

SELECTING ROADWAY DESIGN TREATMENTS TO ACCOMMODATE BICYCLES

Choosing the appropriate facility type is important. No one type of bicycle facility or highway design suits every bicyclist. Within any given transportation corridor, bicyclists may be provided with more than one option to meet the travel and access needs of all potential users.

The choice of highway design will affect the level of use, the types of user that can be expected to use any given road and the level of access and mobility that is afforded bicyclists. For example, a four-lane divided highway with 12-foot travel lanes, no shoulder and a 55 mph speed limit will attract only the most confident of riders. The same road with a 5-foot shoulder or bike lane might provide sufficient “comfortable operating space” for many more adult riders, but would still not be comfortable for children or less confident adults. This latter group might only be accommodated through an alternative route using neighborhood streets linked by short sections of a shared-use path. If such an alternative route is provided and the four-lane road has a continuous paved shoulder, most experienced and many casual adult riders will continue to use the shoulder for the sake of speed and convenience.

Facilities for bicyclists should also be planned to provide continuity and consistency for all users. Children using a bicycle facility to get to school should not have to cross a major arterial without some intersection controls, and shoulders and bike lanes should not end abruptly and unannounced at a difficult intersection or busy stretch of highway.

The selection of a bicycle facility type is dependent on many factors, including the ability of the users, specific corridor conditions and facility cost. AASHTO designates bicycle facility types as Shared Roadway (No Bikeway Designation), Signed Shared Roadway, Bike Lane, Shared-Use Path and Separated Bike Lane.* The following are explanations of when each of these facilities may be appropriate. Design parameters for these four types are discussed later in this publication.

- Shared Roadway (No Bikeway Designation) - Most bicycle travel in the United States now occurs on streets and highways without bikeway designations. In some instances, a community’s existing street system may be fully adequate for efficient bicycle travel and signing and striping for bicycle use may be unnecessary. In other cases, some streets and highways may be unsuitable for bicycle travel at present, and it would be inappropriate to encourage bicycle travel by designating the routes as bikeways. Finally, some routes may not be considered high bicycle demand corridors, and it would be inappropriate to designate them as bikeways regardless of roadway conditions (e.g., minor residential streets).
- Some rural highways are used by touring bicyclists for inner city and recreational travel. In most cases, such routes should only be designated as bikeways where there is a need for enhanced continuity with other bicycle routes. However, the development and maintenance of 4-foot paved shoulders with a 4-inch edge stripe can significantly improve the safety and convenience of bicyclists and motorists along such routes.

* Rev. 1/17