

Side Path



DESCRIPTION

- Side paths are shared use paths that run parallel and adjacent to a roadway.
- Side paths separate non-motorized users from the roadway by a horizontal buffer or a barrier.
- Side paths are for bicyclists and pedestrians and serve as an extension of the bike and pedestrian network. They provide opportunities for bicyclists and pedestrians to travel separated from motor vehicles.

CONTEXT

- Side paths can be installed in built up areas and rural areas.
- Side paths require a wide roadside to provide separation from the roadway.
- Side paths require a minimum of 5 feet of separation from the roadway pavement, which requires additional right of way width or a barrier in constrained areas.

BENEFITS

- ✓ **Improved safety**
- ✓ **More user options**
- ✓ **Increased connectivity**



Virginia Capital Trail

POLICY AND DESIGN GUIDANCE

- Side paths are typically at least 10 feet wide; however, a 12-foot width is preferred.
- Side paths should be a minimum of 8 feet wide in constrained areas with low pedestrian volumes.
- When the distance between the roadway pavement edge and the side path is less than 5 feet, a physical barrier is required.
- To reduce the risk of collisions, the AASHTO 2012 Bike Guide recommends:
 - Reducing the number of driveways.
 - Designing intersections to reduce speeds.
 - Maintaining sight distance for motorists and non-motorists.
- Side paths are required to be accessible by all users, including those that may be visually impaired.

RESOURCES

Treatment applications and general design guidance:

[AASHTO](#)

[Virginia Supplement to the MUTCD](#)

[VDOT Complete Streets](#)

[VDOT Road Design Manual](#)

General guidance:

[Share VA Roads](#)

[FHWA](#)

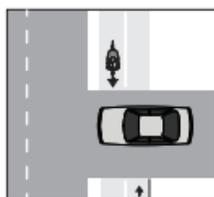
Rural applications:

[Small Town and Rural Design Guide](#)

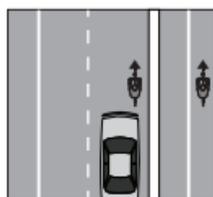
Guidelines are provided for informational purposes only. For detailed design guidance, please refer directly to design manuals and standards.



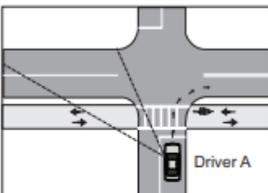
Barriers, while needed in tight spaces, can narrow both roadway and path, and create hazards.



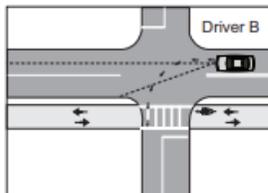
Stopped motor vehicles on side streets or driveways may block the path.



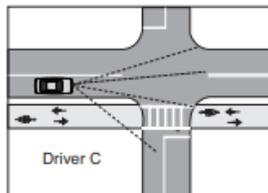
Some bicyclists may find the road cleaner, safer, and more convenient. Motorists may believe bicyclists should use a sidepath.



Right turning Driver A is looking for traffic on the left. A contraflow bicyclist is not in the driver's main field of vision.



Left turning Driver B is looking for traffic ahead. A contraflow bicyclist is not in the driver's main field of vision.



Right turning Driver C is looking for left turning traffic on the main road and traffic on the minor road. A bicyclist riding with traffic is not in the driver's main field of vision.