

3.4G Shared use paths



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INTRODUCTION

Shared use paths are off-street facilities physically separated from motorized traffic where people walking and biking share the same space. Shared use paths are usually designed to accommodate two-way bicycle and pedestrian travel. In Minneapolis, many shared use paths are adjacent to existing roadways (sometimes referred to as “sidepaths”).

Protected bicycle lanes with separate sidewalk space for people walking and biking are preferred to shared use paths for every Street Type. Given the constrained right of way present on some corridors, however, achieving preferred separate biking and walking facilities may be impossible or impractical. In these cases, shared use paths should be considered. When considering shared use paths, the competing needs of the corridor should be evaluated to best support adopted city policies and prioritize the most vulnerable users of our roadways. Shared use paths are not appropriate for streets with high pedestrian and bicycle volumes. Shared use paths require intersection designs that safely accommodate bi-directional bicycle traffic.

Shared use paths with proper intersection designs are considered an All Ages and Abilities bicycle facility given their physical separation from motorized traffic and ability to appeal to a broad spectrum of people looking to travel by bike or micromobility.

Figure 3.4G.1:
Shared use path dimensions table

Shared Use Path			Horizontal Clearance		ADA				
			Signs & Obstructions	Contiguous features (railings/fences)	Grade	Cross slope			Pedestrian Access Route (PAR)
Preferred Width (ft)	Constrained Minimum Width (ft)	Maximum Width (ft)	Minimum Clearance (ft)	Minimum Clearance (ft)	Maximum %	Preferred (%)	Design Maximum (%)	Maximum (%)	Minimum Width (ft)
10-12	8 ^a	14.5 ^b	2 ^c	1	5	1	1.5 ^d	2	5

^a Constrained minimum widths should only be used for short stretches in constrained right-of-way where every consideration has been taken to narrow roadway street zones.

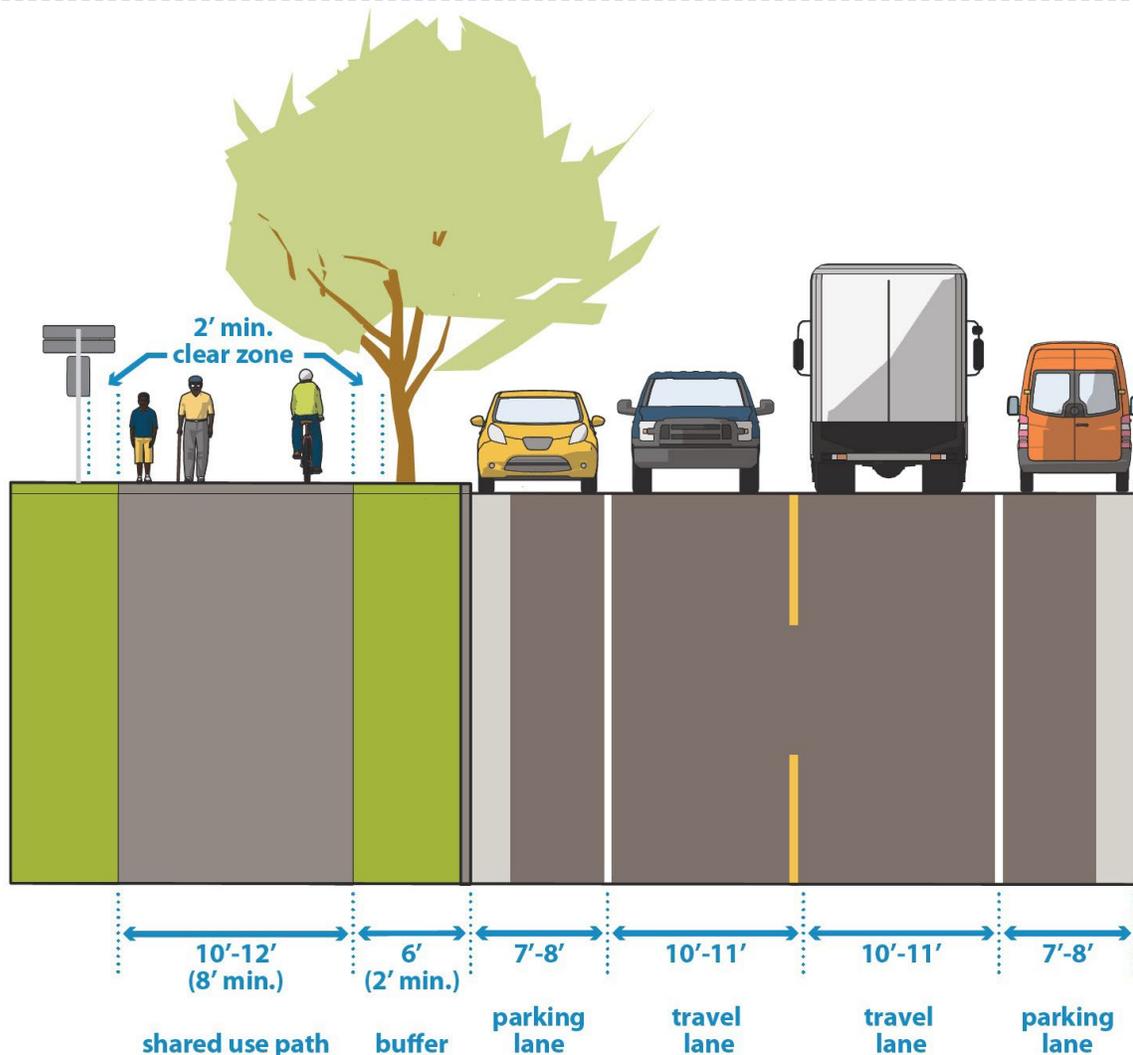
^b With 14.5' or more space, consider separate biking and walking facilities and look to protected bike lane guidance.

^c Less than 2' clearances can be accommodated at locations with stop conditions.

^d Cross slope design maximum of 1.5% to account for construction tolerances; 2% maximum cross slope on implementation.

Figure 3.4G.2:

Shared use path dimensions graphic



Preferred widths shown - see chart for more information

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

A. MnDOT guidance

Please reference [MnDOT's Bicycle Facility Design Manual](#) (pages 5-3 to 5-28) for specific geometric guidance and best practices on sidepath and shared use path design. The following design guidance is intended to supplement the information included in the MnDOT Bicycle Facility Design Manual.

B. Widths

Preferred widths for shared use paths are between 10' and 12'. Ideally path width should be wider in locations where high volumes of bicycle and/or pedestrian traffic is expected, with separate adjacent sidewalk facilities in locations where high non-motorized traffic volumes make pedestrian and bike/micromobility conflicts likely.

C. Materials

Shared use paths should use materials such as asphalt or colored concrete to visually differentiate the space from a conventional sidewalk.

D. Buffer

Shared use paths require a minimum buffer space of 2' from the edge of the path to the roadway, but buffer areas of 6 or more feet are preferred.

1. When buffer area is 3' or less, the buffer area should be paved as it may not be possible to maintain a vegetated buffer/boulevard area.
2. 2' of clearance is required from the edge of the shared use path to any sign or vertical obstruction, except for contiguous installations like fencing or railings that require a 1' minimum clearance from the path.

E. Visibility and safety

Visibility and safety. Since shared use paths are usually designed to accommodate two-way travel and incorporate a buffer or boulevard space between the path and adjacent roadway, it is important to prioritize user safety and visibility at all conflict points with motorized traffic. The MnDOT Bicycle Facility Design Manual recommends the following to increase safety:

- » Reduce conflict points;
- » Reduce motor vehicle speeds at conflict points;
- » Increase the predictability of path and roadway user behavior; and
- » Increase the path separation from the roadway at conflict points.

F. Intersection safety

Examples of treatments to support the MnDOT safety recommendations include:

- » implementing [raised pedestrian and bicycle crossings](#) at intersections;
- » altering intersection geometry and vertical obstructions to improve sight lines;
- » incorporating shared use path geometry such as a "bend out" trail design that supports adequate sightlines and user orientation across an intersection (see [protected intersections guidance](#) for more details);
- » making changes to signal timing to incorporate leading bicycle interval/leading pedestrian interval, or incorporate bike/pedestrian-only signal phases;
- » increasing the size of the buffer/boulevard area between the trail and adjacent roadway; and
- » potentially closing some intersections to eliminate modal conflict points.

G. Intersecting driveways

To maintain a consistent and comfortable user experience, shared use paths should attempt to maintain their elevations and cross slopes across intersecting driveways. Where possible, trail pavement materials should be continued across driveways to eliminate the need for horizontal expansion joints and provide additional visual delineation between the path and driveway surface.

H. ADA requirements and considerations

Shared use paths accommodate pedestrian traffic, and as a result, must maintain ADA-compliance throughout their limits. On mid-block path segments this requires a maximum grade of no more than 5%, a maximum cross-slope of 2% (though a maximum design cross slope of 1.5% is required to accommodate construction tolerances), and a minimum pedestrian access route (PAR) of 4'. At intersections, this includes detectable warnings and ramps at all intersecting streets, with ramp widths designed to match the width of the shared use trail. For additional ADA considerations and details, please reference the [MnDOT Bicycle Facility Design Guide](#) (page 5-26).