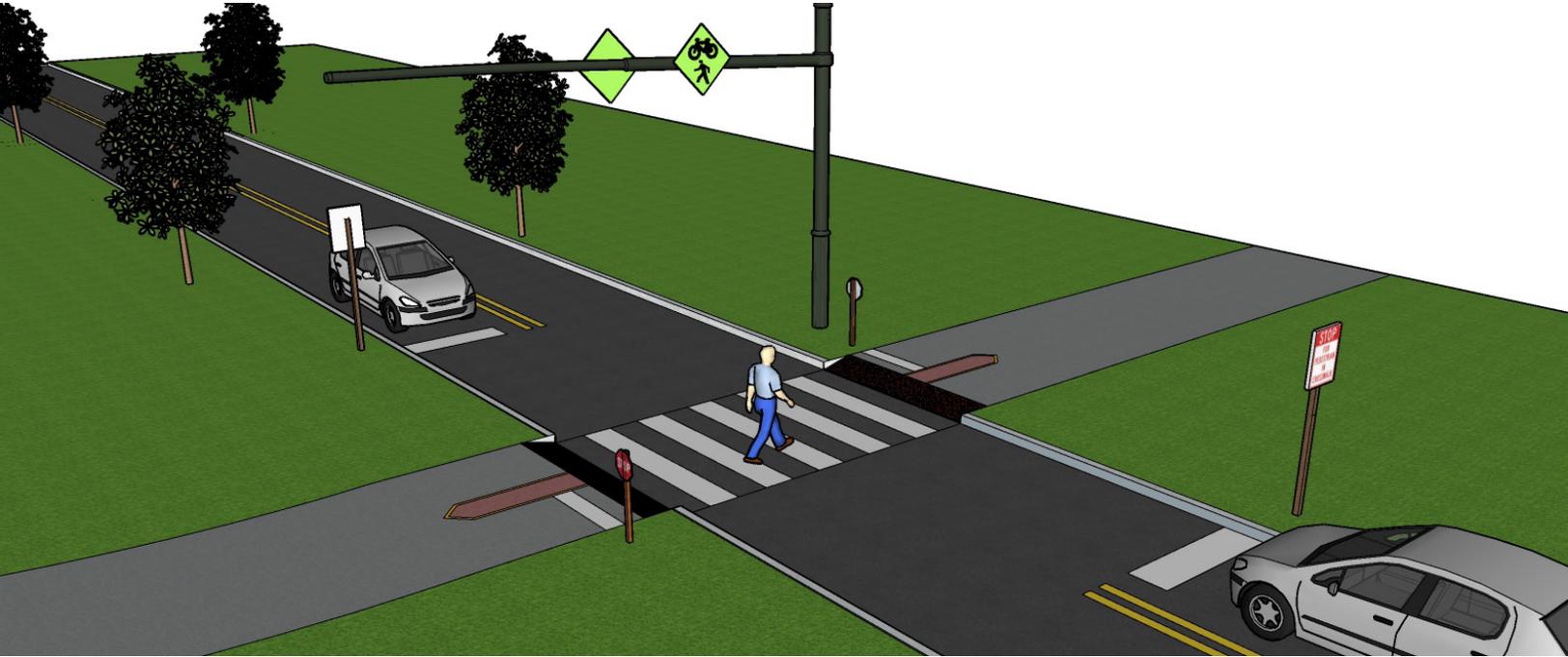


# Shared Use Path



## DESCRIPTION

- Shared use paths are facilities that are meant solely for pedestrians and non-motorized vehicles such as bicycles and e-bicycles. Some shared use paths allow equestrian users. Motorized vehicles are typically prohibited (except for maintenance vehicles).
- Shared use paths are intended for use by bicyclists and pedestrians of all abilities, and therefore are typically relatively level and use a relatively smooth surface such as asphalt or fine aggregate.
- Shared use paths are physically separated from motor vehicle traffic.
- Shared use paths may or may not be aligned parallel to the highway, and if they are parallel to the highway may be in or out of the highway right-of-way.
- Shared use paths are designed for two-way travel.
- Shared use paths serve as an extension of the multimodal network for pedestrians and bicyclists.

## CONTEXT

- Shared use paths often parallel other geographic features such as waterways, former or active rail roads, utility corridors, or highways.
- Shared use paths serve as an extension to sidewalks and on-street bicycle facilities.
- Shared use paths are not the same as trails, which have different design guidelines. VDOT uses the word "trails" to refer to natural surface paths.
- Shared use paths often attract recreational off-roadway cycling. Shared use paths in urban areas can also become an important commuter option, with some Virginia shared use paths serving thousands of commuters a day.

## BENEFITS

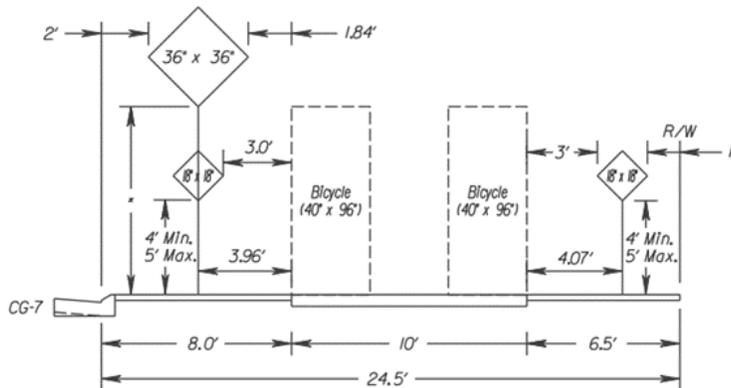
- ✓ Improved safety
- ✓ Improved comfort
- ✓ Aesthetics
- ✓ Alternative mode choice
- ✓ Improved public health



Arlington, VA

## POLICY AND DESIGN GUIDANCE

- Shared use paths require careful design to ensure safe crossings and interactions between the different nonmotorized users.
- Shared use paths are typically at least 10 feet wide with a 2-foot shoulder (maximum 6:1 slope) and a minimum 3-foot clearance between edge of path to lateral obstructions. Some older shared use paths are only 8 feet wide, but for new shared used paths, widths less than 10 feet should be avoided except where constraints preclude a wider width.
- When the shared use path is adjacent to a water feature or a slope greater than or equal to 3:1, a 5-foot gap is required between the edge of path and the hazard. If the distance is less than 5 feet, a physical barrier is required.
- Shared use paths typically have a maximum 5% grade and a 2% cross slope.
- Shared use paths have a typical design speed, on average, of 18 mph. In areas with a downgrade greater than 6 percent, a design speed of 30 mph may be used.
- Shared use paths vary in cost depending on the materials used, right-of-way purchased, and other factors. Average construction costs for paved shared use paths can range from \$250,000 to \$5,000,000 per mile depending on terrain, structures (e.g., bridges, sound barriers, etc.), environmental impact mitigation, number and type of road crossings, amenities, and other design criteria. Unpaved shared use paths can be constructed for as little as \$30,000 per mile.



Typical shared use path with a roadway sign and trail sign.

## RESOURCES

Treatment applications and general design guidance:

[VDOT Complete Streets](#)

[FHWA](#)

[VDOT Network for Success Local Programs Workshop](#)

[MUTCD](#)

[Road Design Manual](#)

[BIKE SAFE](#)

[Virginia Supplement to the MUTCD](#)

General guidance:

[Share VA Roads](#)

[FHWA Shared-Use Paths](#)

[AASHTO Bicycle Facilities](#)

[FHWA Small Town and Rural Multimodal Networks](#)

[AASHTO Geometric Design](#)

[AASHTO Pedestrian Facilities](#)

[NACTO](#)

Guidelines are provided for informational purposes only. For detailed design guidance, please refer directly to design manuals and standards.

For more information on **Shared Use Paths** and other bicycle and pedestrian treatments, visit [virginiadot.org/programs/bikeped/bicycle\\_and\\_pedestrian\\_treatments.asp](http://virginiadot.org/programs/bikeped/bicycle_and_pedestrian_treatments.asp)

