



# GENERAL TRAVEL LANES

Travel lanes are the typical lanes of a vehicular street. Travel lanes are typically designed for general purpose use—meaning they are appropriate for passenger vehicles, delivery vehicles, and the occasional transit vehicle or heavy truck.

Bicycles are generally permitted in the general purpose lane, especially when designated bicycle facilities are not provided on the street. When bicycles use a general purpose travel lane, it is recommended they “take the lane”—meaning people on bicycles should ride in the center of the travel lane making themselves clearly visible to vehicles approaching from the rear. As permitted users of travel lanes, it is appropriate for bicycles to assert use over the full lane just as other vehicles would. Vehicles wishing to overtake bicycles must do as they would for other vehicles—waiting to pass until the opposing lane is clear in order to cross out of the lane and safely pass the other vehicle or bicycle. Grand Rapids has a five foot passing law that is intended to improve bicycle safety as motorists make safe and legal passes around people on bicycles.

The number of travel lanes required on a street depends on the desired volume of vehicle travel on the street, the desired operating environment on the street, and

the remaining right-of-way space available after accommodating all users, as well as the required green infrastructure elements. When determining the number of travel lanes needed, designers should consider how the street is used throughout the day and not just during the peak hour or peak 15 minutes. Excess travel lanes during hours of the day when there are lower vehicle volumes can lead to excessive speeding and work against the objectives of self-enforcing street design. Designers must consider what will deliver the safest functional street.

## USE

- Travel lanes are typical features in all street types, although the number and width of the travel lanes varies by street type. Lower order streets (Neighborhood Residential, Link Residential, Neighborhood Business, and Maker/Industrial streets) typically features two travel lane—one operating in each direction. Because desired operating speed is low, lane widths are generally narrow. Higher order streets (Network Residential, Crosstown Connector, and Urban Center) *may* have a greater number of travel lanes; however, travel lanes may still be narrow to promote self-regulating design.
- Corridors with certain modal priority emphasis overlays—such as transit emphasis or vehicle/truck emphasis—may have wider travel lanes to facilitate their designated use.

## DESIGN

- Travel lanes must be assembled together with other roadway elements including additional lanes in the same or opposing directions, turning lanes, parking lanes, bicycle facilities, transit lanes and/or stops, and sidewalk zone facilities; engineering judgement should be applied to determine the appropriate width of travel lanes.
- General purpose travel lanes are typically demarcated with either yellow center line markings for vehicles traveling in opposite directions and/or white adjacent lane markings for vehicles traveling in the same direction.
- Markings are typically required only at the outer edge of the lane.
- Travel lanes should have a generally smooth pavement surface. Typically, this requires that streets be routinely maintained and potholes and other disruptions repaired in a timely manner.
- Utility access such as vaults and manholes, should be kept out of general purpose travel lanes to the extent possible in order to minimize risk to utility workers and minimize disruption to normal street operations when utility maintenance is required.

## OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

- Travel lanes must generally be kept clear of snow and ice. They should be designed to facilitate rapid drainage.
- Travel lanes must be routinely maintained; they often suffer degradation during the cold winter months or following heavy rainfall events.

## REFERENCES

- AASHTO: A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets (Green Book), 2011
- MMUTCD, 2011

