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RULE NO. R161-26.20

NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULE **POSTING DATE: August 24, 2026**

The Director of Austin Transportation and Public Works proposes to adopt the following rule on or after September 25, 2026.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF PROPOSED RULE

A rule proposed in this notice may not become effective before the effective date established by a separate notice of rule adoption. A notice of rule adoption may not be posted before September 25, 2026, or after November 2, 2026 (the 70th day after the date of this notice).

If a proposed rule is not adopted on or before the 70th day, it is automatically withdrawn and cannot be adopted without first posting a new notice of proposed rule.

REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON PROPOSED RULES

The City requests comments from the public with respect to the proposed rules included in this Notice. Comments must be submitted in writing to the contact person below no later than September 24, 2026. A summary of the written comments received will be included in the notice of rule adoption that must be posted for the rule to become effective.

Contact Person:

Amber Hutchens, Capital Program Consultant
Austin Transportation and Public Works Department
Amber.Hutchens@austintexas.gov
512-947-5646

TEXT OF PROPOSED RULE

The text of the proposed rule indicating changes from the current text is attached to this notice.

BRIEF EXPLANATION OF PROPOSED RULE

Rule R161-26.20 proposes the following changes to the Transportation Criteria Manual:

4.1.1 Sidewalks
Requires a waiver for switchbacks in ROW.

4.1.6. Fee In Lieu of sidewalk construction
Fee In Lieu is not applicable to required trails.

4.2.4.1 Pedestrian Island
Add a case that detectable pavers should not be installed at pedestrian islands.

5.2.1 Minor Street Crossings
Fix spelling error

5.3.1.3 Grades
The steep slope allowance (paragraph B) only applies to parkland or designated open space. Remove the option to install resting area beside the trail (paragraph C).

An affordability impact statement regarding the proposed rule is available by contacting Amber Hutchens, amber.hutchens@austintexas.gov, or 512-974-5646.

AUTHORITY FOR ADOPTION OF PROPOSED RULE

The authority and procedure for adoption of a rule to assist in the implementation, administration, or enforcement of a provision of the City Code is provided in City Code Chapter 1-2 (*Adoption of Rules*). The authority to regulate design and construction of roadways, streets or alleys is established in City Code Section 25-6-171 (*Standards for Design and Construction*). Additionally, the authority to regulate design and construction of urban trails is established in City Code Section 25-6-292 (*Design and Construction Standards)* which describes standards for sidewalks, driveway approaches, pavements, appurtenances on public property, or other facilities to provide access to adjoining property.

CERTIFICATION BY CITY ATTORNEY

By signing this Notice of Proposed Rule R161-26.20, the City Attorney certifies the City Attorney has reviewed the rule and finds that adoption of the rule is a valid exercise of the Director's administrative authority.

REVIEWED AND APPROVED:

Richard Mendoza, P.E., Director
Austin Transportation and Public Works

Date: 8/21/26

Deborah Thomas, City Attorney

Date: 8/20/2026

4.1.1 SIDEWALKS

For sidewalk width and placement on Level 1 Streets, refer to Figure 2-14. For sidewalk width and placement requirements along Level 2, 3, and 4 Streets, refer to Table 2-2 and Table 2-3. For sidewalk width and placement requirements along Level 5 Streets, bridges, or temporary sidewalks, see Section 4.1.4. Typical placement of sidewalks within the pedestrian zone in relation to other streetscape furnishings is shown in Figure 4-2, with measurement of clear width illustrated as defined in Section 4.1.1(A).

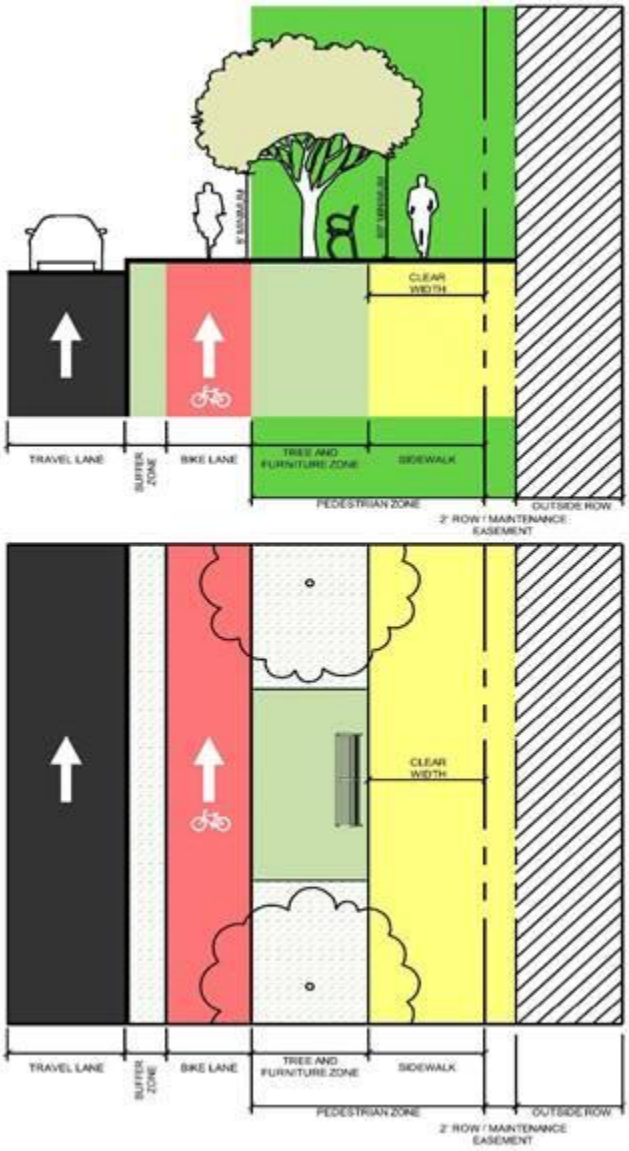

Figure 4-2 — Clear Width

A. Sidewalk widths shall be consistent with the specifications in Table 2-2 and Table 2-3 in Section 2.7.1 and shall be installed consistent with the requirements of the LDC and any applicable development approvals. Sidewalks must be ADA compliant. If a plan adopted by ordinance conflicts with these

requirements, the strictest criteria shall be used. In areas with no other requirements, the minimum clear widths shall be 5 ft. for Level 1 Streets and 6 ft. for all Level 2 and higher streets. Refer to Great Streets Standards for sidewalks in the area defined in Figure A-2.

1. In situations where building lines are built up to the right-of-way line with 0 ft. setback, an 18 in. clearance from the building face may not be counted as part of the 5 ft. clear width requirement.

B. The minimum clear width shall be unobstructed by any permanent or nonpermanent elements for accessible pedestrian travel and shall have a minimum vertical clearance of 80 in. Minimum vertical clearance for shared use paths is per Section 4.1.2 (G).

C. Sidewalks shall follow the shortest, most direct path along the roadway. If this path is not achievable, refer to Section 4.1.3 for further guidance. Unless approved by the Director, switchbacks should not be used in the right-of-way. A switchback may be allowed in the right-of-way if the Director determines:

1. the site has exceptional constraints that limit the design of the sidewalk;

2. the switchback is located behind the sidewalk; and

3. the sidewalk maintains its standard assignment to the curb.

D. Sidewalks or shared used paths shall be installed on both sides of all streets except where Fee-in-Lieu of Sidewalk Installation has been approved in accordance with the LDC and meeting requirements of Section 4.1.6.

E. Sidewalks must be constructed between the curb line and the property line in the pedestrian zone, in an easement, or on adjacent dedicated parkland that creates a continuous path in front of adjacent properties.

F. Except for zero setback properties, the standard alignment for the back edge of the sidewalk is 2 ft. off the property line to allow sufficient space for maintenance. In constrained conditions, the back edge of sidewalk can be located within 2 ft. of the property line with staff approval of an easement or other acceptable provisions to ensure sidewalk can be maintained. Where zero (building) setback lots exist adjacent to a pedestrian facility, sidewalks may be constructed for the entire width from the property line to the curb line, but shall conform to 4.1.1 (A) (1). See Section 2 for additional detail on setbacks and typical cross sections.

G. The side slopes of sidewalks within 5 ft. parallel and on either side of the sidewalk shall not be steeper than 1V:3H.

H. Sidewalks and streetscape furnishings shall be constructed in accordance with the City of Austin Standard Details and the City of Austin Standard Specifications and in accordance with current edition of PROWAG and TAS. Whenever these standards are in conflict, the strictest requirements shall apply.

I. Sidewalk requirements of the LDC may be satisfied by existing sidewalks provided they meet the following criteria:

1. The existing sidewalks comply with the requirements of the LDC and TCM; and

2. The physical condition of the existing sidewalks, including curb ramps, meets or exceeds the requirements to be considered functionally acceptable (A or B rating) under the City of Austin functional classification system as outlined in the City of Austin Sidewalk Plan. Applicants must take inventory of existing sidewalks adjacent to properties and determine the rating of the sidewalk per the methodology outlined in the City of Austin Sidewalk Plan.

J. If a new sidewalk is constructed, street trees shall be provided, unless the street is a Level 1 Street with insufficient right-of-way to accommodate the minimum width of 6 ft. required for street trees. Planting shall be in accordance with the Environmental Criteria Manual, and soil requirements for street trees are further specified in Section 2.7.1.3. Placement of street trees shall not conflict with utilities in accordance with design criteria in the Utilities Criteria Manual.

4.1.6 FEE-IN-LIEU OF SIDEWALK CONSTRUCTION

Per the LDC, when approved by the City Transportation Engineer or applicable Director, private applicants may pay a fee in lieu of constructing required on-site sidewalks ~~and trails~~. Refer to the sidewalk Ordinance for latest fee schedule.

Paying Fee-In-Lieu of Sidewalk Construction approved in accordance with the LDC shall be made in accordance with actual land use (not zoning classification) per rates established on a website maintained by the City.

4.2.4.1 Pedestrian Islands.

Pedestrian islands refer to the protected space provided for pedestrians between opposing travel lanes or between through lanes and a smart right turn. Placement must be considered during the design of the geometrics of an intersection as discussed in Section 3. These areas allow pedestrians more time to cross the street or operate as a two-stage crossing. These spaces must be highly visible, protected from encroachment of vehicular turning movements, and large enough to provide a comfortable waiting area for pedestrians.

Pedestrian islands shall be designed with minimum dimensions in Figure 4-5 and Table 4-2. The design shown in Figure 4-5 is for a raised median with concrete curb, but may be substituted with a painted island area with vertical posts when approved by applicable staff. Refer to City of Austin Standard Details for specific sign, curb and gutter, and pavement marking requirements for pedestrian islands.

Figure 4-5 — Pedestrian Islands

Pedestrian Islands at approaches to roundabouts shall be designed with dimensions in Figure 4-7 and Table 4-2. Pedestrian islands that are not part of an isolated island, such as in a median along a street or between through lanes and a smart right turn shall be designed with dimensions in Figure 4-8 and Table 4-2.

Figure 4-6 — Roundabout Pedestrian Island Area Dimensions

Figure 4-7 — Smart Right Turn Pedestrian Island Area Dimensions

Table 4-2 — Pedestrian Island Area Dimensions

	Desired (ft.)	**Minimum (ft.)**
Length "L"	6	4
Width "W"	10	8

A. Pedestrian islands shall be used at crossings on Level 2 and higher streets They shall be used at signalized intersections whenever possible.

B. When the associated pedestrian crossing is not raised, physical raised curbs shall be provided on all entry points to the island to shield pedestrians.

C. The pedestrian island must match the elevation of the crossing path, whether at street elevation or top of curb elevation for raised street crossings.

D. Pedestrian cut throughs shall be incorporated into all medians where pedestrian crossings intersect raised curbs.

E. Either design of pedestrian islands shall provide a minimum width of 8 ft. for the pedestrian path crossing through the island and a minimum median width of 4 ft.

F. Pedestrian islands designed to accommodate bicycle or shared use path crossings shall be 8 ft. minimum width and the cut through width shall be equivalent to the width of the shared use path and curb ramps.

G. Length "L" in Figure 4-7 and Table 4-2 is measured from back of curb.

H. Designated pedestrian island area shall not be placed within the turning envelope of the control vehicle (See Section 3 for guidance on turning maneuvers and placement of pedestrian islands near intersections). If the speed of the turning maneuver can be lowered so that vehicles do not encroach, turning speed reduction shall be the treatment.

I. Island areas shall include detectable warning surfaces prior to entering the street, except when the island is less than 6 ft from face of curb to face of curb (which allows 2 ft minimum clear space between the island detectable warnings as required by accessibility Standards) or when the island area does not provide pedestrian signal push buttons at a signalized intersection.

J. When a pedestrian island area does not meet the Desired dimensions in Table 4-2, the crossing shall be timed as a single stage crossing and pedestrian area only serve as a cut through.

K. Two-stage pedestrian crossings shall not be installed at new signalized pedestrian crossings.

5.2.1 MINOR STREET CROSSINGS

Driveways (see Section 7) and Minor Street crossings (see Section 3.4.2.1) shall be designed to provide awareness and priority to the protected bike lane and sidewalk. Minor Street crossings include Level 0 and Level 1 Streets, unless otherwise defined by the City Transportation Engineer or applicable Director as a Minor Street crossing.

Figure 5-6 shows the typical layout of a protected bicycle lane crossing a minor street as a raised crossing. Modified configurations are used when combined with continental crosswalks across minor streets. Figure 5-7 illustrates the typical profile for a minor street crossing with a protected bike lane and sidewalk crossing.

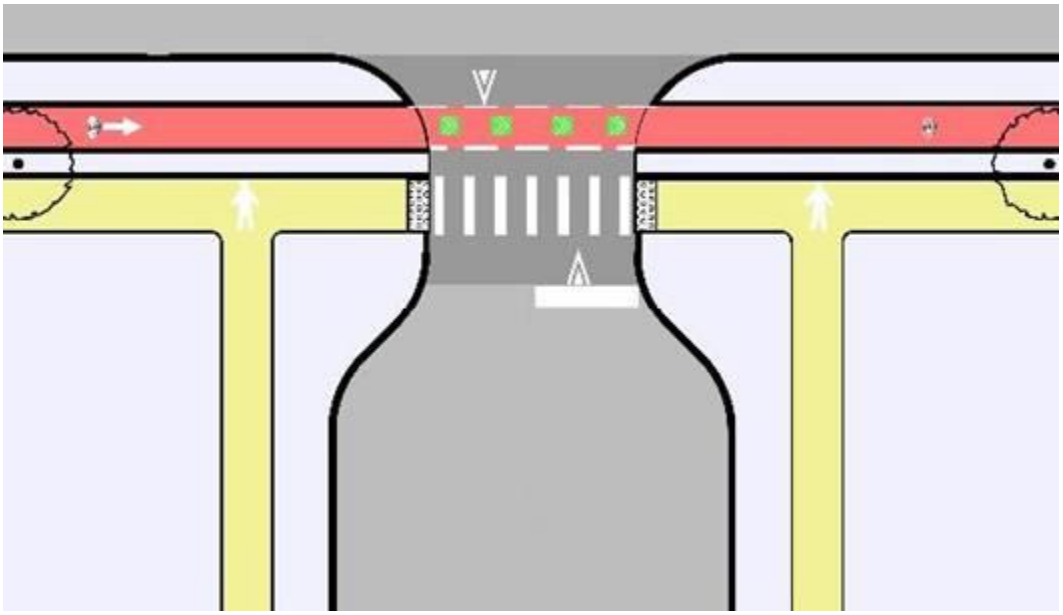

Figure 5-6 — Typical Minor Street Crossing

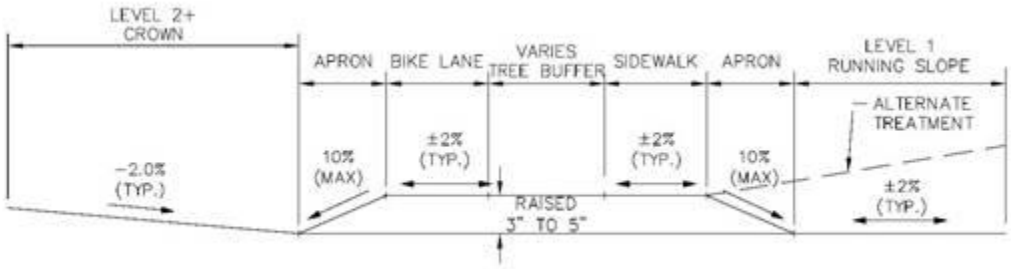

Figure 5-7 — Minor Street ~~Corssing~~Crossing Grade Profile

A. A raised crossing is the default treatment to be used at all minor street crossings.

B. The design shall clearly communicate that bicyclists have the right-of-way by continuing the surface treatment of the bike lane across the driveway.

C. The approach ramps to the raised crosswalk shall not exceed 5% for a minor street.

D. For minor street crossings the bike lane and sidewalk can optionally be graded away from the higher-level roadway.

E. Refer to Section 3.4.2.1 for criteria for minor street crossings.

5.3.1.3 Grades.

A. When right-of-way is shared with a street, an urban trail or shared use path shall not exceed the general grade established for the adjacent street. When an urban trail has its own right-of-way or easement, urban trails ~~shall~~should not exceed 5% grade when practical. Engineers should attempt to achieve a target grade of ~~less than~~ 2% whenever practical to provide positive drainage.

B. In some circumstances within parkland or designated open space, ~~urban trails following the~~ achieving a running grade of ~~a street or~~ 5% ~~when in its own right-of-way or easement~~ may not be possible due to physical or regulatory constraints. Physical constraints include existing terrain or infrastructure, right-of-way availability, and notable natural features. Regulatory constraints include federal, state, or local laws with the purpose of preserving threatened or endangered species; the environment; or archaeological, cultural, historical, or significant natural features that would be adversely affected by the additional gradient. Grades shown in Table 5-5 shall be provided when physical or regulatory constraints exist.

Table 5-5 — Maximum Running Slope and Segment Length

Running Slope of Trail Segment		Maximum Length of Segment (ft.)
Steeper Than	**But Not Steeper Than**	
1:20 (5%)	1:12 (8.33%)	200
1:12 (8.33%)	1:10 (10%)	30
1:10 (10%)	1:8 (12%)	10

C. If the terrain requires steep runs longer than the allowable distance shown in Table 5-5, resting intervals shall be provided at the top and bottom of each segment. ~~Resting intervals may be provided within or adjacent to the trail. When the resting area is within the trail, it~~ Resting areas must be 5 ft. long and at least as wide as the trail. ~~When the resting area is adjacent to the trail, it must be 5 ft. long and 3 ft. wide and provide a minimum 4 ft. by 4 ft. turning space.~~ The surface of the resting area cannot exceed two percent slope in any direction. ~~The City's preferred minimum longitudinal grade shall be 0.5%.~~