

NCDOT Greenway Accommodation Guidelines Trainings
Question and Answer Log
November 2015

Q: Are the Greenway Planning and Design Guidelines policy or guidelines?

A: Guidelines. There was a policy adopted in 2009, and that is the language that specifies that the Guidelines apply in growth areas.

Q: It is a change to require the municipal agreement with the environmental document. If the projects sits and then moves forward, will the Project Team have to do a new agreement?

A: There may be a second agreement. The genesis has to do with greenway accommodations requested early on in large process, with nothing put in writing, then the local agency backing out when the process is too far along to do new plans. In the case of a city with Powell Bill funds, the funds can be debited for the cost share. This is not possible for counties. Accordingly, DOT now requires that agencies without Powell Bill funds to put the funds forward when the agreement is made to ensure DOT receives the cost share. Jimmy Travis has decided as shown in the new Guidelines that agencies with Powell Bill funds can split the cost share into three payments, one third at the agreement, one third at the let, and one third (plus/minus to reflect final cost) at the time construction is completed.

Q: Do the Guidelines mean that local agencies can't come back later in the process and ask for accommodation?

A: The short answer is "no, they can't." The more realistic answer is that different factors may cause agreements to be made late in the game. It is ultimately the decision of the Upper Management Team to make the call in this situation.

Q: When are the Guidelines in effect?

A: The Guidelines are in place now.

Q: Are the local jurisdictions notified of the Project Team's recommendation?

A: They are. In most cases, the result will be positive, so the Project Team would approach to form an agreement over cost share. If the answer is no, the Project Team would start the process with Upper Management, and would be in communication with the local agency as well.

Q: Who pays for sidewalks on controlled access bridges where there is a divergent diamond design interchange?

A: The sidewalk would have to be part of the overall project design, outside of the controlled access section. This isn't covered by these Guidelines.

Q: When a greenway underpass is needed but not immediately, no funding is yet held for the trail project, can cost sharing be achieved?

A: Bridge replacement is not always on the same schedule as greenway construction, which is why the vetting process looks to the longer 5-10 year timeline for planned greenway construction. That is the way we are testing out the ability for the future greenway to be realized in the not too distant future. A longer-term cost planning process than CIP can also be useful to determine that the greenway will be built in the future. In about a third of the cases that agencies are looking to accommodate greenways, there is a natural shelf available, which can be preserved without a cost share needed.

Q: Are restriping bike lanes on repaved State Roads available for cost sharing?

A: There isn't a cost share for this type of improvement. The real question is whether the roadway has room to accommodate a bike lane. This has to be determined first, to consider whether a bike lane can be accomplished in a repaving project.

Q: Who handles paths under railroad bridges that are being rebuilt?

A: The local agency with cooperation from the railroad company.

Q: Why is a 5' additional width on a bridge in addition to 5' for sidewalk considered a betterment when a 10' width is the minimum for a bike/ped joint facility?

A: The additional 5 feet added to the standard 5 feet sidewalk on the bridge is the betterment portion, period. We don't have specific policies that allow us to cost share for a full 10 foot path, so it will revert to the minimum 5 foot sidewalk for a sidewalk accommodation.

Q: If the NCDOT helps pay for the accommodation, does the greenway have to be paved/ADA accessible? Some trails are planned to be natural surface.

A: If we are talking about an accommodation for a future greenway, bearing in mind that the greenway is not being constructed at the time of the bridge replacement, it may be a natural surface trail for a period of time. There is not an expectation that the trail needs to be an ADA-accessible, paved trail. The question will be asked on how wide the trail will be, which is important to determine how long the bridge will need to be to accommodate the crossing.

Q: Is any consideration given to whether the greenway is part of a planned statewide facility (e.g. Mountains to Sea, ECG, Deep River Trail, etc.)? For example, if the locals have not identified a way to pay for this greenway, but it's part of a larger statewide plan?

A: We think that statewide bike/ped trails are important facilities, it doesn't change the cost share provision for the scoping process, but it does improve buy-in for the process. There may be an opportunity to apply for funds, for example through State Parks, for future trail funding for trails on a statewide plan.

Q: Is the bike/ped division involved in the project design to ensure crossing accommodations are included on major corridors?

A: DBPT does provide feedback on greenway width, but the design of the bridge itself is handled by Structures, or Design Build, whoever is designing the bridge itself.

Q: When you talk about local agency, does it involve the ETJ?

A: This would depend on the intergovernmental agreement that the County may have with a municipality. ETJ often affects zoning authority. Some municipalities have agreements to maintain multi-modal facilities in the ETJ outside of city boundaries. If the agency wants the accommodation and is willing to cost share and maintain it, and the county agrees, the process can move forward.

Q: Are bicycle and pedestrian facilities included in the STI analysis? Will project engineers know that bike/ped accommodations are included in the analysis for projects?

A: In older STI projects, the accommodations were not necessarily included, but can be discussed as part of the project planning process. In SPOT 4.0, the cross sections available for selection in the input process include bike/ped accommodations in some cases, so those cross sections should be selected where appropriate to ensure that the cost estimates are accurate.

Q: Do any of these guidelines apply to accommodations made into a culvert or a request to place a tunnel parallel to a culvert?

A: Yes, it does, the same way it would apply to a bridge.

Q: When a multi-use path is added to a bridge and it is separated from traffic lanes by a railing, who pays for the additional rail?

A: This is above and beyond what AASHTO requires, so it is considered a betterment.

Q: What is the width of the trail? How far off from top of bank should the trail be set? Above what design storm do you want us to try and set the trail elevation?

A: Good questions about the design of the greenway itself. These guidelines relate to the bridge only-not to the construction of a new greenway. We follow AASHTO and federal guidelines for greenway construction, when the local government is ready to take that step.