

**Austin Pedestrian Advisory Council and Bicycle Advisory Council Joint
Recommendation:**

City of Austin Transportation Criteria Manual October 2021

WHEREAS, the purpose of the Austin Bicycle Advisory Council (BAC) is to advise the City of Austin and other jurisdictions on all matters relating to the use of the bicycle, bicycle infrastructure, and individuals of all ages and abilities who utilize bicycles;

WHEREAS, the Austin Pedestrian Advisory Council (PAC) advises the City of Austin and other government entities on planning, policy, design, funding, education, and enforcement regarding creating, maintaining, and operating pedestrian facilities;

WHEREAS, the existing Transportation Criteria Manual (TCM) was written primarily in the 1980s and relied on guidelines established by American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) that resulted in City of Austin streets and roads which were primarily focused on moving automobiles;

WHEREAS, the Austin Bicycle Advisory Council and Pedestrian Advisory Council (BACPAC) greatly appreciate City of Austin staff efforts to update the TCM and bring it up to more modern street standards, including National Association of City Transportation Official (NACTO) standards, and to align it with the Austin Strategic Mobility Plan;

WHEREAS, the BACPAC jointly appreciates the renewed emphasis on non-motorized modes of transportation and recognizes that this emphasis will create both more equitable streets and roads, helping the City achieve equity goals and specific goals set forth in the adopted Climate Equity Plan;

WHEREAS, the TCM rewrite requires street trees that will further advance the City's Climate Equity goals, help reduce air pollution and the heat island effect, as well as provide more shade and comfort on streets and roads, while also adding protections for people when those trees are placed between moving vehicles and human-powered forms of transportation;

WHEREAS, the BACPAC jointly recognizes that the emphasis on non-motorized forms of transportation will create safer streets and roads, including lowering design speeds, calling for protected intersections, raised bikeways and raised crosswalks, and broadly setting design standards that will help the City achieve adopted Vision Zero goals;

WHEREAS, with stay home orders during COVID it became clear that transportation demand management (TDM) can in fact solve congestion and that the TCM should have clear TDM policies that further goals to change demand on the transportation network;

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has adopted the International Fire Code (IFC), with a local amendment that requires 25' of clear path for fire trucks, rather than the IFC recommended 20 ft. clear;

WHEREAS, the requirement for 25' of clear path creates a significant impact on the width of our streets, especially the Level 1 neighborhood streets;

WHEREAS, more Austinites die in traffic (typically 80 per year) than die in structural fires, (typically four per year) and street width can be directly correlated with increased vehicle speeds;

WHEREAS, vehicle speed correlates directly to the severity of injury in a crash and high speeds often result in fatalities;

WHEREAS, the City of Austin has made a robust effort to reduce speed limits on streets and roads, including adopting a 25 mph speed limit on Level 1 neighborhood streets in the urban core;

WHEREAS, Imagine Austin calls for a compact and connected city;

WHEREAS, many roads, including transit corridors, within the City of Austin are owned and controlled by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT);

WHEREAS, the TCM's street level hierarchy is conceptualized in the context of automobiles and assumes that the primary consideration for streets is moving, parking, and storing automobiles but contains no street levels that anticipate certain levels of walking and bicycling or provide those latter modes' shared or exclusive street space;

WHEREAS, straight streets and long blocks encourage fast driving and discourage walking and bicycling by reducing variety and options with short travel distances;

WHEREAS, angled on-street parking reduces visibility for all street users, including drivers, and allows vehicles of all sizes to extend into the vehicle traffic, bike lane, or pedestrian curb;

WHEREAS, Black and Brown residents of Austin are disproportionately impacted by car crashes in terms of both injury and death (in 2021, according to Vision Zero data, 16.2% of those injured and 15.2% of those killed by car crashes were Black Austinites in spite of being 7.83% of the population and 37.6% of those injured and 35.4% of those killed by car crashes were Hispanic Austinites in spite of being 32.5% of the population) and the City of Austin has established an Equity Office to provide leadership, guidance, and insight on equity to improve the quality of life for Austinites and work to achieve the vision of making Austin the most livable city in the nation for all;

WHEREAS, BACPAC appreciates the recent changes in the TCM that aim to reduce conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists by eliminating shared sidewalks;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the BACPAC recommend that the following considerations be incorporated into the Transportation Criteria Manual:

The Austin Fire Department remove the amendment to its adoption of the IFC to increase recommended street widths by 5 ft. over the IFC's recommendations;

Street types be designated to the shared street / Woonerf and car-free designs;

All street levels specifically plan for future volumes of walking and bicycling on particular streets;

All diagrams, unless otherwise necessary, depict well-defined and human-scaled environments - not sprawl-style environments such as street-facing parking lots, multi-lane roadways, and branching (dendritic) street patterns - and reflect the aspiration and need to sharply reduce automobile travel and address suburban sprawl;

Discourage block lengths longer than 250';

Discourage perfectly straight stretches of street longer than 500';

Use all available tools and streets designs to slow vehicles on Level 1 neighborhood streets, including pinch points, raised crosswalks, pedestrian refuge islands, and tactical urbanism materials;

Include robust strategies for transportation demand management (TDM) and require TDM analysis for all new development that will generate more than 2,000 future trips with a de-emphasis of single-occupancy automobiles;

Structure graphics to clearly explain site planning requirements, showing what the City of Austin expects to see;

Require street trees on all levels of streets and roads in the TCM;

Require additional bike parking;

Encourage TxDOT to adhere to the standards provided in the TCM for all streets, roads, and frontage roads under TxDOT control and located within the City of Austin;

Encourage Travis County to follow these updated TCM guidelines;

Write the TCM to reflect priorities in our transportation network that mirrors the adopted Austin Strategic Mobility Plan: pedestrian provisions first, then bicycling, then transit, and finally the automobile-oriented needs (e.g. design criteria, driveways);

Specify where appropriate: 'T' intersections should be filled in with off-street uses, e.g. landscaping, in the portion of the through street where parking is prohibited, i.e. at the intersection itself on the side of the through street where the terminating street would punch through if it were a four-way intersection;

State (in the appropriate place) that bikeways and sidewalks should be as straight as the corridor, and not winding/circuitous. This criteria should be prioritized when designing and building a street;

Describe the design for pedestrian- and bicycle-only plazas;

Describe the design for a transitway, with variations that include provisions for pedestrians and bicyclists;

Reference to "through lanes" should generally clarify what type of lanes they are, e.g. "car priority through lanes", "bike through lanes", etc;

For all street levels, in constrained circumstances, compromises shall be made to all modes in a balanced way;

Bike paths should have turning radii that are not too sharp;

Vertical clearance should be specified as 8' and not as 6.5' on sidewalks;

Clearly define "shared-use path" (there are multiple sections that talk about shared-use paths where the diagram shows something else);

Remove on-street angled parking from the TCM for any new street designs;

Update § 12-5-42 to include "bikeways" and "sidewalks" in the rule that: "No portion of the vehicle shall extend into the roadway so as to obstruct traffic flow;"

Prohibit parking within a safe distance of intersections to maximize pedestrian and bicycle crossing;

Sustainable modes analysis should include a reference to address all plans that identify bicycle, pedestrian, transit and bike share priority projects/areas that are within the development area;

Traffic impact analysis (TIA) should include a safety analysis requirement that demonstrates the site will not create new or exacerbate existing safety issues, particularly the safety conditions for pedestrians, bicycles, and drivers at intersections that may be impacted by a land development proposal, in line with Austin's Vision Zero policy and highlighting the need to ensure safety of non-motorized users;

Transit station amenities should include reference to the provision of bike share stations (MetroBike) in accordance with the current plan directive;

The sidewalk width minimum requirement should be increased to 6' (rather than 5') at minimum based upon best practices;

Prioritize improving areas where Black & Brown communities are disproportionately impacted by car crashes;

Construction detours should be prioritized for bicyclists and pedestrians on the same street wherever bike lanes or sidewalks are obstructed, even where they may take a lane from motor vehicles, and in cases where this is impossible, detours of the same or greater protection quality and connectedness should be provided;

Design to manage curb access in residential areas to minimize the conflicts between active transit lane users and service or delivery workers;

Update Section 5.1.4.2.1 to state that raised bike lanes should avoid all obstructions including, but not limited to, poles, light posts, and curb drop offs. Where right of way is too constrained to avoid obstructions, on-street facilities should be preferred;

The requirement of a TIA, TDM, and/or neighborhood traffic analysis (NTA) should be based on a number of trips per hour rather than a number of trips per day basis, since a per day number does not capture the operational and safety issues that happen during critical (peak) periods of the day;

Recognize and mitigate efforts targeted towards climate degradation consequent to transportation infrastructure development;

Eliminate parking minimums as part of the transportation analysis for new sites.

Date: November 1, 2021

Vote: per minutes prepared 11/1/21

Attest: Christopher Parks, Staff Liaison


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