

Chapter 6.0 Network Amenities

The provision of network amenities is a key and sometimes overlooked element of pedestrian and cycling network design. Developing and maintaining a comprehensive network of on-road and off-road pedestrian and cycling facilities does not automatically mean people will use the network. The network has to be promoted, users need to feel comfortable and safe in using it, and they should have access to adequate trip-end facilities at strategic locations.

This section outlines many of the amenities that should be considered during the design and implementation of the Pedestrian and Cycling network.

6.1 Bicycle Friendly Catchbasin Covers

Catchbasin grates and utility covers are potential obstructions to cyclists, as well as in-line skaters. Therefore, bicycle-safe grates should be used, and grates and covers should be located in a manner which will minimize severe and/or frequent manoeuvring by the cyclist. When new curbed roadways are constructed or rehabilitated, curb face inlets should be considered to minimize the number of potential obstructions. Catchbasin grates and utility covers should be placed or adjusted to be flush with the adjacent pavement surface.

Catchbasin grates with slots parallel to the roadway, or a gap between the frame and the grate, can trap the front wheel of a bicycle, causing loss of steering control. If the slot spacing is wide enough, narrow bicycle wheels can drop into the grates. Conflicts with grates may result in serious damage to the bicycle wheel and frame as well as injury to the cyclist.

These grates should be replaced with bicycle-safe, hydraulically efficient versions. All on-road cycling facilities in urban areas with curb, gutter and storm drains should be made bicycle friendly through the provision of bicycle friendly catchbasin covers.

The Region of Niagara has recently adopted a new standard for catchbasin covers that is bicycle friendly.

All arterial roads in the Region of York should adopt a standard similar to the one used in the Region of Niagara and develop a standard catchbasin cover.

Guideline:

6.1 The Region of York should ensure that all catchbasin covers are bicycle friendly. Catchbasin covers on proposed bicycle routes should receive priority for adjustment.

6.2 Rest and Staging Areas

Rest areas should be provided along routes at areas where users tend to stop, such as interpretative stations, lookouts, restaurants, museums and other attractions / services, are logical locations for rest areas. Ideally, there should be a rest area every five kilometres on a recreational trail or at major intersections and gathering places near on-road facilities or along sidewalks and boulevard trails. Typical furnishings to be considered include benches or tables, washrooms, drinking fountains, trash cans, information signing complete with mapping, plus bicycle parking facilities. Additional services may include an air pump, shelter and telephones.

Staging areas should be incorporated into key gateways and park areas. This will provide for access to the trail system. Potential amenities at staging areas may also include picnic facilities and automobile parking for recreational users and “Park and Bike” commuters. Should parking at a rest or staging area be necessary, the number of parking spaces required should be determined on a site-specific basis, and should account for factors such as supply and demand of automobile parking elsewhere throughout the network.

Guideline:

6.2 Rest and staging areas should be provided at strategic locations such as gathering points, attractions and destinations, as well as other locations where cyclists and pedestrians are expected to stop. The Region of York and its partners, including the private sector, should work together to identify and implement rest and staging areas, where possible.

6.3 Gateways and Trailheads

Gateways and trailheads are a key character enhancing element of a pedestrian system and cycling network and a hierarchy is suggested for them. It is suggested that a hierarchy be established that represents region-wide and local level contexts.

Regional Gateways

These features are intended to “set the tone” for the system. They introduce the Region of York as a community oriented place and are intended to create a sense of welcome, arrival and safety. They are recognized by their usually appealing plaza design. They are also an opportunity to establish trail use conventions, introduce sites of historic and cultural significance and introduce themes that reflect the character of different areas in the Region. This is especially important in a region as large and diverse as the Region of York.

It is also important to offer people amenities such as benches, trash receptacles and information / directional kiosks.

Local Gateways

Local gateways primarily reaffirm region-wide conventions and introduce locally significant themes. They are often paired with information and way-finding signs. They will become a recognizable feature in the landscape and are important to both tourists and local residents. These sites should become an integral part of the marketing initiative and should be identified on regional maps.

Guidelines:

- 6.3 It is suggested that a hierarchy of Regional and Local Gateways be established that represents region-wide and local level contexts.*
- 6.4 Gateways should become a recognizable feature in York Region’s landscape to both tourists and residents alike.*
- 6.5 Gateways should become an integral part of the marketing initiative and should be identified on the bicycle and other maps.*

6.4 Transit Connections

6.4.1 Cycling and Transit

Providing defined access to/from the bus stop is also important. Sidewalks should be provided to connect bus stops with intersections, or other land uses. Consideration should also be given to safe pedestrian crossings, especially when a bus stop is located at a mid-block location. Bus shelters and other amenities should be provided at the bus stops, where appropriate. They can be placed either in front of the sidewalk, or behind the sidewalk. Care must also be taken to ensure that these amenities do not pose hazards to pedestrians, nor obstructions for sight lines for vehicular traffic.

York Region Transit has specific guideline documents that outline their requirements (Technical Guidelines for Transit Facilities, Stops and Accessories, January, 2005 and York Region Transit Drawings and Specifications, November, 2005).

Transit stops, particularly bus stops should be designed in a way that provides safe, convenient, and comfortable place for people to wait. Desirable features at bus stops also include waste-recycling receptacles, seating, lighting and bike racks. The Viva Bus Rapid Transit system currently in operation serves as an excellent example of ideal bus-stop design. Although, realistically, it is not expected that every bus stop in the Region of York will be as elaborate as Viva stops, some of the features used in the Viva system can be applied to local YRT routes.

Bus stop locations should also be fully accessible to pedestrians in wheelchairs and should have hard surface connections to sidewalks where landscape buffers exist, without blocking pedestrian travel along the sidewalk.¹

Improving the cycling-transit link is an important part of making cycling a part of daily life in the Region of York. Linking cycling with York Region Transit and Viva services will overcome barriers such as lengthy trips, personal security concerns and riding at night or in poor weather. This link also enables cyclists to reach more distant areas across the Region, and increases transit ridership on weekends and holidays.

Bike racks on buses is one example of a cycling-transit link. It allows cyclists to ride their bike to a transit stop or station, attach it to a bus-mounted bike rack, travel to their stop, disembark and continue on their bicycle to their final destination.

The cycling-transit link can also make access to transit less expensive. In suburban neighbourhoods, population densities are often too low to offer transit service within the typical walking distance of 500 metres of every commuter. Within the last 20 years, many transit agencies built expansive motor vehicle park-and-ride lots or centralized depots as an alternative to costly feeder bus service. Many of these facilities are within easy cycling distance, provide opportunities to increase cycling and transit ridership and reduce taxpayer costs, traffic congestion and air pollution.

¹ Pedestrian Facilities User Guide – Providing Safety and Mobility; U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration March 2002.



Bike Racks on Buses – Seattle, Washington

6.4.2 Linking Terminals to Pedestrian Facilities

In order to encourage people to walk to transit terminals, it is imperative that pedestrian access to terminals be both safe and convenient. Terminals should always be directly connected to sidewalk systems, and where possible, multi-use trail systems.

Where terminals are located near major trip destinations, such as malls, the terminals should ensure a direct and convenient connection to that destination. It is preferable if the terminal can be located adjacent to the destination rather than on the other side of a parking lot.

Guideline:

6.6 Transit terminals should feature safe and convenient pedestrian access, including direct links to sidewalks and major destinations.

6.5 Trip End Facilities for Commuters

Installation of showers and lockers at workplaces and educational institutions help to promote the use of the network for utilitarian purposes. Lockers can be used to store personal belongings such as cycling accessories and a change of clothing. Businesses or institutions with employees who commute by bicycle, in-line skating, or other modes should be encouraged to offer these facilities.

Consideration should be given to promoting and / or implementing trip-end facilities as part of efforts to apply a region-wide transportation demand management (TDM) strategy.

Guidelines:

- 6.7 *The Region of York and its partners should provide trip-end facilities for employees and visitors at all public buildings where feasible, and the private sector should be encouraged to do the same.*

- 6.8 *Consideration should be given to promoting and / or implementing trip-end facilities as part of efforts to apply a region-wide transportation demand management (TDM) strategy.*