turn Boxes.....	8-21
Figure 8-15: Example of Connecting Offset Bicycle Boulevard Segments Using a Two-Way Separated Bike Lane .....	8-23
Figure 8-16: Example of Connecting Offset Bicycle Boulevard Segments Using Center Left-Turn Lanes.....	8-24

## Chapter 9: Design of Shared Lanes and Bike Lanes

Figure 9-1: Shared Lane Conditions (Rural Context, Suburban Context, Urban Context).....	9-3
Figure 9-2: Measuring Lane Width Considering Edge of Pavement, Curb, Gutter, and Parking Conditions.....	9-4
Figure 9-3: Shared Lane Marking Lateral Placement in Travel Lanes <14 ft without Parking .....	9-6

Figure 9-4: Shared Lane Marking Lateral Placement in Lanes >14 ft in Width on Streets without Parking ..... 9-7

Figure 9-5: Shared Lane Marking Lateral Placement in Travel Lanes adjacent to a Parking Lane ..... 9-8

Figure 9-6: Longitudinal Placement of Shared Lane Markings along a Roadway ..... 9-10

Figure 9-7: Active Warning Beacons for Bicyclist Operating in Shared Lane Conditions with Higher Potential for Conflicts..... 9-12

Figure 9-8: Typical Bike Lane Pavement Markings and Traffic Control Signs..... 9-16

Figure 9-9: Buffer Design Options ..... 9-18

Figure 9-10: Constrained Bike Lane Adjacent to Parking Example ..... 9-21

Figure 9-11: Bike Lane with a Door Zone Buffer adjacent to Parking..... 9-23

Figure 9-12: Example Bike Lane adjacent to Back-In Diagonal Parking ..... 9-23

Figure 9-13: Design Criteria for Back-In Diagonal Parking ..... 9-24

Figure 9-14: Separated Bike Lane behind a Floating Bus Stop ..... 9-25

Figure 9-15: Example of an Advisory Bicycle Lane in Alexandria, VA ..... 9-26

Figure 9-16: Comparison of Vehicle Interactions for Center Operating Space Wide and Narrow Cross Sections ..... 9-27

Figure 9-17: Advisory Bicycle Lane Design..... 9-29

Figure 9-18: Example Left-Side Bike Lane, Boston, MA..... 9-30

Figure 9-19: Example of a Climbing Bicycle Lane on Steep Street, Seattle, WA ..... 9-31

Figure 9-20: Example Counterflow Bike Lane to Allow Two-Way Bicycle Travel on Street Designed for One-Way Motorist Operation ..... 9-32

Figure 9-21: Example of Bike Lane Approach Markings to an Intersection, Los Angeles, CA..... 9-34

Figure 9-22: Example Right-Turn Only Lane with Shared Lane Markings ..... 9-36

Figure 9-23: Example Bike Lanes on Streets ..... 9-37

Figure 9-24: Example Bike Lanes On Streets >40 mph or Right-Turn Lanes >200 ft in Length..... 9-38

Figure 9-25: Through Lane Drops to Right-Turn Lane with Bike Lane..... 9-39

Figure 9-26: Example Bike Lane Approach to a Through-Right and a Right-Turn Only Lane..... 9-40

Figure 9-27: Bike Left-Turn Only Lane ..... 9-42

Figure 9-28: Buffered Bike Lane Treatments at Merge Areas and Crossings..... 9-43

Figure 9-29: Typical Intersection Transition for One-Way Street Designed for Two-Way Bicycle Travel..... 9-44

**Chapter 10: Traffic Signals and Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons**

Figure 10-1: Example Green Wave Progression Sign..... 10-4

Figure 10-2: Examples of Signal Indication Options for Bicyclists ..... 10-6

Figure 10-3: Left-Hook and Right-Hook Graphic.....	10-8
Figure 10-4: Intersection Phasing Diagram Showing Exclusive Bicycle and Pedestrian Phase....	10-11
Figure 10-5: Intersection Phasing Diagram Showing Concurrent Bicycle Phase and Protected Turn Movement.....	10-12
Figure 10-6: Intersection Phasing Diagram Showing Leading Bicycle and Pedestrian Interval....	10-13
Figure 10-7: Intersection Phasing Diagram Showing Permissive Conflicts.....	10-14
Figure 10-8: Bicycle Position at End of Minimum Green and Bicycle Minimum Green .....	10-16
Figure 10-9: Bicycle Position During Red Clearance .....	10-21
Figure 10-10: Example of Near-Side and Far-Side Bicycle Signal Faces.....	10-23
Figure 10-11: Accessible Pedestrian Pushbutton Location with Separated Bike Lane.....	10-26
Figure 10-12: Pushbutton Locations.....	10-29
Figure 10-13: Example of Curbside Bicycle Pushbutton .....	10-29
Figure 10-14: Examples of Inductive Loop Detection .....	10-30
Figure 10-15: Example of Detector Confirmation Indication .....	10-32
Figure 10-16: Example of Detection Zone Locations .....	10-33
Figure 10-17: Bicycle Detector Marking Options .....	10-34
Figure 10-18: Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon and Separated Bike Lane .....	10-36
Figure 10-19: Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon with Separated Bicycle Lane .....	10-37
Figure 10-20: Toucan Crossing Example .....	10-40
Figure 10-21: Toucan Crossing Example (Photo).....	10-41

## **Chapter 11: Bicycle Facility Design at Interchanges, Alternative Intersections, and Roundabouts**

Figure 11-1: Example Interchange Bicyclist/Motorist Conflict Areas.....	11-3
Figure 11-2: Examples of 30-, 60-, and 90-Degree Roadway Intersections .....	11-6
Figure 11-3: Entrance Ramp with Truck Apron and Bike Lane.....	11-7
Figure 11-4: Entrance Ramp with Truck Apron and Separated Bike Lane.....	11-8
Figure 11-5: Entrance Ramp with Right-Turn Lane, Bike Lane, and Side Path.....	11-9
Figure 11-6: Bicycle Lane Carried across an Exit Ramp Throat.....	11-10
Figure 11-7: Bicycle Lane Shifted Perpendicular to Crossing of an Exit Ramp .....	11-11
Figure 11-8: Exit Ramp with Bike Lane Crossing and Advance Warning or Traffic Signal.....	11-12
Figure 11-9: Bike Lane Positioned in High-Exposure Weaving Area .....	11-14
Figure 11-10: Median Shared Use Path (10 ft wide) with 6-ft Buffers .....	11-16
Figure 11-11: Constrained Median Shared Use Path (10 ft wide) with Concrete Barrier Buffers.....	11-16

Figure 11-12: Side Path between Travel Lanes and Bridge Piers with Preferred Buffers ..... 11-17

Figure 11-13: Channelized Right-Turn Lane Approach Angles..... 11-18

Figure 11-14: Channelized Right-Turn Refuge Island..... 11-19

Figure 11-15: Side Path Design for SPDI..... 11-21

Figure 11-16: Typical Layout of Bike Lane Transitions to Shared Use Path at Multilane Roundabout with Bike Ramps..... 11-24

Figure 11-17: Typical Layout of Separated Bike Lanes at Roundabout ..... 11-25

**Chapter 12: Rural Area Bikeways and Roadways**

Figure 12-1: Example of a Rural Shared Lane ..... 12-4

Figure 12-2: Example of a Paved Shoulder ..... 12-6

Figure 12-3: Shoulder Widening on Uphill Section of Roadway to Accommodate Bicycling..... 12-8

Figure 12-4: Example Shoulder Marking to Accommodate Bicycling at Locations with and without Right-Turn Lanes..... 12-9

Figure 12-5: Shoulder Transition to Bike Lane at a Right-Turn Lane on a Rural Arterial..... 12-10

Figure 12-6: Bypass Lane with Paved Shoulder ..... 12-11

Figure 12-7: Example of Advisory Shoulders in Hanover, NH..... 12-12

Figure 12-8: Rumble Strip Placement Options ..... 12-14

Figure 12-9: Rumble Strip Minimum Gap Illustration..... 12-16

Figure 12-10: Sidepath along a Rural Road..... 12-18

**Chapter 13: Structures**

Figure 13-1: Bikeway along the Interstate 90 Bridge over Lake Washington, WA ..... 13-2

Figure 13-2: Examples of Warning Beacons Advising Motorists of Shared Lanes within a Tunnel and on a Bridge ..... 13-4

Figure 13-3: Examples of Structured Shared Use Path Crossings on the Washington and Old Dominion Trail over Fairfax County Parkway in Virginia (left), the Midtown Greenway in Minneapolis, MN (center), and the Palouse Trail Underpass of Washington State Route 270, Pullman, WA (right)..... 13-4

Figure 13-4: Example of a Bridge with Accessible Ramps and Staircases and At-Grade Road Crossing Access..... 13-5

Figure 13-5: Horizontal Clearances for Shared Use Paths on Bridges along Roads ..... 13-8

Figure 13-6: Sabo Bridge over Hiawatha Avenue, Minneapolis, MN..... 13-11

Figure 13-7: Example of Tunnel Lighting ..... 13-13

Figure 13-8: Example of a Shared Use Path Cantilever Retrofit to Existing Railroad Bridge, Portland, OR..... 13-15

Figure 13-9: Example of Bike Channels on a Stairway along the Burke Gilman Trail in Seattle, WA.....	13-16
Figure 13-10: Bike Channel Design Guidance for a Stairway.....	13-17

## Chapter 14: Wayfinding Systems for Bicyclists

Figure 14-1: National Routes.....	14-5
Figure 14-2: State Bicycle Route Sign.....	14-5
Figure 14-3: D11 Series Bicycle Route Signs.....	14-6
Figure 14-4: Examples of Confirmation, Decision, and Turn Sign Assemblies.....	14-7
Figure 14-5: D1 Series Destination Guide Signs.....	14-7
Figure 14-6: Turn Plaques.....	14-8
Figure 14-7: Example of Community Wayfinding.....	14-11
Figure 14-8: Horizontal and Vertical Sign Clearances.....	14-12
Figure 14-9: Wayfinding Sign Placement at Intersections.....	14-14
Figure 14-10: On-Road Detour for Shared Use Path.....	14-16

## Chapter 15: Maintenance

Figure 15-1: Examples of Debris, Faded Markings, and Snow Clearing.....	15-2
Figure 15-2: Bicycle Infrastructure Life Cycle.....	15-5
Figure 15-3: Full-Depth Permanent Patch on a Shared Use Path.....	15-10
Figure 15-4: Fog Sealing a Shared Use Path.....	15-11
Figure 15-5: Milled Roadway with Smooth Seam at Gutter with Constrained Bike Lane.....	15-12
Figure 15-6: Recommended Safety Edge <sub>SM</sub> Configuration for Asphalt Pavements and Overlays.....	15-13
Figure 15-7: Example of an Articulated Plow (V-Plow).....	15-15
Figure 15-8: Example of a Root Barrier.....	15-16
Figure 15-9: Non-Recessed Preformed Pavement Markings Damaged by Snowplows (left) and Recessed Pavement Markings Undamaged by Snowplows (right).....	15-18
Figure 15-10: Example Construction Zone with Bicycles “MAY USE FULL LANE” Sign and Shared Lane Markings.....	15-20
Figure 15-11: Example of Steel Plates with Slip Resistant Edges.....	15-21

## Chapter 16: Bicycle Parking, Bike Share Siting, and End-of-Trip Facilities

Figure 16-1: Directional Signage for Bicycle Parking.....	16-5
Figure 16-2: On-Street Bicycle Corrals.....	16-7
Figure 16-3: Bicycle Station.....	16-9

Figure 16-4: Bicycle Parking Garage with 5,000 Bicycle Capacity beneath Central Station Rotterdam, Netherlands ..... 16-9

Figure 16-5: Separated Bicycle Lane Connecting Directly to Bicycle Parking Garage at a University in Utrecht, Netherlands ..... 16-10

Figure 16-6: Examples of Recommended and Not Recommended Racks ..... 16-13

Figure 16-7: At left: Bikes Locked to a Schoolyard Rack in Inefficient and Unintended Ways; at right: A Schoolyard Rack with Extra Capacity and a Bike Locked to a Decorative Streetscape Structure that Better Meets Bike Rack Guidelines ..... 16-14

Figure 16-8: Decorative Bicycle Rack that Meets Guidelines ..... 16-14

Figure 16-9: Bike Parking Footprint ..... 16-16

Figure 16-10: Site Planning Dimensions ..... 16-17

Figure 16-11: Site Planning Dimensions for a Bike Room..... 16-18

Figure 16-12: Valet Special Event Parking..... 16-19

Figure 16-13: On-Street Bike Share Dock Placement..... 16-22

Figure 16-14: Sidewalk Bike Share Dock Placement..... 16-23

Figure 16-15: Lockers and Showers for Bicycle Commuters ..... 16-24

Figure 16-16: Bicycle Repair Station and Sign..... 16-25

# List of Tables

## Chapter 2: Bicyclist Operation and Safety

Table 2-1: Common Crash Types and Pre-Crash Maneuvers .....	2-6
Table 2-2: Top 12 Rural Bicyclist Fatality Types from 2014 to 2020 FARS Summarized by PBCAT Coding.....	2-7
Table 2-3: Top 12 Urban Bicyclist Fatality Types from 2014 to 2020 FARS Summarized by PBCAT Coding.....	2-8
Table 2-4: Typical Adult Bicyclist Performance Characteristics .....	2-20
Table 2-5: Bicyclist Lateral Shy Distance to Physical Elements.....	2-26

## Chapter 3: Bicycle Planning

Table 3-1: Recreational, Commute, and Other Utilitarian Trip Characteristics .....	3-9
Table 3-2: Relationship between Network Type and Mode Share.....	3-12
Table 3-3: Factors to Consider in Planning the Location of New Bikeways .....	3-14
Table 3-4: Levels of Traffic Stress.....	3-25

## Chapter 5: Elements of Design

Table 5-1: Minimum Bicyclist Stopping Sight Distance .....	5-8
Table 5-2: Minimum Bicyclist Stopping Sight Distance vs. Grades for Various Design Speeds—2.5-Second Reaction Time .....	5-9
Table 5-3: Minimum Bicyclist Stopping Sight Distance vs. Grades for Various Design Speeds—1.5-Second Reaction Time.....	5-9
Table 5-4: Recommended Intersection Approach Clear Space by Vehicular Turning Design Speed.....	5-13
Table 5-5: Intersection Sight Distance: Case U2 .....	5-17
Table 5-6: Length of Roadway Approach Sight Triangle Equation: Case U3 .....	5-20
Table 5-7: Length of Path Approach Sight Triangle Equation: Case U3.....	5-21
Table 5-8: Length of Path and Roadway Sight Triangle for Uncontrolled Crossings: Case U3.....	5-22
Table 5-9: Bicyclist Sight Distance Crossing from a Stop-Controlled Minor Road: Case V .....	5-23
Table 5-10: Pedestrian and Bicyclist Intersection Sight Distance Equation: Case X.....	5-26
Table 5-11: Horizontal Sightline Offset Look-Up.....	5-28
Table 5-12: Horizontal Sightline Offset for Horizontal Curves Equation.....	5-29
Table 5-13: Shifting Taper Equation.....	5-32

Table 5-14: Recommended Minimum Range of Hourly Crossing Opportunities..... 5-44  
 Table 5-15: Uncontrolled Crossing Evaluation ..... 5-46

**Chapter 6: Design of Shared Use Paths**

Table 6-1: Shared Use Path Operating Conditions Based on Level of Service Criteria ..... 6-6  
 Table 6-2: Shared Use Path Level of Service Look-Up Table, Typical Mode Split ..... 6-7  
 Table 6-3: Recommended Shared Use Path Widths\* to Achieve SUP LOS “C” ..... 6-8  
 Table 6-4: Minimum Radius of Curvature Based on Lean Angle Equation ..... 6-17  
 Table 6-5: Minimum Radii for Horizontal Curves at 20-Degree Lean Angles ..... 6-18  
 Table 6-6: Minimum Radius of Curvature Based on Superelevation Equation ..... 6-19  
 Table 6-7: Length of Crest Vertical Curve to Provide Sight Distance Equations..... 6-21  
 Table 6-8: Minimum Length of Crest Vertical Curve Based on Stopping Sight Distance..... 6-22

**Chapter 7: Design of Separated Bike Lanes and Side Paths**

Table 7-1: Separated Bike Lane Configurations on a One-Way Street ..... 7-10  
 Table 7-2: Separated Bike Lane Configurations on a Two-Way Street..... 7-11  
 Table 7-3: One-Way Separated Bike Lane Widths Based on Existing or Anticipated Volumes ..... 7-16  
 Table 7-4: Two-Way Separated Bike Lane Widths Based on Existing or Anticipated Volumes ..... 7-17  
 Table 7-5: Raised Bike Lane Widths ..... 7-69

**Chapter 8: Bicycle Boulevard Planning and Design**

Table 8-1: Bicycle Boulevard Motor Vehicle Traffic Volume and Speed Performance Criteria..... 8-3  
 Table 8-2: Lane Shift Taper Equation for Traffic Calming Treatments ..... 8-9

**Chapter 9: Design of Shared Lanes and Bike Lanes**

Table 9-1: One-Way Standard Bicycle Lane Widths ..... 9-15

**Chapter 10: Traffic Signals and Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons**

Table 10-1: Recommended Hourly Turning Traffic Thresholds for Time-Separated Bicycle Movements ..... 10-9  
 Table 10-2: Bicycle Minimum Green Time Equation ..... 10-17  
 Table 10-3: Bicycle Minimum Green Time ..... 10-18

Table 10-4: Total Phase Length and Minimum Green.....	10-19
Table 10-5: Bicycle Red Clearance Equation.....	10-20

## **Chapter 12: Rural Area Bikeways and Roadways**

Table 12-1: Paved Shoulder Widths for Bicycling.....	12-7
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## **Chapter 15: Maintenance and Operations**

Table 15-1: Maintenance Equipment Types .....	15-8
Table 15-2: Types of Pavement Marking Materials.....	15-17

## **Chapter 16: Bicycle Parking, Bike Share Siting, and End-of-Trip Facilities**

Table 16-1: Sample Short-Term Bicycle Parking Quantity Requirements .....	16-4
Table 16-2: Sample Long-Term Bicycle Parking Quantity Requirements.....	16-5

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## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

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# Chapter 1: Introduction

## 1.1. Design Imperative for Bicycle Facilities

A multimodal transportation system should provide safe mobility and accessibility to destinations for all people. As a component of a multimodal transportation system, bicycling can contribute to positive outcomes for community mobility, health, sustainability, and economic development goals. (See [Chapter 1 References](#): Frank and Engelke, 2001; Pucher and Buehler, 2017; Krizek, 2007.) The provision of bicycle facilities can address transportation equity challenges in a community by expanding transportation options for people. (See [Chapter 1 References](#): Morency et al., 2012.) Specifically, the bicycle provides a mobility option for people too young to drive a motor vehicle, people who cannot drive a motor vehicle, people who do not have the financial resources to own and maintain a motor vehicle, and people who choose not to drive (See [Chapter 1 References](#): U.S. Department of Transportation [U.S. DOT], 2010.) Bicycle networks support transit, commuter and passenger rail, ferries, and other mass transport networks by effectively expanding catchment areas served by access points to these services.

Bicyclists should be expected on all streets, roads, and highways except where prohibited by law. A network of safe, comfortable, connected, and intuitive bikeways supports bicycling as a viable, convenient, and desirable mode of transportation for people of all ages and abilities. As discussed in [Chapter 3](#), communities with higher rates of bicycling typically provide well-designed and maintained bicycle networks. These networks provide users with a comfortable place to ride over the course of their entire trip. In urban and suburban centers and rural towns, where a large share of trips are shorter than 3 mi, there is great opportunity for bicycling as a transportation mode to complement recreational bicycle activity.

## 1.2. Purpose

The purpose of *the Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities* (referred to herein as “the Bicycle Guide” or “the Guide”) is to provide information on the planning, design, and operation of bikeways along streets, roads, and highways as well as on paths along independent alignments. It additionally provides guidance for the provision of supportive bicycle facilities, such as bike parking and wayfinding, and offers recommendations for the maintenance of bicycle facilities. This Guide provides information to assist the designer in choosing the appropriate combination of features, design values, and materials to create the design while considering the context of the project area and surrounding environment. The Guide is not intended to be a detailed design manual for every situation that may be encountered. It will be necessary to develop unique solutions specific to the local context based on informed design decision-making following the principles established in this Guide. Planners and designers should strive to provide a facility that minimizes the chances of severe injury and prevents loss of life for all users. This Guide should be used to supplement local and state guidance; they will take precedence where conflicts exist.