

What are Bicycle Boulevards?

Traffic engineers typically make use of three types of bicycle facilities:

- Bicycle Track – a paved bicycle road physically separated from motor vehicles and pedestrians, often striped for two way travel.
- Bicycle Lane – on-street lanes, preferably protected, that are for cyclists use alone.
- Shared Roadway – A road facility in which cyclists share the roadway with motor vehicles, generally by only the most intrepid cyclists.

Bicycle boulevards (AKA greenways) take the shared roadway bicycle facility to a new level, creating an attractive, convenient, and comfortable cycling environment that is welcoming to cyclists of all ages and skill levels. In essence, bicycle boulevards are low-volume and low-speed streets that give bicyclists and pedestrians priority over motor vehicles.

Required designed elements include: restricted access by motor vehicles, traffic calming and traffic reduction, way-finding signs, and pavement markings. Bicycle boulevards allow through movements for cyclists and pedestrians, while discouraging similar through trips by non-local motor traffic. Motor vehicle access to properties along the route is maintained.



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The primary characteristics of a bicycle boulevard are:

- low motor vehicle volumes
- low motor vehicle speeds
- logical, direct, and continuous cyclist connections to desired destinations
- wayfinding signs to destinations
- bicyclists have the right of way to maintain momentum with minimal delay
- comfortable and safe crossings for cyclists at intersections
- local motor vehicles may access their own blocks

How are design elements combined effectively?

The main design elements are intersection treatments, traffic volume limits, and signage. The design of each bicycle boulevard will be unique, combining design elements to address specific traffic conditions. Motor vehicle speeds are reduced preferably with “horizontal deflection” or sideways movement rather than “vertical deflection” or up-and-down movement, which cause problems for cyclist comfort and momentum. Motor vehicle access is deterred at gateway intersections, and directed off the boulevard at internal cross street intersections. This makes a non-stop through-way for bicyclists, free of all but resident motor vehicles.



An example of chicanes from Austin, TX



Mini Traffic Circle - Vancouver, BC
In Vancouver, neighborhood groups maintain gardens in mini traffic circles, which can be attractive street features that slow motor vehicles.



Motor vehicle diagonal diverter



Partial Closure and Median Refuge Island - Portland, OR
Volume management tools on the Spokane Neighborhood Greenway reduce traffic volumes along the route. This mountable curb design permits emergency vehicle access.