

Bicycle and Pedestrian Terminology

A GUIDE TO ACTIVE
TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE



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The following definitions and terminology are adapted from official guidance documents, such as the American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities; the 2009 AASHTO Guide for the Planning, Design, and Operation of Pedestrian Facilities; the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Bicycle Design Guide; and the U.S. Access Board Publication-Accessible Public Rights-of-Way Planning and Design for Alterations.

Inclusion of these terms in this document does not constitute an endorsement of the designs, facilities or treatments.





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Accessible Pedestrian Signal (APS)

Devices that communicate information about the Walk and Don't Walk intervals at signalized intersections in non-visual formats to pedestrians who are blind or have low vision.

Accessible Route

A continuous, unobstructed path connecting all accessible elements and spaces in a building, facility or site, including designated portions of a public right of way.

Activity Center

A public or private facility that acts as a trip generator.

Active Transportation

Human-powered transportation that engages people in physical activity while they travel. There are two primary classes of active transportation: walking and bicycling. The following are common characteristics of these modes of travel: human scale, vulnerable road users, primarily nonmotorized, and perform better via their own infrastructure networks. This term includes people who use assistive devices to aid their mobility.

Advance Yield/Stop Lines

A pavement marking placed 20 to 50 feet prior to the crosswalk intended to improve visibility of pedestrians to motorists. It can help reduce the likelihood of a multiple-threat crash at an unsignalized mid-block crossing, as the line encourages drivers to stop or yield back far enough so a pedestrian can see if a second motor vehicle is approaching in the far lane and be able to take evasive action. It should be supplemented with appropriate signs per the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.

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Advisory Bike Lane

Continuously dashed edge lane line on narrow, low-volume streets without centerlines, which allow motorists to temporarily enter the bicycle lane when it is safe to do so to provide oncoming traffic sufficient space to pass.

Advisory Shoulders

See Advisory Bike Lane.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

Requirements for ensuring equal opportunity for persons with disabilities in employment, state and local government services, public accommodations, commercial facilities, transportation, and accessibility.



Barriers to Travel

Barriers usually refer to natural (hills, lakes, rivers) or man-made (freeways, bridges without sidewalks) obstacles to through-traffic or access.

Bicycle

A pedal-powered vehicle upon which the human operator sits. The term “bicycle” can include two- or three-wheeled human-powered vehicles. The Michigan Vehicle Code defines a bicycle as: “a device propelled by human power upon which a person may ride, having either 2 or 3 wheels in a tandem or tricycle arrangement, all of which are over 14 inches in diameter.” MCL257.4

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Bicycle Boulevard

A segment of street, or series of contiguous street segments, that has been modified to accommodate through-bicycle traffic and minimize through-motor vehicle traffic. Another common term for a bicycle boulevard is a Neighborhood Greenway or slow street.



Bicycle (Bike) Box

A designated area on the approach to a signalized intersection, between a recessed motorist stop line and the crosswalk or intersection, intended to provide bicyclists a visible place to wait in front of stopped motorists during the red signal phase for the purpose of providing a head start at the onset of the green phase. The Bike Box is currently not included in the Michigan Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MMUTCD); however, MDOT has received approval from the Federal Highway Administration to use the device statewide. Local agencies should notify MDOT if they use this device.



Bicycle Corral

A means of providing short-term bicycle parking by installing bicycle racks in the traditional auto on-street parking space, along the curb. (Source Association for Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals – Bike Parking Guidelines 2010.)



Bicycle Facilities

A general term denoting provisions to accommodate or encourage bicycling, including parking and storage facilities.

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Bicycle-Friendly

A roadway not designated by directional and informational markers, striping, signs, or pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists, but containing appropriate bicycle-friendly design standards, such as bicycle-safe drain grates.



Bicycle Lane or Bike Lane

A portion of roadway that has been designated for preferential or exclusive use by bicyclists with pavement markings and signs, if used. It is intended for one-way travel, usually in the same direction as the adjacent traffic lane, unless designed as a counterflow lane.



Bicycle Network

A system of bikeways (see bikeway definition) designated by the jurisdiction having authority, either with a unique route designation or with Bike Route signs, along which bicycle guide signs may provide directional and distance information. Signs that provide directional, distance, and destination information for bicyclists do not necessarily establish a bike network.



Bicycle Parking

A location to secure a bicycle for either short or long durations.

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Source: FHWA/PedBikeImages

Bicycle Signal

An electronically operated traffic control device used to provide guidance, right-of-way control, and improve safety and operational movements involving bicycle facilities and bicycle movements through an intersection.



Source: Saris

Bicycle Wheel Channel/Ramp

A smooth channel or ramp located along a stairway to facilitate walking a bicycle up or down the stairs. Also known as a Runnel.

Bike Path

A non-descriptive general term referring to a bicycle-only facility but with no standardized definition. Use of the term should generally be avoided as it may refer to a range of facilities.



Bike Route

A segment of road designated by a jurisdiction having authority with appropriate directional and informational markers but often without striping, signs or pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists.

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Bikeway

A generic term for any road, street, path, or way in which some manner is specifically designated for bicycle travel, regardless of whether such facilities are designated for the exclusive use of bicycles or are to be shared with other transportation modes.



Bollards

Wood or metal posts used to restrict access of motor vehicles, often times on shared-use paths. Use of bollards is strongly discouraged due to the risk they pose to path users in the event of a collision.



Buffer

Horizontal space that separates two modes of travel.



Buffered Bike Lane

A bicycle lane accompanied by a designated buffer space, separating the bicycle lane from the adjacent travel lane.

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Chicane

Fixed objects projecting into the travel lane, such as curbing or fencing, requiring the user to weave a tight course between them, resulting in traffic calming.

Complete Streets

As defined by Michigan law, roadways planned, designed, and built to provide appropriate access to all legal users in a manner that promotes safe and efficient movement of people and goods whether by car, truck, transit, assistive device, foot, or bicycle. MCL 247.660p



Source: FHWA/PedBikeImages

Countdown Pedestrian Signal

A pedestrian signal head with an added display showing a countdown timer displaying the time remaining (in seconds) individuals have to cross a roadway.



Counterflow Bicycle Lane

A bicycle lane that allows bicyclists to travel the opposite direction of motor vehicle traffic on a one-way street. Also known as Contra-Flow Bicycle Lane.

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Crash or Collision

A crash or collision reflect a mistake or combination of mistakes and are not “accidents.” In terms of the bicyclist, collisions may involve the ground, a fixed object (e.g., a tree or bollard), a pedestrian, another cyclist, or a parked or moving motor vehicle. They usually involve a mistake(s) on the part of users.



Crosswalk

That part of a roadway at an intersection that is included within the extensions of the lateral lines of the sidewalks on opposite sides of the roadway, measured from the curb line, or in the absence of curbs from the edges of the roadway. Also, any portion of a roadway at an intersection or elsewhere that is distinctly indicated for pedestrian crossing by lines or other markings on the surface.



Curb Extension

A section of sidewalk or a landscaped area extending into the roadway at an intersection or mid-block crossing that reduces the crossing distance for pedestrians and may help reduce traffic speeds. Also known as a bulb out, bump out, or neckdown. Curb extensions that occur mid-block are sometimes referred to as pinch points or chokers.

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Curb Ramp

A combined ramp and landing to accomplish a change in level at a curb. This element provides street and sidewalk access to pedestrians using wheelchairs, strollers or other devices with wheels.

Cycle Track

See Separated Bike Lane.



Detectable Warning

Standardized surface feature built in, or applied to, walking surfaces or other elements to warn pedestrians with vision impairments of hazards on a sidewalk and or loading platform, such as the curb line or drop-off. Detectable warnings are also called truncated domes.



Directional Indicator

Tactile surfaces comprised of raised bars detectable underfoot or with a white cane typically deployed parallel to the pedestrian path of travel to help pedestrians follow an accessible route or navigate an open space.

Source: Dongho Change, Seattle, WA

Edge Line Markings

White or yellow pavement marking lines that delineate the right or left edge(s) of a traveled way. Also commonly called a fog line.

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E-Bike

A device upon which an individual may ride that is equipped with all the following: (1) A seat or saddle for use by the rider, (2) Fully operable pedals for human propulsion, and (3) An electric motor of not greater than 750 watts. In Michigan, state statute defines three classes of e-bikes. Michigan statute MCL 257.662a further defines the three classes of e-bike and the individual rights and responsibilities of e-bike riders.



Flexible Delineator

A vertical post typically made of plastic or another material that is attached to a solid surface and gives when a force is applied.

Footpath

An unpaved travel way formed naturally by pedestrian use, often due to the lack of pedestrian facilities. Also known as “goat trails” or “desire lines.”



Grade-Separated Crossing

A facility, such as an overpass, underpass, skywalk, or tunnel, that allows pedestrians and motor vehicles to cross each other at different levels.

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Green Colored Pavement Markings

Markings used to highlight bicycle lanes as they traverse intersections or driveways, in bike boxes and two-stage turn boxes, or in other areas where bicyclists and motor vehicle movements could conflict.

High-Intensity Activated CrossWALK (HAWK)

See Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB).

Highway

A general term denoting a public way for purposes of vehicular travel, including the entire area within the right of way.

Improved/Paved

A surface enhanced with concrete or asphalt, or covered with another firm, stable, and slip-resistant material such as crushed limestone aggregate or similar material.

Independent Right of Way

A general term denoting right of way for the placement of infrastructure outside the boundaries of a conventional highway right of way.



Source: Insurance Institute for Highway Safety

Intersection Hardening

An intersection modification that forces drivers to slow down to make their turn. These changes may include reducing the radii of street corners or placing physical barriers close to the intersection in a way that limits potential turning angles.

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Logical Terminus

The end point of a transportation facility such as a path or bike lane that was determined using sound reasoning. Selected end points should ensure safe and clear transitions to continue a path of travel, or access to a destination (i.e., trailhead, etc.).

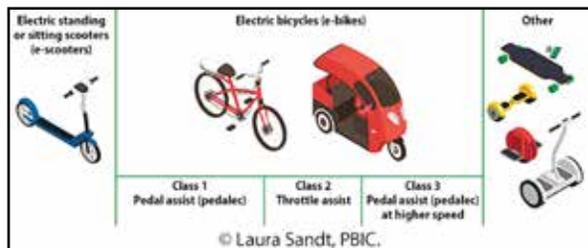
Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI)

A traffic signal timing adjustment whereby pedestrians receive a “Walk” signal several seconds before vehicles receive a green light. This allows the pedestrian to establish their presence in the crosswalk before vehicles turn the corner and enter the crosswalk, encouraging vehicles to yield to the pedestrian.



Median Island

An island in the center of a road that physically separates the directional flow of traffic that provides pedestrians with a place of refuge, reducing the crossing distance and simplifies a crossing by creating two short crossings. Also known as pedestrian refuge islands.



Examples of powered micromobility devices and their classifications according to PBIC.

Micro-Mobility

Small, low-speed human or electric powered transportation devices including but not limited to bicycles, scooters or other small, lightweight wheeled conveyances.

Pathway

A non-descriptive non-standardized term referring to some type of facility that could be used for nonmotorized purposes. Use of the term should generally be avoided as it may refer to a range of facilities and user types.

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Pavement Markings

Painted or applied line(s) or legend placed on any travel surface for regulating, guiding or warning traffic.

Paved

See Improved/Paved.



Pedestrian

A person afoot, in a wheelchair, on skates, or on a skateboard.

Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon (PHB)

The pedestrian hybrid beacon (also known as the High-Intensity Activated crossWALK, or HAWK) is a pedestrian-activated device used to warn and control traffic at a non-signalized location to assist pedestrians in crossing at a marked crosswalk. The beacon head consists of two red lenses above a single yellow lens. The beacon head is “dark” until the pedestrian desires to cross the street and the device is activated; the device is activated by pushing a button.



Pedestrian Signal

An electronic traffic control device that, when activated, provides time for the pedestrian to enter the street and finish crossing the street at a pre-determined rate calculated in feet of travel per second.

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Protected Bike Lane

See Separated Bike Lane.



Source: Virginia Department of Transportation

Protected Intersection

A design where bicyclists do not merge in with car traffic at any point. The bicycle lane is extended around the intersection, protected at each corner by a corner island that also serves to tighten the turn radius. Bicyclists who want to cross the street pull up past the crosswalk into a bike queue area that, combined with signal phasing, gives them a head start when the light turns green. The curb extensions narrow the roadway so that both bicyclists and pedestrians have a shorter crossing distance and are more visible to drivers, especially those preparing to make a turn.



Source: FHWA/PedBikeImages

Raised Crosswalk

A crosswalk that is raised above the surface of the roadway. Raised crosswalks enhance the visibility of the crosswalk users and encourage slower traffic. Signs and pavement markings are often included.



Rail Trail

A shared-use path, either paved or unpaved, built within the right of way of a former railroad.

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Rail-with-Trail

A shared-use path, either paved or unpaved, built within the right of way of an active railroad.

Restripe

Adjustment in the placement of existing travel lane lines to reallocate roadway space, often to create space for other uses such as bicycle lanes or buffers between motor vehicle lanes and other users. This adjustment does not remove or add any travel lanes for motor vehicles.



Right of Way

A general term denoting land, property or interest therein, usually in a strip, acquired for or devoted to transportation purposes.

Right of Way (Assignment)

The right of a driver, bicyclist or pedestrian to proceed in a lawful manner in preference to another driver, bicyclist or pedestrian.



Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB)

A user-actuated amber LED beacon that supplements warning signs at non-signalized intersections or mid-block crosswalks. They are activated by pedestrians manually by a push button or passively by a pedestrian detection system. RRFBs use an irregular flash pattern. An RRFB is a warning device used to inform motor vehicle drivers of a pedestrian's intent to cross when activated.

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Roadway

The Michigan Vehicle Code defines a roadway as: “that portion of a highway improved, designed, or ordinarily used for vehicular travel. In the event a highway includes 2 or more separate roadways, the term ‘roadway,’ as used herein, shall refer to any such roadway separately, but not to all such roadways collectively.” MCL 257.55

Request to Experiment

A formal process whereby road agencies can request to use pavement markings, signs or traffic signals not currently in the most recent edition of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) on a limited term and application basis in exchange for collecting data on the before and after conditions relevant to the non-standard device or application.

Road Diet

The process of reconfiguring the lanes (number of lanes) of a road, often resulting in the creation of space for bicycle lanes, paved shoulders, refuge islands, or other facilities.



Source: MLIVE; Press Photo/Hollyn

Roundabout

Circular intersections that direct traffic counter-clockwise around a center island. Roundabouts offer a solution to the traditional intersection problems of delays, capacity and safety. Since everyone is traveling in the same direction and at lower speed, the severity of crashes is often reduced. Left-turn, right-angle and head-on crashes are virtually eliminated. Roundabouts make efficient use of space and increase the capacity of an intersection.

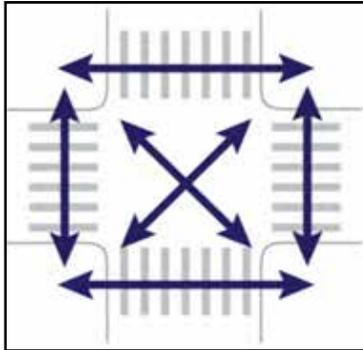


Rumble Strips

A textured or grooved pavement treatment designed to create noise and vibration to alert motorists of a need to change their path or speed. Longitudinal rumble strips are sometimes used on or along shoulders or center lines of highways to alert motorists who stray from the appropriate traveled way. Transverse rumble strips are placed on the roadway surface in the travel lane, perpendicular to the direction of travel.

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Source: City of New York

Scramble Crosswalk

An intersection where all vehicles stop simultaneously, allowing sidewalk users to cross the street in all directions at the same time, including diagonally. Also known as a Barnes Dance.



Separated Bike Lane

A bicycle facility separated from other modes of travel by a vertical element such as on-street parking, bollards/delineators, curbing, or grade-separation. Separated bike lanes can be one direction or bi-directional.

Shared Lane

A lane of a traveled way open to both bicycle and motor vehicle travel.

Narrow Lane

A travel lane less than 14 feet wide, which therefore does not allow bicyclists and motorists to travel side-by-side within the same traffic lane and maintain a safe separation distance.

Wide Curb Lane

A travel lane at least 14 feet wide, adjacent to a curb, which allows bicyclists and motorists to travel side-by-side within the same traffic lane.

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Shared Lane Marking (SLM or “Sharrow”)

A pavement marking symbol that assists bicyclists with lateral positioning in lanes too narrow for a motor vehicle and a bicycle to travel side-by-side within the same traffic lane.

Shared Road

A roadway where motor vehicles and bicycles use the same operating space.



Shared-Use Pathway

A bikeway physically separated from motor vehicle traffic by an open space or barrier, either within the highway right of way or an independent right of way. Shared-use paths also may be used by pedestrians, skaters, wheelchair users, joggers, and other nonmotorized users. Most shared-use paths are designed for two-way travel. Also known as Multi-use Pathways.



Shoulder

The portion of the roadway contiguous with the traveled way that accommodates stopped vehicles, emergency use, and lateral support of sub-base, base, and surface courses. Shoulders, where paved, are often used by bicyclists.



Shoulder Bicycle Lane

The portion of the roadway contiguous with the traveled way that is wide enough or has potential to accommodate stopped vehicles, emergency use, and lateral support of sub-base, base, and surface courses but is marked as a bicycle lane and meets relevant design criteria for bicycle lanes and paved shoulders.

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Sidepath

A shared-use path located immediately adjacent and parallel to a roadway.



Sidewalk

That portion of a street or highway right of way, beyond the curb or edge of roadway pavement, which is intended for use by pedestrians.

Sight Distance

A measurement of the user's visibility, unobstructed by objects, along the normal travel path to the furthest point of the roadway surface.



Source: FHWA/PedBikeImages

Speed Bump

A small sharply raised section of road that encourages reduction in vehicle speeds by causing discomfort when driven over at excessive speeds.

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Speed Hump/Table

A large rounded and raised section of road that encourages reduction in vehicle speeds by causing discomfort when driven over at excessive speeds.

Traffic Calming

A general term for measures designed to reduce driver speeds typically through changes in roadway design and geometrics. These changes can include but are not limited to roundabouts or chicanes, speed humps or tables, or road diets.



Trail

Non-descriptive general term referring to off-roadway facilities but with no standardized definition. Often used interchangeably with “pathway” or “path,” the term “trail” should generally be avoided as it may refer to a range of facilities, including a coarse, unpaved hiking/biking route, a paved shared-use facility or a facility intended to serve people on horseback.

Trailhead

The primary access point to a shared-use path. It may have parking and other amenities at the terminus.

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Traveled Way

The portion of the roadway intended for the movement of vehicles, exclusive of shoulders and any bike lane immediately inside of the shoulder.

Truncated Domes

See Detectable Warning.



Source: City of Vancouver, Washington

Two-Stage Turn

The act of a bicyclist turning left in two stages: First, by traveling straight through the intersection to a two-stage turn bike box. Second, once in the box, turn 90 degrees (generally to one's left) and proceed through the intersection upon receiving a green traffic signal.



Source: FHWA/PedBikeImages

Two-Stage Turn Box

A designated area at an intersection, outside the path of moving traffic, that provides bicyclists a place to wait prior to making a two-stage turn.

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Unimproved/Unpaved

A surface not enhanced with concrete or asphalt, nor covered with another firm, stable, and slip-resistant material such as crushed limestone aggregate or similar material.



U.S. Bicycle Route

An interconnected network of roads and/or paved shared-use pathways that are officially designated by the American Association of State and Highway Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and connect one state with another, a state with an international border or two U.S. Bicycle Routes. In Michigan, U.S. Bicycle Routes are intended for long-distance touring bicyclists who are comfortable riding with traffic. U.S. Bicycle Routes are mapped and may or may not be signed.

Walkability/Bikeability

The ability to easily and safely walk, bike and roll to and through a location while having reasonable access to desired destinations.

Wayfinding

The process by which people navigate their environment, typically through signs, maps, or virtual tools.



For More Information

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