

Active transportation

Active transportation refers to bicycling and pedestrian modes, such as walking and using lower-speed pedestrian devices (e.g., wheelchairs, scooters).

WSDOT policy and guidance

- [Design Manual](#) (chapters 1100-1106 [Need, Context & Modal Priority], 1510 [Americans with Disabilities Act], 1515 [Shared Use Paths], 1520 [Roadway Bicycle Facilities] and divisions 10 [Traffic Safety Elements] and 13 [Intersections and Interchanges])
- [Designing for Pedestrians](#) (see Pedestrian Design Guidance for State Highways – Outside Cities)
- [Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices](#) for Streets and Highways
 - [Washington Administrative Code 468-95](#), which modifies and must be used with the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices
 - [Changes and experimentations](#) for the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices
- [Standard Plans](#)
- [Traffic Manual](#) (chapter 2L, and parts 7 and 9)
- [Development Services Manual](#)
- [Action Plan For Implementing Pedestrian Crossing Countermeasures At Uncontrolled Locations](#)
- National Association of City Transportation Officials standards for [Urban Street Design Guide](#)¹ and [Urban Bikeway Design Guide](#) (WSDOT-endorsed)

Other useful agency plans:

- [Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan](#)
- [Corridor Sketch Initiative](#)
- [U.S. Bicycle Route System In Washington](#)

If the project proposes something not discussed in the WSDOT Design Manual, contact the regional assistant state design engineer to discuss appropriate documentation.

¹ Some local jurisdictions have adopted their own standards.

Additional resources

- [A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets, 7th edition \(Green Book\)](#), American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
- [Guide For the Development of Bicycle Facilities, 4th Edition](#), American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
- [Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities, 1st Edition](#); American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
- [Pedsafe Pedestrian Safety Guide and Countermeasure Selection System](#), Federal Highway Administration
- [Bikeway Selection Guide](#), Federal Highway Administration
- [Bicycle and Pedestrian Program Publications](#), Federal Highway Administration
- [Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center](#), U.S. Department of Transportation and University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center

User tips

Eight of the nine Washington counties with permanent pedestrian and bicycle counters reported an increased number of active transportation trips from 2017 to 2018.

Active transportation plays a key role in every trip. Consider the needs of travelers who use active transportation for a part of their trip (e.g., access to a parking space or transit stop), and those who take their entire trip by foot, bicycle, other micro-mobility transportation device or mobility-assistive device.

Washington's five-year rolling average for reported walking and biking fatalities and serious injuries shows an upward trend. In 2018, motor-vehicle drivers killed 124 pedestrians and bicyclists and seriously injured another 520.

Consider the network

Consider the complete walk and bike shed that active travelers are likely to use. Look at where schools, grocery stores, and other services are located relative to where people live. Also consider active traveler access to intermodal connections. It is useful to take the perspective of travelers who don't own motor vehicles.

When changes to a facility reduce utility of the broader active transportation network, consider off-system investments that restore network connectivity and functionality. Where WSDOT projects interrupt an existing trail network or right-of-way provides accommodation for a trail, our agency has specific statutory authorization to plan, accommodate, establish and maintain such facilities (RCW 47.30.030).

Accommodate all users

Everyone has mobility limitations at some point in their life. A well-planned and designed active transportation facility is one that is Americans with Disabilities Act compliant and can accommodate all users door-to-door. This includes people who use a variety of devices such as wheelchairs, scooters, walkers, and bicycles. The WSDOT Design Manual requires compliance with the Federal Highway Administration's Title II of the Americans with Disability Act, which states that all new construction or alternation of existing transportation facilities must be designed and constructed to be accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities.

Speed and separation

Keep design speeds at a minimum where the road network is shared with bicyclists, pedestrians, and people with mobility limitations.

Where motorist speeds and traffic volumes are high and cannot be lowered, design facilities that create greater distance between motorists and people walking and bicycling. Examples include:

- Buffered sidewalks and bike lanes
- Protected bike lanes
- Shared use paths

Where traffic volumes are low, land-use context is changing, and/or near facilities that serve vulnerable users, consider traffic-calming strategies to lower vehicle speeds. Examples include:

- road diets that reduce vehicle travel lane widths or repurpose one or more vehicle travel lanes
- speed tables
- curb extensions
- chicanes
- lane narrowing to lower speeds

When active transportation users must use the shoulder, provide a wide and continuous shoulder with ample lighting.

Crossings

In Washington, more pedestrians are struck and killed by drivers while attempting to cross the road than any other pedestrian movement. Consider the availability of crossings with appropriate controls for the volume and speed of motor vehicle traffic; distance between crossings and their proximity to transit stops; line of sight for drivers approaching a crossing or stop and the possible need to add signage or countermeasures; and other factors addressed in the Action Plan For Implementing Pedestrian Crossing Countermeasures At Uncontrolled Locations. That plan speaks to mid-block crossings but the principles can be applied to other locations.

Crossings on higher speed facilities should increase vulnerable user conspicuity and protection. Examples include pedestrian scaled lighting, rectangular rapid flashing beacons, crossing islands, raised crossings and protected intersections. Endeavor to provide reasonable crossing opportunities. Where intersections are not frequent enough to allow easy access to destinations and modal connections, consider mid-block crossings. Midblock crossings often require additional enhancements. Use crossing enhancement treatments based on the [WSDOT Pedestrian Crossing Enhancement Guidance](#).

Connectivity

Try to create a connected and continuous network for active transportation users. Fill gaps in the active transportation network by:

- Including active transportation facilities in your design.
- Collaborating with local jurisdictions to connect state-owned active transportation facilities with local active transportation facilities.

- Collaborating with local jurisdictions to use a combination of state and local active transportation facilities to create a continuous network.

Design active transportation routes that connect to activity centers and transit facilities.

Demand

Design active transportation facilities to accommodate potential future demand, which may not correlate with existing active transportation use. This occurs particularly where active transportation facilities are substandard or absent.

When estimating future demand, consider:

- Existing density and proximity of origins and destinations within walking (approximately 1 mile) or bicycling (approximately 3 miles) distances of each other.
- Future land-use context and density.
- Proximity to origins, destinations, and transit that serve people (e.g., people with low incomes, children, seniors, and people with disabilities) who use active transportation modes as their primary form of transportation.

Where to get help

Your region's pedestrian and bicycle subject matter expert is a resource for active transportation project features and considerations.

*Your input helps to make these planning and design tips a relevant resource!
For more information, contact Kate Severson, seversk@wsdot.wa.gov or (360) 709-8003.*

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