

## **1. Introduction**

Bicycling and walking are fundamental travel modes and integral components of an efficient transportation network. Appropriate bicycle and pedestrian accommodations provide the public, including the disabled community, with access to the transportation network; connectivity with other modes of transportation; and independent mobility regardless of age, physical constraints, or income. Effective bicycle and pedestrian accommodations enhance the quality of life and health, strengthen communities, increase safety for all highway users, reduce congestion, and can benefit the environment. Bicycling and walking are successfully accommodated when travel by these modes is efficient, safe, and comfortable for the public. A strategic approach will consistently incorporate the consideration and provision of bicycling and walking accommodations into the decision-making process for Virginia's transportation network.

## **2. Purpose**

This policy provides the framework through which the Virginia Department of Transportation will accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians, including pedestrians with disabilities, along with motorized transportation modes in the planning, funding, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of Virginia's transportation network to achieve a safe, effective, and balanced multimodal transportation system.

For the purposes of this policy, an accommodation is defined as any facility, design feature, operational change, or maintenance activity that improves the environment in which bicyclists and pedestrians travel. Examples of such accommodations include the provision of bike lanes, sidewalks, and signs; the installation of curb extensions for traffic calming; and the addition of paved shoulders.

## **3. Project Development**

The Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) will initiate all highway construction projects with the presumption that the projects shall accommodate bicycling and walking. Factors that support the need to provide bicycle and pedestrian accommodations include, but are not limited to, the following:

- project is identified in an adopted transportation or related plan
- project accommodates existing and future bicycle and pedestrian use
- project improves or maintains safety for all users
- project provides a connection to public transportation services and facilities
- project serves areas or population groups with limited transportation options
- project provides a connection to bicycling and walking trip generators such as employment, education, retail, recreation, and residential centers and public facilities
- project is identified in a Safe Routes to School program or provides a connection to a school
- project provides a regional connection or is of regional or state significance
- project provides a link to other bicycle and pedestrian accommodations

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- project provides a connection to traverse natural or man-made barriers
- project provides a tourism or economic development opportunity

Project development for bicycle and pedestrian accommodations will follow VDOT's project programming and scheduling process and concurrent engineering process. VDOT will encourage the participation of localities in concurrent engineering activities that guide the project development.

### **3.1 Accommodations Built as Independent Construction Projects**

Bicycle and pedestrian accommodations can be developed through projects that are independent of highway construction, either within the highway right-of-way or on an independent right-of-way. Independent construction projects can be utilized to retrofit accommodations along existing roadways, improve existing accommodations to better serve users, and install facilities to provide continuity and accessibility within the bicycle and pedestrian network. These projects will follow the same procedures as those for other construction projects for planning, funding, design, and construction. Localities and metropolitan planning organizations will be instrumental in identifying and prioritizing these independent construction projects.

### **3.2 Access-Controlled Corridors**

Access-controlled corridors can create barriers to bicycle and pedestrian travel. Bicycling and walking may be accommodated within or adjacent to access-controlled corridors through the provision of facilities on parallel roadways or physically separated parallel facilities within the right-of-way. Crossings of such corridors must be provided to establish or maintain connectivity of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

### **3.3 Additional Improvement Opportunities**

Bicycle and pedestrian accommodations will be considered in other types of projects. Non-construction activities can be used to improve accommodations for bicycling and walking. In addition, any project that affects or could affect the usability of an existing bicycle or pedestrian accommodation within the highway system must be consistent with state and federal laws.

#### **3.3.1 Operation and Maintenance Activities**

Bicycling and walking should be considered in operational improvements, including hazard elimination projects and signal installation. Independent operational improvements for bicycling and walking, such as the installation of pedestrian signals, should be coordinated with local transportation and safety offices. The maintenance program will consider bicycling and walking so that completed activities will not hinder the movement of those choosing to use these travel modes. The maintenance program may produce facility changes that will enhance the environment for bicycling and walking, such as the addition of paved shoulders.

#### **3.3.2 Long Distance Bicycle Routes**

Long distance bicycle routes facilitate travel for bicyclists through the use of shared lanes, bike lanes, and shared use paths, as well as signage. All projects along a long distance route meeting the criteria for an American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials

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(AASHTO) or *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices* (MUTCD) approved numbered bicycle route system should provide the necessary design features to facilitate bicycle travel. Independent construction projects and other activities can be utilized to make improvements for existing numbered bicycle routes. Consideration should be given to facilitating the development of other types of long distance routes.

### 3.3.3 Tourism and Economic Development

Bicycling and walking accommodations can serve as unique transportation links between historic, cultural, scenic, and recreational sites, providing support to tourism activities and resulting economic development. Projects along existing or planned tourism and recreation corridors should include bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. In addition, the development of independent projects to serve this type of tourism and economic development function should be considered and coordinated with economic development organizations at local, regional, and state levels, as well as with other related agencies. Projects must also address the need to provide safety and connectivity for existing and planned recreational trails, such as the Appalachian Trail, that intersect with the state's highway system.

## 3.4 Exceptions to the Provision of Accommodations

Bicycle and pedestrian accommodations should be provided except where one or more of the following conditions exist:

- scarcity of population, travel, and attractors, both existing and future, indicate an absence of need for such accommodations
- environmental or social impacts outweigh the need for these accommodations
- safety would be compromised
- total cost of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations to the appropriate system (i.e., interstate, primary, secondary, or urban system) would be excessively disproportionate to the need for the facility
- purpose and scope of the specific project do not facilitate the provision of such accommodations (e.g., projects for the Rural Rustic Road Program)
- bicycle and pedestrian travel is prohibited by state or federal laws

## 3.5 Decision Process

The project manager and local representatives will, based on the factors listed previously in this section, develop a recommendation on how and whether to accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians in a construction project prior to the public hearing. The district administrator should confirm this recommendation prior to the public hearing. Public involvement comments will be reviewed and incorporated into project development prior to the preparation of the design approval recommendation. When a locality is not in agreement with VDOT's position on how bicyclists and pedestrians will or will not be accommodated in a construction project, the locality can introduce a formal appeal by means of a resolution adopted by the local governing body. The resolution must be submitted to the district administrator to be reviewed and considered prior to the submission of the design approval recommendation to the chief engineer for program development. Local resolutions must be forwarded to the chief engineer for program development for consideration during the project design approval or to the Commonwealth

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Transportation Board for consideration during location and design approval, if needed for a project. The resolution and supporting information related to the recommendation must be included in the project documentation.

The decisions made by VDOT and localities for the provision of bicycle and pedestrian travel must be consistent with state and federal laws regarding accommodations and access for bicycling and walking.

#### **4. Discipline Participation in Project Development**

VDOT will provide the leadership to implement this policy. Those involved in the planning, funding, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of the state's highways are responsible for effecting the guidance set forth in this policy. VDOT recognizes the need for interdisciplinary coordination to efficiently develop, operate, and maintain bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

Procedures, guidelines, and best practices will be developed or revised to implement the provisions set forth in this policy. For example, objective criteria will be prepared to guide decisions on the restriction of bicycle and pedestrian use of access-controlled facilities. VDOT will work with localities, regional planning agencies, advisory committees, and other stakeholders to facilitate implementation and will offer training or other resource tools on planning, designing, operating, and maintaining bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

##### **4.1 Planning**

VDOT will promote the inclusion of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in transportation planning activities at local, regional, and statewide levels. These planning activities include, but are not limited to, corridor studies, small urban studies, regional plans, and the statewide multimodal long-range transportation plan. To carry out this task, VDOT will coordinate with local government agencies, regional planning agencies, and community stakeholder groups. In addition, VDOT will coordinate with the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation (VDRPT) and local and regional transit providers to identify needs for bicycle and pedestrian access to public transportation services and facilities.

##### **4.2 Funding**

Highway construction funds can be used to build bicycle and pedestrian accommodations either concurrently with highway construction projects or as independent transportation projects. Both types of bicycle and pedestrian accommodation projects will be funded in the same manner as other highway construction projects for each system (i.e., interstate, primary, secondary, or urban). VDOT's participation in the development and construction of an independent project that is not associated with the interstate, primary, secondary, or urban systems will be determined through a negotiated agreement with the locality or localities involved.

Other state and federal funding sources eligible for the development of bicycle and pedestrian accommodations may be used, following program requirements established for these sources.

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These sources include, but are not limited to, programs for highway safety, enhancement, air quality, congestion relief, and special access.

VDOT may enter into agreements with localities or other entities in order to pursue alternate funding to develop bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, so long as the agreements are consistent with state and federal laws.

### **4.3 Design and Construction**

VDOT will work with localities to select and design accommodations, taking into consideration community needs, safety, and unique environmental and aesthetic characteristics as they relate to specific projects. The selection of the specific accommodations to be used for a project will be based on the application of appropriate planning, design, and engineering principles. The accommodations will be designed and built, or installed, using guidance from VDOT and AASHTO publications, the MUTCD, and the *Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG)*. Methods for providing flexibility within safe design parameters, such as context sensitive solutions and design, will be considered.

During the preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS), VDOT will consider the current and anticipated future use of the affected facilities by bicyclists and pedestrians, the potential impacts of the alternatives on bicycle and pedestrian travel, and proposed measures, if any, to avoid or reduce adverse impacts to the use of these facilities by bicyclists and pedestrians.

During project design VDOT will coordinate with VDRPT to address bicyclist and pedestrian access to existing and planned transit connections.

Requests for exceptions to design criteria must be submitted in accordance with VDOT's design exception review process. The approval of exceptions will be decided by the Federal Highway Administration or VDOT's Chief Engineer for Program Development.

VDOT will ensure that accommodations for bicycling and walking are built in accordance with design plans and VDOT's construction standards and specifications.

### **4.4 Operations**

VDOT will consider methods of accommodating bicycling and walking along existing roads through operational changes, such as traffic calming and crosswalk marking, where appropriate and feasible.

VDOT will work with VDRPT and local and regional transit providers to identify the need for ancillary facilities, such as shelters and bike racks on buses, that support bicycling and walking to transit connections.

VDOT will enforce the requirements for the continuance of bicycle and pedestrian traffic in work zones, especially in areas at or leading to transit stops, and in facility replacements in accordance with the MUTCD, *VDOT Work Area Protection Manual*, and *VDOT Land Use*

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*Permit Manual* when construction, utility, or maintenance work, either by VDOT or other entities, affects bicycle and pedestrian accommodations.

VDOT will continue to research and implement technologies that could be used to improve the safety and mobility of bicyclists and pedestrians in Virginia's transportation network, such as signal detection systems for bicycles and in-pavement crosswalk lights.

#### **4.5 Maintenance**

VDOT will maintain bicycle and pedestrian accommodations as necessary to keep the accommodations usable and accessible in accordance with state and federal laws and VDOT's asset management policy. Maintenance of bike lanes and paved shoulders will include repair, replacement, and clearance of debris. As these facilities are an integral part of the pavement structure, snow and ice control will be performed on these facilities.

For sidewalks, shared use paths, and bicycle paths built within department right-of-way, built to department standards, and accepted for maintenance, VDOT will maintain these bicycle and pedestrian accommodations through replacement and repair. VDOT will not provide snow or ice removal for sidewalks and shared use paths. The execution of agreements between VDOT and localities for maintenance of such facilities shall not be precluded under this policy.

#### **5. Effective Date**

This policy becomes effect upon its adoption by the Commonwealth Transportation Board on March 18, 2004, and will apply to projects that reach the scoping phase after its adoption.

This policy shall supersede all current department policies and procedures related to bicycle and pedestrian accommodations. VDOT will develop or revise procedures, guidelines, and best practices to support and implement the provisions set forth in this policy, and future departmental policies and procedural documents shall comply with the provisions set forth in this policy.