



January 19, 2018

Bob Bronkall, Deputy Director – Land Use Division
Humboldt County Public Works
1106 Second Street
Eureka, CA 95501

via email: bbronkall@co.humboldt.ca.us

RE: County Pedestrian Facility Standards

Dear Mr. Bronkall:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on the development of standards for pedestrian facilities throughout Humboldt County. We applaud the County's efforts to improve pedestrian facilities and encourage you to consider the required ADA sidewalk upgrades as an opportunity to upgrade pedestrian facilities more generally, in order to encourage more County residents and visitors to walk as a form of transportation, and to improve the safety, comfort and convenience of people who walk or use a wheelchair in the County.

Following are some broad principles by which we recommend you design County pedestrian facilities. As requested, we have provided both positive and negative examples of local infrastructure where possible.

- **Wide Sidewalks:** Wider sidewalks increase both safety and comfort for people walking, as well as for people in wheelchairs or with other forms of limited mobility. Narrow sidewalks, in contrast, slow down foot traffic and often cause people on foot to expose themselves to the dangers of automobile traffic by stepping into the road to avoid other sidewalk users. The problems of narrow sidewalks are compounded by obstructions such as utility poles and mailboxes, which should be avoided whenever possible. Downtown Arcata provides a convenient study in contrasts:
 - What works: Wide sidewalks on H Street in Arcata between 9th & 11th Streets.
 - What doesn't work: Narrow sidewalks on G Street in Arcata, particularly north of 11th Street.
- **Safe Crossings:** Crossing streets and roads represents the greatest safety risk and inconvenience to those traveling by foot (or wheelchair). Intersections should be (re)designed for people on foot first, rather than the current default of designing for vehicles with other modes of transportation merely an afterthought. Here are some examples of practices we encourage:
 - Increase the use of stop signs and signalization at intersections that are heavily used by people on foot or in wheelchairs. Where it would increase safety for non-vehicular road users, invoke exceptions to vehicular traffic volume warrants found in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and other codes and regulations.
 - Increase the use of pedestrian-triggered flashing warning signs and consider using in-road warning lights at crosswalks and other road crossings. At heavily used crossings, make these pedestrian-triggered signs obligatory "yield" or "stop" indicators for vehicles, rather than only cautionary or "alert" signs.

- In densely populated areas, consider new intersection designs that prioritize non-vehicular road users, such as all-way pedestrian crossings, diagonal crossings, or “pedestrian scrambles.”
- What works: New stop signs at 8th & 11th Street intersections with I Street in Arcata allowing safer and more predictable pedestrian movement.
- What doesn't work: Dangerous 4th & 5th Street non-signalized crosswalks in Eureka.
- **Make Pedestrian Facilities a Priority:** Walking (or wheelchair) is the mode of transportation we all share. Furthermore, encouraging mode shift toward active transportation is a key step in making our communities safer, healthier, and more prosperous, as well as combating climate change. It should be the County's goal to add sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities to every street and road, although acknowledging funding constraints, we encourage you to focus on areas with the densest population, highest concentration of jobs, and heaviest travel first. Finally, adding sidewalks should not be limited unnecessarily by right-of-way limitations—removal of vehicular travel or parking lanes in favor of sidewalks (or bike lanes) should be considered a viable option.
 - What works: Full sidewalk development in most of Old Town Eureka.
 - What doesn't work: Patchwork of narrow shoulders and occasional sidewalks on heavily used Hiller Road in McKinleyville.
- **Sidewalks on Both Sides of the Street:** When sidewalks are only on one side of the street, particularly when they switch sides periodically, those traveling by foot or wheelchair must cross more often, increasing safety risk and inconvenience.
 - What works: Sidewalks on both sides of Central Avenue between School Road and Railroad Drive in McKinleyville.
 - What doesn't work: Sidewalks on one side of School Road west of Salmon Avenue and east of Washington Avenue in McKinleyville.
- **Accessibility for All:** Consider ADA requirements as a minimum standard and design pedestrian facilities that work for everyone.
- **Intermodality:** Pedestrian facilities that connect to transit, bicycle facilities, vehicular parking, and waterfront/marine transportation should be prioritized.
- **Take Advantage of Opportunities for Cross-Modal Infrastructure:** When redesigning/upgrading pedestrian facilities, look out for opportunities to cost effectively improve infrastructure for bicycles and transit as well. For example, pedestrian-triggered lights at intersections should include the ability for easy bicycle triggering as well, and sidewalks around transit stops should improve shelters and include adequate room for people to easily pass those waiting for the bus without interference.
- **Consider Pedestrian Priority Streets and Other Innovative Approaches:** “Pedestrian priority” streets are those which allow walking, bicycling, and driving in the roadway but give those on foot or in wheelchairs the primary right-of-way, making vehicular traffic much slower and more cautious. This approach might work well in a few of the most densely populated areas of the County.

Thank you for your consideration. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you should have any questions.

Sincerely,

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