

THE GREEN BOOK

A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets

2011
6th Edition





American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 HIGHWAY FUNCTIONS

1.1 SYSTEMS AND CLASSIFICATIONS	1-1
1.2 THE CONCEPT OF FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION.	1-1
1.2.1 Hierarchies of Movements and Components	1-1
1.2.2 Functional Relationships	1-4
1.2.3 Access Needs and Controls	1-7
1.3 FUNCTIONAL SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS	1-8
1.3.1 Definitions of Urban and Rural Areas	1-8
1.3.2 Functional Categories	1-8
1.3.3 Functional Systems for Rural Areas	1-8
1.3.4 Functional Highway Systems in Urbanized Areas	1-10
1.3.5 Functional Classification as a Design Type	1-12
1.4 REFERENCES	1-13

CHAPTER 2 DESIGN CONTROLS AND CRITERIA

2.1 DESIGN VEHICLES	2-1
2.1.1 General Characteristics	2-1
2.1.2 Minimum Turning Paths of Design Vehicles.	2-5
2.1.3 Vehicle Performance	2-33
2.1.4 Vehicular Pollution	2-36
2.2 DRIVER PERFORMANCE AND HUMAN FACTORS	2-36
2.2.1 Introduction	2-36
2.2.2 Older Drivers and Older Pedestrians	2-37
2.2.3 The Driving Task	2-37
2.2.4 The Guidance Task	2-38
2.2.5 The Information System	2-39
2.2.6 Information Handling.	2-39
2.2.7 Driver Error	2-42

2.2.8	Speed and Design	2-45
2.2.9	Design Assessment	2-45
2.3	TRAFFIC CHARACTERISTICS	2-46
2.3.1	General Considerations	2-46
2.3.2	Volume	2-46
2.3.3	Directional Distribution	2-50
2.3.4	Composition of Traffic	2-51
2.3.5	Projection of Future Traffic Demands	2-52
2.3.6	Speed	2-53
2.3.7	Traffic Flow Relationships	2-58
2.4	HIGHWAY CAPACITY	2-60
2.4.1	General Characteristics	2-60
2.4.2	Application	2-60
2.4.3	Capacity as a Design Control	2-61
2.4.4	Factors Other Than Traffic Volume That Affect Operating Conditions	2-63
2.4.5	Levels of Service	2-66
2.4.6	Design Service Flow Rates	2-67
2.5	ACCESS CONTROL AND ACCESS MANAGEMENT	2-70
2.5.1	General Conditions	2-70
2.5.2	Basic Principles of Access Management	2-72
2.5.3	Access Classifications	2-72
2.5.4	Methods of Controlling Access	2-73
2.5.5	Benefits of Controlling Access	2-73
2.6	THE PEDESTRIAN	2-78
2.6.1	General Considerations	2-78
2.6.2	General Characteristics	2-78
2.6.3	Walking Speeds	2-79
2.6.4	Walkway Level of Service	2-80
2.6.5	Intersections	2-80
2.6.6	Reducing Pedestrian-Vehicular Conflicts	2-80

2.6.7 Characteristics of Persons with Disabilities	2-81
2.7 BICYCLE FACILITIES	2-81
2.8 SAFETY	2-82
2.8.1 Key Factors Related to Traffic Crashes	2-82
2.8.2 Key Safety Resources	2-85
2.8.3 Safety Improvement Programs	2-85
2.8.4 Project Development Process	2-86
2.9 ENVIRONMENT	2-86
2.10 ECONOMIC ANALYSIS	2-86
2.11 REFERENCES	2-86

CHAPTER 3 ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION	3-1
3.2 SIGHT DISTANCE	3-1
3.2.1 General Considerations	3-1
3.2.2 Stopping Sight Distance	3-2
3.2.3 Decision Sight Distance	3-6
3.2.4 Passing Sight Distance for Two-Lane Highways	3-8
3.2.5 Sight Distance for Multilane Highways	3-14
3.2.6 Criteria for Measuring Sight Distance	3-14
3.3 HORIZONTAL ALIGNMENT	3-18
3.3.1 Theoretical Considerations	3-18
3.3.2 General Considerations	3-19
3.3.3 Design Considerations	3-29
3.3.4 Design for Rural Highways, Urban Freeways, and High-Speed Urban Streets	3-33
3.3.5 Design Superelevation Tables	3-43
3.3.6 Design for Low-Speed Urban Streets	3-52
3.3.7 Turning Roadways	3-57
3.3.8 Transition Design Controls	3-59
3.3.9 Offtracking	3-85
3.3.10 Traveled-Way Widening on Horizontal Curves	3-91

3.3.11	Widths for Turning Roadways at Intersections	3-97
3.3.12	Sight Distance on Horizontal Curves.	3-106
3.3.13	General Controls for Horizontal Alignment	3-111
3.4	VERTICAL ALIGNMENT	3-113
3.4.1	Terrain	3-113
3.4.2	Grades.	3-113
3.4.3	Climbing Lanes	3-125
3.4.4	Methods for Increasing Passing Opportunities on Two-Lane Roads	3-132
3.4.5	Emergency Escape Ramps.	3-140
3.4.6	Vertical Curves	3-149
3.5	COMBINATIONS OF HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL ALIGNMENT	3-164
3.5.1	General Considerations	3-164
3.5.2	General Design Controls	3-165
3.5.3	Alignment Coordination in Design	3-166
3.6	OTHER FEATURES AFFECTING GEOMETRIC DESIGN.	3-170
3.6.1	Erosion Control and Landscape Development.	3-170
3.6.2	Rest Areas, Information Centers, and Scenic Overlooks.	3-171
3.6.3	Lighting	3-172
3.6.4	Utilities	3-174
3.6.5	Traffic Control Devices	3-175
3.6.6	Traffic Management Plans for Construction	3-177
3.7	REFERENCES	3-179

CHAPTER 4 CROSS-SECTION ELEMENTS

4.1	GENERAL	4-1
4.2	TRAVELED WAY	4-1
4.2.1	Surface Type	4-1
4.2.2	Cross Slope	4-1
4.2.3	Skid Resistance	4-6
4.2.4	Hydroplaning	4-7
4.3	LANE WIDTHS	4-7

4.4 SHOULDERS	4-8
4.4.1 General Characteristics	4-8
4.4.2 Width of Shoulders	4-10
4.4.3 Shoulder Cross Sections	4-11
4.4.4 Shoulder Stability	4-12
4.4.5 Shoulder Contrast	4-13
4.4.6 Turnouts	4-14
4.5 RUMBLE STRIPS	4-14
4.6 ROADSIDE DESIGN	4-14
4.6.1 Clear Zones	4-15
4.6.2 Lateral Offset	4-15
4.7 CURBS	4-16
4.7.1 General Considerations	4-16
4.7.2 Curb Configurations	4-17
4.7.3 Curb Placement	4-19
4.8 DRAINAGE CHANNELS AND SIDESLOPES	4-20
4.8.1 General Considerations	4-20
4.8.2 Drainage	4-20
4.8.3 Drainage Channels	4-22
4.8.4 Sideslopes	4-24
4.9 ILLUSTRATIVE OUTER CROSS SECTIONS	4-27
4.9.1 Normal Crown Sections	4-27
4.9.2 Superelevated Sections	4-28
4.10 TRAFFIC BARRIERS	4-29
4.10.1 General Considerations	4-29
4.10.2 Longitudinal Barriers	4-30
4.10.3 Bridge Railings	4-33
4.10.4 Crash Cushions	4-33
4.11 MEDIANS	4-34
4.12 FRONTAGE ROADS	4-36

4.13	OUTER SEPARATIONS	4-40
4.14	NOISE CONTROL	4-41
4.14.1	General Considerations	4-41
4.14.2	General Design Procedures	4-42
4.14.3	Noise Reduction Designs	4-43
4.15	ROADSIDE CONTROL	4-47
4.15.1	General Considerations	4-47
4.15.2	Driveways	4-47
4.15.3	Mailboxes	4-48
4.15.4	Fencing	4-50
4.16	TUNNELS	4-50
4.16.1	General Considerations	4-50
4.16.2	Types of Tunnels	4-51
4.16.3	General Design Considerations	4-51
4.16.4	Tunnel Sections	4-52
4.16.5	Examples of Tunnels	4-55
4.17	PEDESTRIAN FACILITIES	4-56
4.17.1	Sidewalks	4-56
4.17.2	Grade-Separated Pedestrian Crossings	4-57
4.17.3	Curb Ramps	4-61
4.18	BICYCLE FACILITIES	4-66
4.19	BUS TURNOUTS	4-67
4.19.1	Freeways	4-67
4.19.2	Arterials	4-68
4.19.3	Park-and-Ride Facilities	4-70
4.20	ON-STREET PARKING	4-72
4.21	REFERENCES	4-74

CHAPTER 5 LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS

5.1 INTRODUCTION	5-1
5.2 LOCAL RURAL ROADS	5-2
5.2.1 General Design Considerations	5-2
5.2.2 Cross-Sectional Elements	5-5
5.2.3 Structures	5-7
5.2.4 Roadside Design	5-8
5.2.5 Intersection Design	5-9
5.2.6 Railroad-Highway Grade Crossings	5-10
5.2.7 Traffic Control Devices	5-10
5.2.8 Drainage	5-10
5.2.9 Erosion Control and Landscaping	5-10
5.3 LOCAL URBAN STREETS	5-11
5.3.1 General Design Considerations	5-11
5.3.2 Cross-Sectional Elements	5-13
5.3.3 Structures	5-19
5.3.4 Roadside Design	5-20
5.3.5 Intersection Design	5-20
5.3.6 Railroad-Highway Grade Crossings	5-21
5.3.7 Traffic Control Devices	5-22
5.3.8 Roadway Lighting	5-22
5.3.9 Drainage	5-22
5.3.10 Erosion Control	5-23
5.3.11 Landscaping	5-23
5.4 SPECIAL-PURPOSE ROADS	5-23
5.4.1 Introduction	5-23
5.4.2 Recreational Roads	5-24
5.4.3 Resource Recovery Roads	5-33
5.5 VERY LOW-VOLUME LOCAL ROADS (ADT ≤ 400)	5-34
5.6 REFERENCES	5-34

CHAPTER 6 COLLECTOR ROADS AND STREETS

6.1 INTRODUCTION	6-1
6.2 RURAL COLLECTORS	6-2
6.2.1 General Design Considerations	6-2
6.2.2 Cross-Sectional Elements	6-5
6.2.3 Structures	6-7
6.2.4 Roadside Design	6-8
6.2.5 Intersection Design	6-9
6.2.6 Railroad-Highway Grade Crossings	6-10
6.2.7 Traffic Control Devices	6-10
6.2.8 Drainage	6-10
6.2.9 Erosion Control and Landscaping	6-11
6.3 URBAN COLLECTORS	6-11
6.3.1 General Design Considerations	6-11
6.3.2 Cross-Sectional Elements	6-13
6.3.3 Structures	6-16
6.3.4 Roadside Design	6-17
6.3.5 Intersection Design	6-18
6.3.6 Railroad-Highway Grade Crossings	6-19
6.3.7 Traffic Control Devices	6-19
6.3.8 Roadway Lighting	6-19
6.3.9 Drainage	6-20
6.3.10 Erosion Control	6-20
6.3.11 Landscaping	6-20
6.4 REFERENCES	6-20

CHAPTER 7 RURAL AND URBAN ARTERIALS

7.1 INTRODUCTION	7-1
7.2 RURAL ARTERIALS	7-1
7.2.1 General Characteristics	7-1

7.2.2	General Design Considerations	7-2
7.2.3	Cross-Sectional Elements	7-4
7.2.4	Roadside Design	7-6
7.2.5	Structures	7-6
7.2.6	Traffic Control Devices	7-7
7.2.7	Erosion Control	7-7
7.2.8	Provision for Passing	7-7
7.2.9	Ultimate Development of Multilane Divided Arterials	7-9
7.2.10	Multilane Undivided Arterials	7-12
7.2.11	Divided Arterials	7-12
7.2.12	Intersections	7-24
7.2.13	Access Management	7-24
7.2.14	Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities	7-25
7.2.15	Bus Turnouts	7-25
7.2.16	Railroad-Highway Grade Crossings	7-26
7.2.17	Rest Areas	7-26
7.3	URBAN ARTERIALS	7-26
7.3.1	General Characteristics	7-26
7.3.2	General Design Considerations	7-27
7.3.3	Cross-Sectional Elements	7-29
7.3.4	Roadside Design	7-37
7.3.5	Structures	7-38
7.3.6	Traffic Barriers	7-39
7.3.7	Railroad-Highway Grade Crossings	7-39
7.3.8	Access Management	7-39
7.3.9	Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities	7-41
7.3.10	Provision for Utilities	7-42
7.3.11	Intersection Design	7-42
7.3.12	Operational Control and Regulations	7-43
7.3.13	Directional Lane Usage	7-47

7.3.14 Frontage Roads and Outer Separations	7-50
7.3.15 Grade Separations and Interchanges	7-51
7.3.16 Erosion Control.....	7-51
7.3.17 Lighting	7-52
7.3.18 Public Transit Facilities.....	7-52
7.4 REFERENCES	7-56

CHAPTER 8 FREEWAYS

8.1 INTRODUCTION.....	8-1
8.2 GENERAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS.....	8-1
8.2.1 Design Speed	8-1
8.2.2 Design Traffic Volumes.....	8-2
8.2.3 Levels of Service.....	8-2
8.2.4 Traveled Way and Shoulders.....	8-2
8.2.5 Curbs.....	8-3
8.2.6 Superelevation	8-3
8.2.7 Grades.....	8-3
8.2.8 Structures	8-4
8.2.9 Vertical Clearance	8-4
8.2.10 Roadside Design.....	8-5
8.2.11 Ramps and Terminals.....	8-5
8.2.12 Outer Separations, Borders, and Frontage Roads.....	8-5
8.3 RURAL FREEWAYS.....	8-6
8.3.1 Alignment and Profile	8-6
8.3.2 Medians	8-7
8.3.3 Sideslopes.....	8-9
8.3.4 Frontage Roads.....	8-9
8.4 URBAN FREEWAYS	8-10
8.4.1 General Design Characteristics.....	8-10
8.4.2 Medians	8-10
8.4.3 Depressed Freeways	8-11

8.4.4 Elevated Freeways	8-16
8.4.5 Ground-Level Freeways	8-22
8.4.6 Combination-Type Freeways	8-24
8.4.7 Special Freeway Designs	8-28
8.4.8 Accommodation of Managed Lanes and Transit Facilities	8-35
8.5 REFERENCES	8-47

CHAPTER 9 INTERSECTIONS

9.1 INTRODUCTION	9-1
9.2 GENERAL DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS AND OBJECTIVES	9-2
9.2.1 Characteristics of Intersections	9-2
9.2.2 Intersection Functional Area	9-2
9.2.3 Design Objectives	9-4
9.2.4 Design Considerations for Intersection User Groups	9-5
9.2.5 Intersection Capacity	9-6
9.2.6 Intersection Design Elements	9-8
9.3 TYPES AND EXAMPLES OF INTERSECTIONS	9-8
9.3.1 Three-Leg Intersections	9-10
9.3.2 Four-Leg Intersections	9-14
9.3.3 Multileg Intersections	9-19
9.3.4 Roundabouts	9-21
9.4 ALIGNMENT AND PROFILE	9-25
9.4.1 General Considerations	9-25
9.4.2 Alignment	9-25
9.4.3 Profile	9-27
9.5 INTERSECTION SIGHT DISTANCE	9-28
9.5.1 General Considerations	9-28
9.5.2 Sight Triangles	9-29
9.5.3 Intersection Control	9-32
9.5.4 Effect of Skew	9-54

9.6	TURNING ROADWAYS AND CHANNELIZATION	9-55
9.6.1	Types of Turning Roadways	9-55
9.6.2	Channelization	9-92
9.6.3	Islands	9-94
9.6.4	Free-Flow Turning Roadways at Intersections	9-106
9.6.5	Turning Roadways with Corner Islands	9-106
9.6.6	Superelevation for Turning Roadways at Intersections	9-114
9.6.7	Stopping Sight Distance at Intersections for Turning Roadways	9-123
9.7	AUXILIARY LANES	9-124
9.7.1	General Design Considerations	9-124
9.7.2	Deceleration Lanes	9-125
9.7.3	Design Treatments for Left-Turn Maneuvers	9-131
9.8	MEDIAN OPENINGS	9-140
9.8.1	General Design Considerations	9-140
9.8.2	Control Radii for Minimum Turning Paths	9-141
9.8.3	Minimum Length of Median Opening	9-149
9.8.4	Median Openings Based on Control Radii for Design Vehicles	9-149
9.8.5	Effect of Skew	9-151
9.8.6	Above-Minimum Designs for Direct Left Turns	9-154
9.9	INDIRECT LEFT TURNS AND U-TURNS	9-155
9.9.1	General Design Considerations	9-155
9.9.2	Intersections with Jughandle or Loop Roadways	9-157
9.9.3	Displaced Left-Turn Intersections	9-160
9.9.4	Wide Medians with U-Turn Crossover Roadways	9-162
9.9.5	Location and Design of U-Turn Median Openings	9-164
9.10	ROUNDBABOUT DESIGN	9-167
9.10.1	Geometric Elements of Roundabouts	9-169
9.10.2	Fundamental Principles	9-171
9.11	OTHER INTERSECTION DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS	9-176
9.11.1	Intersection Design Elements with Frontage Roads	9-176

9.11.2	Traffic Control Devices	9-180
9.11.3	Bicycles	9-180
9.11.4	Pedestrians	9-181
9.11.5	Lighting	9-181
9.11.6	Driveways	9-181
9.11.7	Midblock Left Turns on Streets with Flush Medians	9-182
9.12	RAILROAD-HIGHWAY GRADE CROSSINGS.	9-184
9.12.1	Horizontal Alignment.	9-184
9.12.2	Vertical Alignment	9-184
9.12.3	Crossing Design	9-185
9.12.4	Sight Distance.	9-186
9.13	REFERENCES	9-192

CHAPTER 10 GRADE SEPARATIONS AND INTERCHANGES

10.1	INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL TYPES OF INTERCHANGES.	10-1
10.2	WARRANTS FOR INTERCHANGES AND GRADE SEPARATIONS.	10-3
10.3	ADAPTABILITY OF HIGHWAY GRADE SEPARATIONS AND INTERCHANGES	10-5
10.3.1	Traffic and Operation.	10-6
10.3.2	Site Conditions	10-7
10.3.3	Type of Highway and Intersecting Facility	10-7
10.4	ACCESS SEPARATIONS AND CONTROL ON THE CROSSROAD AT INTERCHANGES	10-7
10.5	SAFETY	10-9
10.6	STAGE DEVELOPMENT	10-10
10.7	ECONOMIC FACTORS	10-10
10.7.1	Initial Costs	10-10
10.7.2	Maintenance Costs	10-10
10.7.3	Vehicular Operating Costs	10-10
10.8	GRADE SEPARATION STRUCTURES	10-11
10.8.1	Introduction	10-11
10.8.2	Types of Separation Structures.	10-11
10.8.3	Overpass versus Underpass Roadways	10-17

10.8.4 Underpass Roadways	10-19
10.8.5 Overpass Roadways	10-22
10.8.6 Longitudinal Distance to Attain Grade Separation	10-24
10.8.7 Grade Separations without Ramps	10-27
10.9 INTERCHANGES	10-27
10.9.1 General Considerations	10-27
10.9.2 Three-Leg Designs	10-28
10.9.3 Four-Leg Designs	10-35
10.9.4 Other Interchange Configurations	10-60
10.9.5 General Design Considerations	10-63
10.9.6 Ramps	10-87
10.9.7 Other Interchange Design Features	10-127
10.10 REFERENCES	10-130

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1 HIGHWAY FUNCTIONS

Figure 1-1. Hierarchy of Movement	1-2
Figure 1-2. Channelization of Trips	1-5
Figure 1-3. Schematic Illustration of a Functionally Classified Rural Highway Network	1-6
Figure 1-4. Schematic Illustration of a Portion of a Suburban Street Network.	1-6
Figure 1-5. Relationship of Functionally Classified Systems in Serving Traffic Mobility and Land Access.	1-7

CHAPTER 2 DESIGN CONTROLS AND CRITERIA

Figure 2-1. Minimum Turning Path for Passenger Car (P) Design Vehicle	2-10
Figure 2-2. Minimum Turning Path for Single-Unit Truck (SU-9 [SU-30]) Design Vehicle.	2-11
Figure 2-3. Minimum Turning Path for Single-Unit Truck (SU-12 [SU-40]) Design Vehicle.	2-12
Figure 2-4. Minimum Turning Path for Intercity Bus (BUS-12 [BUS-40]) Design Vehicle	2-13
Figure 2-5. Minimum Turning Path for Intercity Bus (BUS-14 [BUS-45]) Design Vehicle	2-14
Figure 2-6. Minimum Turning Path for City Transit Bus (CITY-BUS) Design Vehicle	2-15
Figure 2-7. Minimum Turning Path for Conventional School Bus (S-BUS-11 [S-BUS-36]) Design Vehicle	2-16
Figure 2-8. Minimum Turning Path for Large School Bus (S-BUS-12 [S-BUS-40]) Design Vehicle	2-17
Figure 2-9. Minimum Turning Path for Articulated Bus (A-BUS) Design Vehicle.	2-18
Figure 2-10. Turning Characteristics of a Typical Tractor-Semitrailer Combination Truck	2-19
Figure 2-11. Computational Method for Determining the Centerline Turning Radius for Tractor-Semitrailer Combination Trucks.	2-20
Figure 2-12. Lengths of Commonly Used Truck Tractors.	2-21
Figure 2-13. Minimum Turning Path for Intermediate Semitrailer (WB-12 [WB-40]) Design Vehicle	2-22
Figure 2-14. Minimum Turning Path for Interstate Semitrailer (WB-19 [WB-62]) Design Vehicle	2-23
Figure 2-15. Minimum Turning Path for Interstate Semitrailer (WB-20 [WB-67]) Design Vehicle	2-24

Figure 2-16. Minimum Turning Path for Double-Trailer Combination (WB-20D [WB-67D]) Design Vehicle	2-25
Figure 2-17. Minimum Turning Path for Rocky Mountain Double-Trailer Combination (WB-28D [WB-92D]) Design Vehicle	2-26
Figure 2-18. Minimum Turning Path for Triple-Trailer Combination (WB-30T [WB-100T]) Design Vehicle	2-27
Figure 2-19. Minimum Turning Path for Turnpike-Double Combination (WB-33D [WB-109D]) Design Vehicle	2-28
Figure 2-20. Minimum Turning Path for Motor Home (MH) Design Vehicle	2-29
Figure 2-21. Minimum Turning Path for Passenger Car and Camper Trailer (P/T) Design Vehicle	2-30
Figure 2-22. Minimum Turning Path for Passenger Car and Boat Trailer (P/B) Design Vehicle	2-31
Figure 2-23. Minimum Turning Path for Motor Home and Boat Trailer (MH/B) Design Vehicle	2-32
Figure 2-24. Acceleration of Passenger Cars, Level Conditions	2-34
Figure 2-25. Deceleration Distances for Passenger Vehicles Approaching Intersections	2-35
Figure 2-26. Median Driver Reaction Time to Expected and Unexpected Information	2-40
Figure 2-27. 85th-Percentile Driver Reaction Time to Expected and Unexpected Information	2-41
Figure 2-28. Relation between Peak-Hour and Average Daily Traffic Volumes on Rural Arterials	2-48
Figure 2-29. Generalized Speed-Volume-Density Relationships (37)	2-59
Figure 2-30. Weaving Sections	2-68
Figure 2-31. Simple and Multiple Weaving Sections	2-69
Figure 2-32. Estimated Crash Rates by Type of Median—Urban and Suburban Areas (22)	2-75
Figure 2-33. Estimated Crash Rates by Type of Median—Rural Areas (22)	2-76
Figure 2-34. Estimated Crash Rates by Unsignalized and Signalized Access Density—Urban and Suburban Areas (22)	2-77

CHAPTER 3 ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

Figure 3-1. Comparison of Design Values for Passing Sight Distance and Stopping Sight Distance	3-11
Figure 3-2. Scaling and Recording Sight Distances on Plans	3-17
Figure 3-3. Geometry for Ball-Bank Indicator	3-21
Figure 3-4. Side Friction Factors for High-Speed Streets and Highways	3-23
Figure 3-5. Side Friction Factors for Low-Speed Streets and Highways	3-24

Figure 3-6. Side Friction Factors Assumed for Design 3-25

Figure 3-7. Methods of Distributing Superelevation and Side Friction 3-27

Figure 3-8. Method 5 Procedure for Development of the Superelevation Distribution 3-34

Figure 3-9. Design Superelevation Rates for Maximum Superelevation Rate of 4 Percent 3-35

Figure 3-10. Design Superelevation Rates for Maximum Superelevation Rate of 6 Percent 3-36

Figure 3-11. Design Superelevation Rates for Maximum Superelevation Rate of 8 Percent 3-37

Figure 3-12. Design Superelevation Rates for Maximum Superelevation Rate of 10 Percent 3-38

Figure 3-13. Design Superelevation Rates for Maximum Superelevation Rate of 12 Percent 3-39

Figure 3-14. Superelevation, Radius, and Design Speed for Low-Speed Urban Street Design 3-56

Figure 3-15. Transition Spirals (63). 3-69

Figure 3-16. Diagrammatic Profiles Showing Methods of Attaining Superelevation for a Curve to the Right 3-77

Figure 3-16. Diagrammatic Profiles Showing Methods of Attaining Superelevation for a Curve to the Right (Continued). 3-78

Figure 3-17. Track Width for Widening of Traveled Way on Curves 3-87

Figure 3-18. Front Overhang for Widening of Traveled Way on Curves 3-88

Figure 3-19. Extra Width Allowance for Difficulty of Driving on Traveled Way on Curves. 3-89

Figure 3-20. Widening Components on Open Highway Curves (Two-Lane Highways, One-Way or Two-Way) 3-91

Figure 3-21. Derivation of Turning Roadway Widths on Curves at Intersections 3-98

Figure 3-22a. Design Controls for Stopping Sight Distance on Horizontal Curves (Metric) 3-107

Figure 3-22b. Design Controls for Stopping Sight Distance on Horizontal Curves (U.S. Customary) 3-108

Figure 3-23. Diagram Illustrating Components for Determining Horizontal Sight Distance. 3-109

Figure 3-24. Speed-Distance Curves for a Typical Heavy Truck of 120 kg/kW [200 lb/hp] for Deceleration on Upgrades. 3-115

Figure 3-25. Speed-Distance Curves for Acceleration of a Typical Heavy Truck of 120 kg/kW [200 lb/hp] on Upgrades and Downgrades 3-116

Figure 3-26. Speed-Distance Curves for a Typical Recreational Vehicle on the Selected Upgrades (65) 3-118

Figure 3-27. Crash Involvement Rate of Trucks for Which Running Speeds Are Reduced below Average Running Speed of All Traffic (26) 3-120

Figure 3-28. Critical Lengths of Grade for Design, Assumed Typical Heavy Truck of 120 kg/kW [200 lb/hp], Entering Speed = 110 km/h [70 mph]	3-123
Figure 3-29. Critical Lengths of Grade Using an Approach Speed of 90 km/h [55 mph] for Typical Recreational Vehicle (18)	3-124
Figure 3-30. Climbing Lanes on Two-Lane Highways	3-126
Figure 3-31. Climbing Lane on Freeways and Multilane Highways	3-132
Figure 3-32. Passing Lanes Section on Two-Lane Roads	3-133
Figure 3-33. Schematic for 2+1 Roadway	3-136
Figure 3-34. Schematic for Three-Leg Intersection on a 2+1 Roadway	3-136
Figure 3-35. Schematic for Four-Leg Intersection on a 2+1 Roadway	3-137
Figure 3-36. Schematic for Adjacent Lane Drop Tapers on a 2+1 Roadway	3-137
Figure 3-37. Schematic for Adjacent Lane Addition Tapers on a 2+1 Roadway	3-138
Figure 3-38. Forces Acting on a Vehicle in Motion	3-141
Figure 3-39. Basic Types of Emergency Escape Ramps	3-144
Figure 3-40. Typical Emergency Escape Ramp	3-148
Figure 3-41. Types of Vertical Curves	3-150
Figure 3-42. Parameters Considered in Determining the Length of a Crest Vertical Curve to Provide Sight Distance	3-152
Figure 3-43. Design Controls for Crest Vertical Curves—Open Road Conditions	3-154
Figure 3-44. Design Controls for Sag Vertical Curves—Open Road Conditions	3-159
Figure 3-45. Sight Distance at Undercrossings	3-162
Figure 3-46. Alignment and Profile Relationships in Roadway Design (41)	3-168
Figure 3-46. Alignment and Profile Relationships in Roadway Design (Continued)	3-169
Figure 3-46. Alignment and Profile Relationships in Roadway Design (Continued)	3-170

CHAPTER 4 CROSS-SECTION ELEMENTS

Figure 4-1. Typical Cross Section, Normal Crown	4-2
Figure 4-2. Typical Cross Section, Superelevated	4-3
Figure 4-3. Roadway Sections for Divided Highway (Basic Cross Slope Arrangements)	4-4
Figure 4-4. Graded and Usable Shoulders	4-10
Figure 4-5. Typical Highway Curbs	4-17

Figure 4-6. Designation of Roadside Regions	4-24
Figure 4-7. Typical Frontage Road Arrangements	4-37
Figure 4-8. Frontage Roads, Irregular Pattern	4-38
Figure 4-9. One-Way Frontage Roads, Entrance and Exit Ramps.	4-39
Figure 4-10. Two-Way Frontage Roads, Entrance and Exit Ramps.	4-39
Figure 4-11. Typical Outer Separations	4-41
Figure 4-12. Effects of Depressing the Highway	4-45
Figure 4-13. Effects of Elevating the Highway	4-46
Figure 4-14. Typical Two-lane Tunnel Sections	4-53
Figure 4-15. Diagrammatic Tunnel Sections	4-54
Figure 4-16. Entrance to a Freeway Tunnel	4-55
Figure 4-17. Interior of a Two-Lane Directional Tunnel	4-55
Figure 4-18. Typical Pedestrian Overpasses on Major Highways.	4-60
Figure 4-19. Curb Ramp Details	4-63
Figure 4-20. Examples of Sidewalk Curb Ramps	4-64
Figure 4-20. Examples of Sidewalk Curb Ramps (Continued)	4-65
Figure 4-21. Median Refuge	4-66
Figure 4-22. Bus Turnouts	4-68
Figure 4-23. Midblock Bus Turnout	4-69
Figure 4-24. Sawtooth Bus Loading Area.	4-71
Figure 4-25. Typical Application of Diagonal Back-In/Head-Out Parking.	4-73
Figure 4-26. Parking Lane Transition at Intersection.	4-74

CHAPTER 5 LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS

Figure 5-1. Types of Cul-de-Sacs and Dead-End Streets	5-17
Figure 5-2. Alley Turnarounds.	5-18
Figure 5-3. Actual Curb Radius and Effective Radius for Right-Turn Movements at Intersections	5-21
Figure 5-4. Potential Road Network	5-24
Figure 5-5. Minimum-Radius Horizontal Curve for Gravel Surface	5-28
Figure 5-6. Turnout Design	5-31

CHAPTER 6 COLLECTOR ROADS AND STREETS

Chapter 6 has no figures.

CHAPTER 7 RURAL AND URBAN ARTERIALS

Figure 7-1. Climbing Lane on Two-Lane Rural Arterial	7-8
Figure 7-2. Two-Lane Arterial Cross Section with Ultimate Development to a Four-Lane Arterial	7-11
Figure 7-3. Methods of Attaining Superelevation on Divided Arterials	7-18
Figure 7-4. Typical Medians on Divided Arterials	7-20
Figure 7-5. Cross Sectional Arrangements on Divided Arterials.	7-21
Figure 7-6. Cross Sectional Arrangements on Divided Arterials with Frontage Roads	7-23
Figure 7-7. Continuous Two-Way Left-Turn Lane	7-32
Figure 7-8. Arterial Street in Residential Area	7-35
Figure 7-9. Divided Arterial Street with Parking Lane	7-36
Figure 7-10. Urban Arterial with Dual Left-Turn Lanes	7-46
Figure 7-11. Divided Arterial Street with Two-Way Frontage Road	7-50
Figure 7-12. Reserved Bus Lane	7-55

CHAPTER 8 FREEWAYS

Figure 8-1. Typical Ground-Level Rural Freeway	8-7
Figure 8-2. Typical Rural Medians.	8-8
Figure 8-3. Typical Cross Section for Depressed Freeways	8-13
Figure 8-4. Restricted Cross Sections for Depressed Freeways	8-13
Figure 8-5. Cross Sections with Retaining Walls on Depressed Freeways without Ramps	8-14
Figure 8-6. Depressed Freeway	8-15
Figure 8-7. Typical Cross Sections for Elevated Freeways on Structures without Ramps	8-18
Figure 8-8. Typical and Restricted Cross Sections for Elevated Freeways on Structures with Frontage Roads	8-19
Figure 8-9. Typical and Restricted Cross Sections for Elevated Freeways on Embankment	8-20
Figure 8-10. Viaduct Freeway	8-21
Figure 8-11. Two-Level Viaduct Freeway	8-21
Figure 8-12. Typical Cross Sections for Ground-Level Freeways	8-23

Figure 8-13. Restricted Cross Sections for Ground-Level Freeways	8-23
Figure 8-14. Profile Control—Combination-Type Freeway in Rolling Terrain	8-24
Figure 8-15. Profile Control—Combination-Type Freeway in Level Terrain	8-25
Figure 8-16. Cross-Section Control—Combination-Type Freeway.	8-26
Figure 8-17. Combination-Type Freeway	8-27
Figure 8-18. Typical Cross Sections for Reverse-Flow Operation	8-28
Figure 8-19. Typical Reverse Roadway Terminals	8-30
Figure 8-20. Reverse-Flow Freeway	8-31
Figure 8-21. Typical Dual-Divided Freeway	8-33
Figure 8-22. Dual-Divided Freeway	8-34
Figure 8-23. Bus Roadway Located between a Freeway and a Parallel Frontage Road	8-36
Figure 8-24. Bus Stops at Freeway Level	8-38
Figure 8-25. Bus Stops at Freeway-Level Diamond Interchange	8-39
Figure 8-26. Freeway-Level Bus Stop at Cloverleaf Interchange	8-40
Figure 8-27. Bus Stops at Street Level on Diamond Interchange	8-41
Figure 8-28. Joint Freeway-Transit Right-of-Way	8-43
Figure 8-29. Typical Sections with Rail Transit in Freeway Median	8-44
Figure 8-30. Example of Transit Station Layout	8-45
Figure 8-31. Freeway with Rail Rapid Transit in the Median	8-46

CHAPTER 9 INTERSECTIONS

Figure 9-1. Physical and Functional Intersection Area	9-3
Figure 9-2. Elements of the Functional Area of an Intersection.	9-3
Figure 9-3. General Types of Intersections	9-9
Figure 9-4. Three-Leg Intersections	9-11
Figure 9-5. Channelized Three-leg Intersections	9-13
Figure 9-6. Unchannelized Four-Leg Intersections, Plain and Flared	9-14
Figure 9-7. Channelized Four-Leg Intersections	9-16
Figure 9-8. Four-Leg Intersections with Skew	9-17
Figure 9-9. Channelized Multilane Four-Leg Intersections	9-18
Figure 9-10. Realigning Multileg Intersections	9-20

Figure 9-11. Typical Mini-Roundabout	9-23
Figure 9-12. Typical Single-Lane Roundabout	9-24
Figure 9-13. Typical Multilane Roundabout	9-25
Figure 9-14. Realignment Variations at Intersections	9-26
Figure 9-15. Intersection Sight Triangles	9-30
Figure 9-16. Length of Sight Triangle Leg—Case A, No Traffic Control	9-34
Figure 9-17. Intersection Sight Distance—Case B1, Left Turn from Stop	9-39
Figure 9-18. Intersection Sight Distance—Case B2, Right Turn from Stop, and Case B3, Crossing Maneuver	9-42
Figure 9-19. Length of Sight Triangle Leg along Major Road for Passenger Cars—Case C1, Crossing Maneuver	9-48
Figure 9-20. Intersection Sight Distance—Case C2, Yield-Controlled Left or Right Turn	9-50
Figure 9-21. Intersection Sight Distance—Case F, Left Turn from the Major Road	9-53
Figure 9-22. Sight Triangles at Skewed Intersections	9-55
Figure 9-23. Minimum Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs (Passenger Vehicles) (Metric)	9-64
Figure 9-23. Minimum Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs (Passenger Vehicles) (U.S. Customary)	9-65
Figure 9-24. Minimum Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs (SU-9 [SU-30] Trucks and City Transit Buses) (Metric)	9-66
Figure 9-24. Minimum Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs (SU-9 [SU-30] Trucks and City Transit Buses) (U.S. Customary)	9-67
Figure 9-25. Minimum Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs (SU-12 [SU-40] Trucks) (Metric)	9-68
Figure 9-25. Minimum Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs (SU-12 [SU-40] Trucks) (U.S. Customary)	9-69
Figure 9-26. Minimum Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs (WB-12 [WB-40] Combination Trucks) (Metric)	9-70
Figure 9-26. Minimum Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs (WB-12 [WB-40] Combination Trucks) (U.S. Customary)	9-71
Figure 9-27. Minimum Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs (WB-19 [WB-62] Combination Trucks) (Metric)	9-72
Figure 9-27. Minimum Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs (WB-19 [WB-62] Combination Trucks) (U.S. Customary)	9-73
Figure 9-28. Minimum Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs (WB-28D [WB-92D] Combination Trucks) (Metric)	9-74

Figure 9-28. Minimum Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs (WB-28D [WB-92D] Combination Trucks) (U.S. Customary)	9-75
Figure 9-29. Minimum Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs (WB-30T [WB-100T] Combination Trucks) (Metric)	9-76
Figure 9-29. Minimum Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs (WB-30T [WB-100T] Combination Trucks) (U.S. Customary)	9-77
Figure 9-30. Minimum Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs (WB-33D [WB-109D] Combination Trucks) (Metric)	9-78
Figure 9-30. Minimum Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs (WB-33D [WB-109D] Combination Trucks) (U.S. Customary)	9-79
Figure 9-31. Effect of Curb Radii on Right-Turning Paths of Various Design Vehicles.	9-84
Figure 9-32. Effect of Curb Radii on Right-Turning Paths of Various Design Vehicles.	9-85
Figure 9-33. Effect of Curb Radii and Parking on Right-Turning Paths (Metric)	9-89
Figure 9-33. Effect of Curb Radii and Parking on Right-Turning Paths (U.S. Customary)	9-90
Figure 9-34. Variations in Length of Crosswalk with Different Curb Radii and Width of Borders	9-91
Figure 9-35. Corner Setbacks with Different Curb Radii and Width of Borders	9-91
Figure 9-36. General Types and Shapes of Islands and Medians	9-96
Figure 9-37. Alignment for Addition of Divisional Islands at Intersections	9-98
Figure 9-38. Details of Corner Island Designs for Turning Roadways (Urban Location)	9-101
Figure 9-39. Details of Corner Island Designs for Turning Roadways (Rural Cross Section on Approach)	9-102
Figure 9-40. Nose Ramping at Approach End of Median or Corner Island	9-104
Figure 9-41. Details of Divisional Island Design.	9-105
Figure 9-42. Use of Simple and Compound Curves at Free-Flow Turning Roadways (Metric)	9-107
Figure 9-42. Use of Simple and Compound Curves at Free-Flow Turning Roadways (U.S. Customary)	9-108
Figure 9-43. Minimum Turning Roadway Designs with Corner Islands at Urban Locations (Metric)	9-110
Figure 9-43. Minimum Turning Roadway Designs with Corner Islands at Urban Locations (U.S. Customary)	9-111
Figure 9-44. Development of Superelevation at Turning Roadway Terminals on a Tangent Roadway	9-117

Figure 9-45. Development of Superelevation at Turning Roadway Terminals on a Curved Roadway (Same Direction of Curve)	9-118
Figure 9-46. Development of Superelevation at Turning Roadway Terminals on a Curved Roadway (Opposite Direction of Curve)	9-119
Figure 9-47. Development of Superelevation at Turning Roadway Terminals on a Tangent Roadway with a Deceleration Lane	9-120
Figure 9-48. Functional Area Upstream of an Intersection Illustrating Components of Deceleration Lane Length	9-126
Figure 9-49. Examples of Taper Design for Left- and Right-Turn Auxiliary Lanes (Metric)	9-129
Figure 9-49. Examples of Taper Design for Left- and Right-Turn Auxiliary Lanes (U.S. Customary)	9-130
Figure 9-50. 4.2- to 5.4-m [14- to 18-ft] Median Width Left-Turn Design (Metric)	9-134
Figure 9-50. 4.2- to 5.4-m [14- to 18-ft] Median Width Left-Turn Design (U.S. Customary)	9-135
Figure 9-51. Median Left-Turn Design for Median Width in Excess of 5.4 m [18 ft].	9-136
Figure 9-52. Parallel and Tapered Offset Left-Turn Lane.	9-138
Figure 9-53. Four-Leg Intersection Providing Simultaneous Left Turns	9-139
Figure 9-54. Control Radii at Intersections for 90-Degree Left Turns	9-142
Figure 9-54. Control Radii at Intersections for 90-Degree Left Turns (Continued)	9-143
Figure 9-55. Minimum Design of Median Openings (P Design Vehicle, Control Radius of 12 m [40 ft]).	9-145
Figure 9-56. Minimum Design of Median Openings (SU-9 [SU-30] Design Vehicle, Control Radius of 15 m [50 ft]).	9-146
Figure 9-57. Minimum Design of Median Openings (WB-12 [WB-40] Design Vehicle, Control Radius of 23 m [75 ft]).	9-147
Figure 9-58. Minimum Design of Median Openings (WB-20 [WB-67] Design Vehicle, Control Radius of 40 m [130 ft]).	9-148
Figure 9-59. Above-Minimum Design of Median Openings (Typical Bullet-Nose Ends).	9-155
Figure 9-60. Intersection with Jughandle Roadways for Indirect Left Turns	9-158
Figure 9-61. Vehicular Movements at an Intersection with Jughandle Roadways	9-158
Figure 9-62. Intersection with Loop Roadways for Indirect Left Turns	9-159
Figure 9-63. Diagram of a Displaced Left-Turn Intersection	9-160
Figure 9-64. Vehicular Movements at a Displaced Left-Turn Intersection	9-161

Figure 9-65. Typical Arrangement of U-Turn Roadways for Indirect Left Turns on Arterials with Wide Medians	9-162
Figure 9-66. Vehicular Movements at an Intersection with U-Turn Roadways for Indirect Left Turns	9-163
Figure 9-67. Special Indirect U-Turn Roadways with Narrow Medians	9-167
Figure 9-68. Typical Roundabout in an Urban Setting.	9-168
Figure 9-69. Typical Roundabout in a Rural Setting.	9-168
Figure 9-70. Basic Geometric Elements of a Roundabout	9-170
Figure 9-71. Roundabout Lane Configuration Example	9-173
Figure 9-72. Path Overlap at a Multilane Roundabout	9-174
Figure 9-73. Intersections with Frontage Roads	9-179
Figure 9-74. Flush or Traversable Median Lane Markings	9-183
Figure 9-75. Railroad-Highway Grade Crossing	9-185
Figure 9-76. Case A: Moving Vehicle to Safely Cross or Stop at Railroad Crossing	9-188
Figure 9-77. Case B: Departure of Vehicle from Stopped Position to Cross Single Railroad Track	9-190

CHAPTER 10 GRADE SEPARATIONS AND INTERCHANGES

Figure 10-1. Interchange Configurations	10-3
Figure 10-2. Factors Influencing Length of Access Control along an Interchange Crossroad	10-9
Figure 10-3a. Typical Grade Separation Structures with Closed Abutments.	10-14
Figure 10-3b. Typical Grade Separation Structures with Closed Abutments.	10-15
Figure 10-4. Typical Grade Separation Structure with Open-End Span	10-15
Figure 10-5. Multilevel Grade Separation Structures	10-16
Figure 10-6. Lateral Offset for Major Roadway Underpasses.	10-20
Figure 10-7. Typical Overpass Structures.	10-22
Figure 10-8. Flat Terrain, Distance Needed to Achieve Grade Separation.	10-26
Figure 10-8. Flat Terrain, Distance Needed to Achieve Grade Separation (Continued)	10-27
Figure 10-9. Three-Leg Interchanges with Single Structures	10-29
Figure 10-10. Three-Leg Interchanges with Multiple Structures	10-31
Figure 10-11. Three-Leg Interchange (T-Type or Trumpet).	10-32
Figure 10-12. Three-Leg Interchange Directional Design	10-33

Figure 10-13. Directional Three-Leg Interchange at a River Crossing	10-34
Figure 10-14. Trumpet Freeway-to-Freeway Interchange	10-35
Figure 10-15. Four-Leg Interchanges, Ramps in One Quadrant	10-36
Figure 10-16. Typical Four-Leg Diamond Interchange.	10-37
Figure 10-17. Diamond Interchanges, Conventional Arrangements	10-39
Figure 10-18. Diamond Interchange Arrangements to Reduce Traffic Conflicts.	10-39
Figure 10-19. Diamond Interchanges with Additional Structures	10-40
Figure 10-20. Freeway with a Three-Level Diamond Interchange	10-41
Figure 10-21. X-Pattern Ramp Arrangement	10-41
Figure 10-22. Diamond Interchange with Roundabouts at the Crossroad Ramp Terminals	10-42
Figure 10-23. Underpass Single-Point Diamond Interchange.	10-43
Figure 10-24. Typical SPDI Underpass Configuration in Restricted Right-of-Way	10-44
Figure 10-25. Overpass Layout for an SPDI with a Frontage Road and a Separate U-Turn Movement	10-46
Figure 10-26. Underpass SPDI and Overpass SPDI.	10-47
Figure 10-27. Partial Cloverleaf Interchange	10-49
Figure 10-28. Four-Leg Interchange, Cloverleaf with Collector-Distributor Roads	10-49
Figure 10-29. Schematic of Partial Cloverleaf Ramp Arrangements, Exit and Entrance Turns	10-51
Figure 10-30. Four-Leg Interchange (Partial or Two-Quadrant Cloverleaf with Ramps before Main Structure).	10-52
Figure 10-31. Four-Leg Interchange (Partial or Two-Quadrant Cloverleaf with Ramps beyond Main Structure).	10-53
Figure 10-32. Directional Interchanges with Weaving Areas	10-55
Figure 10-33. Directional Interchanges with No Weaving	10-56
Figure 10-34. Directional Interchanges With Multilevel Structures.	10-57
Figure 10-35. Directional Interchange, Two Semidirect Connections	10-58
Figure 10-36. Four-Level Directional Interchange	10-58
Figure 10-37. Four-Level Directional Interchange	10-59
Figure 10-38. Directional Interchange with Semidirect Connection and Loops	10-59
Figure 10-39. Offset Interchange via Ramp Highway	10-60
Figure 10-40. Four-Leg Interchange, Diamond with a Direct Connection	10-61

Figure 10-41. Four-Leg Interchange, Cloverleaf with a Semidirect Connection	10-61
Figure 10-42. Cloverleaf Interchange with Semidirect Connection	10-62
Figure 10-43. Complex Interchange Arrangement.	10-63
Figure 10-44. Adaptability of Interchanges on Freeways as Related to Types of Intersecting Facilities.	10-65
Figure 10-45. Widening for Divisional Island at Interchanges	10-67
Figure 10-46. Arrangement of Exits between Successive Interchanges	10-69
Figure 10-47. Interchange Forms to Maintain Route Continuity	10-70
Figure 10-48. Collector-Distributor Road on Major-Minor Roadway Overlap	10-71
Figure 10-49. Schematic of Basic Number of Lanes	10-72
Figure 10-50. Typical Examples of Lane Balance	10-74
Figure 10-51. Coordination of Lane Balance and Basic Number of Lanes.	10-75
Figure 10-52. Alternative Methods of Dropping Auxiliary Lanes.	10-77
Figure 10-53. Coordination of Lane Balance and Basic Number of Lanes through Application of Auxiliary Lanes.	10-78
Figure 10-54. Auxiliary Lane Dropped at Two-Lane Exit	10-79
Figure 10-55. Interchange Forms with One and Two Exits.	10-83
Figure 10-56. Two-Lane Crossroad Designs to Discourage Wrong-Way Entry	10-85
Figure 10-57. Divided Crossroad Designs to Discourage Wrong-Way Entry	10-86
Figure 10-58. General Types of Ramps.	10-88
Figure 10-59. Ramp Shapes.	10-91
Figure 10-60. Development of Superelevation at Free-Flow Ramp Terminals	10-95
Figure 10-61. Typical Exit Gore Area Characteristics.	10-96
Figure 10-62. Typical Gore Details	10-98
Figure 10-63. Traveled-Way Narrowing on Entrance Ramps	10-99
Figure 10-64. Gore Area, Single-Lane Exit	10-100
Figure 10-65. Gore Area, Major Fork	10-100
Figure 10-66. Gore Area, Two-Lane Exit	10-101
Figure 10-67. Entrance Terminal.	10-101
Figure 10-68. Recommended Minimum Ramp Terminal Spacing	10-106
Figure 10-69. Typical Single-Lane Entrance Ramps.	10-108

Figure 10-70. Exit Ramps—Single Lane	10-114
Figure 10-71a. Layout of Taper-Type Terminals on Curves (Metric)	10-117
Figure 10-71b. Layout of Taper-Type Terminals on Curves (U.S. Customary)	10-118
Figure 10-72. Parallel-Type Ramp Terminals on Curves	10-119
Figure 10-73. Typical Two-Lane Entrance Ramps	10-122
Figure 10-74. Two-Lane Exit Terminals.	10-123
Figure 10-75. Major Forks	10-125
Figure 10-76. Branch Connections	10-126
Figure 10-77. Diagram of Freeway Configuration with Closely Spaced Ramps but Limited Weaving	10-128

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1 HIGHWAY FUNCTIONS

Table 1-1. Guidelines on Extent of Rural Functional Systems	1-10
Table 1-2. Guidelines for Extent of Urban Functional Systems	1-12

CHAPTER 2 DESIGN CONTROLS AND CRITERIA

Table 2-1a. Design Vehicle Dimensions (SI Units)	2-3
Table 2-1b. Design Vehicle Dimensions (U.S. Customary Units)	2-4
Table 2-2a. Minimum Turning Radii of Design Vehicles (SI Units)	2-6
Table 2-2b. Minimum Turning Radii of Design Vehicles (U.S. Customary Units).	2-7
Table 2-3. Corresponding Design Speeds in Metric and U.S. Customary Units.	2-56
Table 2-4. General Definitions of Levels of Service	2-66
Table 2-5. Guidelines for Selection of Design Levels of Service	2-67

CHAPTER 3 ELEMENTS OF DESIGN

Table 3-1. Stopping Sight Distance on Level Roadways	3-4
Table 3-2. Stopping Sight Distance on Grades	3-5
Table 3-3. Decision Sight Distance	3-7
Table 3-4. Passing Sight Distance for Design of Two-Lane Highways	3-9
Table 3-5. Minimum Passing Zone Lengths to Be Included in Traffic Operational Analyses	3-14
Table 3-6. Average Running Speeds	3-29
Table 3-7. Minimum Radius Using Limiting Values of e and f	3-32
Table 3-8. Minimum Radii for Design Superelevation Rates, Design Speeds, and $e_{\max} = 4\%$	3-44
Table 3-9. Minimum Radii for Design Superelevation Rates, Design Speeds, and $e_{\max} = 6\%$	3-45
Table 3-10a. Minimum Radii for Design Superelevation Rates, Design Speeds, and $e_{\max} = 8\%$ (Metric)	3-46
Table 3-10b. Minimum Radii for Design Superelevation Rates, Design Speeds, and $e_{\max} = 8\%$ (U.S. Customary).	3-47
Table 3-11a. Minimum Radii for Design Superelevation Rates, Design Speeds, and $e_{\max} = 10\%$ (Metric)	3-48

Table 3-11b. Minimum Radii for Design Superelevation Rates, Design Speeds, and $e_{\max} = 10\%$ (U.S. Customary)	3-49
Table 3-12a. Minimum Radii for Design Superelevation Rates, Design Speeds, and $e_{\max} = 12\%$ (Metric)	3-50
Table 3-12b. Minimum Radii for Design Superelevation Rates, Design Speeds, and $e_{\max} = 12\%$ (U.S. Customary)	3-51
Table 3-13a. Minimum Radii and Superelevation for Low-Speed Urban Streets (Metric)	3-54
Table 3-13b. Minimum Radii and Superelevation for Low-Speed Urban Streets (U.S. Customary)	3-55
Table 3-14. Lengths of Circular Arcs for Different Compound Curve Radii	3-58
Table 3-15. Maximum Relative Gradients	3-61
Table 3-16. Adjustment Factor for Number of Lanes Rotated	3-62
Table 3-17a. Superelevation Runoff L_r (m) for Horizontal Curves	3-64
Table 3-17b. Superelevation Runoff L_r (ft) for Horizontal Curves	3-65
Table 3-18. Runoff Locations that Minimize the Vehicle's Lateral Motion	3-67
Table 3-19. Limiting Superelevation Rates	3-68
Table 3-20. Maximum Radius for Use of a Spiral Curve Transition	3-71
Table 3-21. Desirable Length of Spiral Curve Transition	3-73
Table 3-22. Superelevation Rates Associated with Large Relative Gradients	3-74
Table 3-23. Tangent Runout Length for Spiral Curve Transition Design	3-75
Table 3-24. Minimum Lengths of Spiral for Intersection Curves	3-83
Table 3-25. Length of Circular Arc for a Compound Intersection Curve When Followed by a Curve of One-Half Radius or Preceded by a Curve of Double Radius	3-84
Table 3-26a. Calculated and Design Values For Traveled Way Widening on Open Highway Curves (Two-Lane Highways, One-Way Or Two-Way) (Metric)	3-93
Table 3-26b. Calculated and Design Values for Traveled Way Widening on Open Highway Curves (Two-Lane Highways, One-Way or Two-Way) (U.S. Customary)	3-94
Table 3-27. Adjustments for Traveled Way Widening Values on Open Highway Curves (Two-Lane Highways, One-Way or Two-Way)	3-96
Table 3-28a. Derived Pavement Widths for Turning Roadways for Different Design Vehicles (Metric)	3-100
Table 3-28b. Derived Pavement Widths for Turning Roadways for Different Design Vehicles (U.S. Customary)	3-101
Table 3-29. Design Widths of Pavements for Turning Roadways	3-103

Table 3-30. Range of Usable Shoulder Widths or Equivalent Lateral Clearances Outside of Turning Roadways, Not on Structure	3-106
Table 3-31. Optimal Passing Lane Lengths for Traffic Operational Efficiency (28, 29)	3-135
Table 3-32. Recommended Lengths of Turnouts Including Taper	3-139
Table 3-33. Rolling Resistance of Roadway Surfacing Materials.	3-142
Table 3-34. Design Controls for Crest Vertical Curves Based on Stopping Sight Distance	3-155
Table 3-35. Design Controls for Crest Vertical Curves Based on Passing Sight Distance	3-157
Table 3-36. Design Controls for Sag Vertical Curves	3-161

CHAPTER 4 CROSS-SECTION ELEMENTS

Table 4-1. Normal Traveled-Way Cross Slope	4-6
Table 4-2. Noise-Abatement Criteria for Various Land Uses	4-43

CHAPTER 5 LOCAL ROADS AND STREETS

Table 5-1. Minimum Design Speeds for Local Rural Roads.	5-2
Table 5-2. Maximum Grades for Local Rural Roads.	5-3
Table 5-3. Design Controls for Stopping Sight Distance and for Crest and Sag Vertical Curves.	5-4
Table 5-4. Design Controls for Crest Vertical Curves Based on Passing Sight Distance	5-5
Table 5-5. Minimum Width of Traveled Way and Shoulders	5-6
Table 5-6. Minimum Clear Roadway Widths and Design Loadings for New and Reconstructed Bridges.	5-7
Table 5-7. Minimum Structural Capacities and Minimum Roadway Widths for Bridges to Remain in Place	5-8
Table 5-8. Maximum Grades for Recreational Roads	5-26
Table 5-9. Design Controls for Stopping Sight Distance and for Crest and Sag Vertical Curves—Recreational Roads.	5-27
Table 5-10. Design Controls for Passing Sight Distance for Crest Vertical Curves—Recreational Roads.	5-29
Table 5-11. Widths of Traveled Way and Shoulders—Recreational Roads	5-30
Table 5-12. Design Speeds for Resource Recovery and Local Service Roads.	5-33

CHAPTER 6 COLLECTOR ROADS AND STREETS

Table 6-1. Minimum Design Speeds for Rural Collectors	6-2
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Table 6-2. Maximum Grades for Rural Collectors	6-3
Table 6-3. Design Controls for Stopping Sight Distance and for Crest and Sag Vertical Curves	6-4
Table 6-4. Design Controls for Crest Vertical Curves Based on Passing Sight Distance	6-5
Table 6-5. Minimum Width of Traveled Way and Shoulders	6-6
Table 6-6. Minimum Roadway Widths and Design Loadings for New and Reconstructed Bridges	6-7
Table 6-7. Structural Capacities and Minimum Roadway Widths for Bridges to Remain in Place	6-8
Table 6-8. Maximum Grades for Urban Collectors	6-12

CHAPTER 7 RURAL AND URBAN ARTERIALS

Table 7-1. Minimum Sight Distances for Arterials	7-3
Table 7-2. Maximum Grades for Rural Arterials	7-4
Table 7-3. Minimum Width of Traveled Way and Usable Shoulder for Rural Arterials	7-5
Table 7-4. Maximum Grades for Urban Arterials	7-29

CHAPTER 8 FREEWAYS

Table 8-1. Maximum Grades for Rural and Urban Freeways	8-4
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CHAPTER 9 INTERSECTIONS

Table 9-1. Level of Service Definitions for Signalized Intersections (29)	9-8
Table 9-2. Comparison of Roundabout Types	9-22
Table 9-3. Length of Sight Triangle Leg—Case A, No Traffic Control	9-33
Table 9-4. Adjustment Factors for Sight Distance Based on Approach Grade	9-35
Table 9-5. Time Gap for Case B1, Left Turn from Stop	9-37
Table 9-6. Design Intersection Sight Distance—Case B1, Left Turn from Stop	9-38
Table 9-7. Time Gap for Case B2—Right Turn from Stop and Case B3—Crossing Maneuver	9-40
Table 9-8. Design Intersection Sight Distance—Case B2, Right Turn from Stop, and Case B3, Crossing Maneuver	9-41
Table 9-9. Case C1—Crossing Maneuvers from Yield-Controlled Approaches, Length of Minor Road Leg and Travel Times	9-45
Table 9-10. Length of Sight Triangle Leg along Major Road—Case C1, Crossing Maneuver at Yield-Controlled Intersections	9-47
Table 9-11. Time Gap for Case C2, Left or Right Turn	9-49

Table 9-12. Design Intersection Sight Distance—Case C2, Left or Right Turn at Yield-Controlled Intersections	9-49
Table 9-13. Time Gap for Case F, Left Turns from the Major Road.	9-51
Table 9-14. Intersection Sight Distance—Case F, Left Turn from the Major Road	9-52
Table 9-15. Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs for Turns at Intersections—Simple Curve Radius with Taper	9-57
Table 9-15. Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs for Turns at Intersections—Simple Curve Radius with Taper (Continued)	9-58
Table 9-15. Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs for Turns at Intersections—Simple Curve Radius with Taper (Continued)	9-59
Table 9-16. Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs for Turns at Intersections—Three-Centered Curves	9-60
Table 9-16. Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs for Turns at Intersections—Three-Centered Curves (Continued)	9-61
Table 9-16. Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs for Turns at Intersections—Three-Centered Curves (Continued)	9-62
Table 9-16. Edge-of-Traveled-Way Designs for Turns at Intersections—Three-Centered Curves (Continued)	9-63
Table 9-17. Cross Street Width Occupied by Turning Vehicle for Various Angles of Intersection and Curb Radii (Metric)	9-86
Table 9-17. Cross Street Width Occupied by Turning Vehicle for Various Angles of Intersection and Curb Radii (U.S. Customary)	9-87
Table 9-18. Typical Designs for Turning Roadways (Metric)	9-113
Table 9-18. Typical Designs for Turning Roadways (U.S. Customary)	9-114
Table 9-19. Effective Maximum Relative Gradients.	9-116
Table 9-20. Maximum Algebraic Difference in Cross Slope at Turning Roadway Terminals.	9-121
Table 9-21. Stopping Sight Distance for Turning Roadways	9-123
Table 9-22. Desirable Full Deceleration Lengths	9-126
Table 9-23. Guide for Left-Turn Lanes on Two-Lane Highways (10)	9-132
Table 9-24. Swept Path Widths for 90-Degree Left Turns (11)	9-140
Table 9-25. Minimum Design of Median Openings (P Design Vehicle, Control Radius of 12 m [40 ft])	9-145
Table 9-26. Minimum Design of Median Openings (SU-9 [SU-30] Design Vehicle, Control Radius of 15 m [50 ft])	9-146

Table 9-27. Minimum Design of Median Openings (WB-12 [WB-40] Design Vehicle, Control Radius of 23 m [75 ft]) 9-147

Table 9-28. Effect of Skew on Minimum Design for Median Openings (Typical Values Based on Control Radius of 15 m [50 ft]) (Metric) 9-152

Table 9-28. Effect of Skew on Minimum Design for Median Openings (Typical Values Based on Control Radius of 15 m [50 ft]) (U.S. Customary) 9-153

Table 9-29. Design Controls for Minimum Median Openings 9-154

Table 9-30. Minimum Designs for U-Turns. 9-166

Table 9-31. Key Design Dimensions to Accommodate Nonmotorized Users 9-175

Table 9-32. Design Sight Distance for Combination of Highway and Train Vehicle Speeds; 22.4-m [73.5-ft] Truck Crossing a Single Set of Tracks at 90 Degrees 9-191

CHAPTER 10 GRADE SEPARATIONS AND INTERCHANGES

Table 10-1. Guide Values for Ramp Design Speed as Related to Highway Design Speed. 10-89

Table 10-2. Minimum Length of Taper Beyond an Offset Nose 10-99

Table 10-3. Minimum Acceleration Lengths for Entrance Terminals with Flat Grades of Two Percent or Less. 10-110

Table 10-4. Speed Change Lane Adjustment Factors as a Function of Grade (Metric). 10-111

Table 10-4. Speed Change Lane Adjustment Factors as a Function of Grade (U.S. Customary) 10-112

Table 10-5. Minimum Deceleration Lengths for Exit Terminals with Flat Grades of Two Percent or Less. 10-115

FOREWORD

Highway engineers, as designers, strive to meet the needs of highway users while maintaining the integrity of the environment. Unique combinations of design controls and constraints that are often conflicting call for unique design solutions. *A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets* provides guidance based on established practices that are supplemented by recent research. This document is also intended as a comprehensive reference manual to assist in administrative, planning, and educational efforts pertaining to design formulation.

Design values are presented in this document in both metric and U.S. customary units and were developed independently within each system. The relationship between the metric and U.S. customary values is neither an exact (soft) conversion nor a completely rationalized (hard) conversion; and the use of brackets around U.S. Customary values does not indicate as in some AASHTO publications that these are soft conversions. The metric values are those that would have been used had the policy been presented exclusively in metric units; the U.S. customary values are those that would have been used if the policy had been presented exclusively in U.S. customary units. Therefore, the user is advised to work entirely in one system and not attempt to convert directly between the two.

The fact that new design values are presented herein does not imply that existing streets and highways are unsafe, nor does it mandate the initiation of improvement projects. This publication is not intended as a policy for resurfacing, restoration, or rehabilitation (3R) projects. For projects of this type, where major revisions to horizontal or vertical curvature are not necessary or practical, existing design values may be retained. Specific site investigations and crash history analyses often indicate that the existing design features are performing in a satisfactory manner. The cost of full reconstruction for these facilities, particularly where major realignment is not needed, will often not be justified. Resurfacing, restoration, and rehabilitation projects enable highway agencies to improve highway safety by selectively upgrading existing highway and roadside features without the cost of full reconstruction. When designing 3R projects, the designer should refer to *TRB Special Report 214, Designing Safer Roads: Practices for Resurfacing, Restoration, and Rehabilitation*, and related publications for guidance.

The intent of this policy is to provide guidance to the designer by referencing a recommended range of values for critical dimensions. Good highway design involves balancing safety, mobility, and preservation of scenic, aesthetic, historic, cultural, and environmental resources. This policy is therefore not intended to be a detailed design manual that could supersede the need for the application of sound principles by the knowledgeable design professional. Sufficient flexibility is permitted to encourage independent designs tailored to particular situations. Minimum values are either given or implied by the lower value in a given range of values. The larger values within the ranges may be used where social, economic, and environmental impacts are not critical. Engineering judgment is exercised by highway agencies to select appropriate design values.

The highway, vehicle, and individual users are all integral parts of transportation safety and efficiency. While this document primarily addresses geometric design issues, a properly equipped and maintained vehicle and reasonable and prudent performance by the user are also needed for safe and efficient operation of the transportation facility.

Emphasis is placed on the joint use of transportation corridors by pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit vehicles. Designers should recognize the implications of sharing transportation corridors and are encouraged to consider not only vehicular movement, but also movement of people, distribution of goods, and provision of essential services. A more comprehensive transportation program is thereby emphasized.

Cost-effective design is also emphasized. The traditional procedure of comparing highway-user benefits with costs has been expanded to reflect the needs of non-users and the environment. Although adding complexity to the analysis, this broader approach also takes into account both the need for a given project and the relative priorities among various projects. The results of this approach may need to be modified to meet the needs-versus-funds challenges that highway administrators face. The goal of cost-effective design is not merely to give priority to the most beneficial individual projects but to provide the most benefits to the highway system of which each project is a part.

Most of the technical material that follows is detailed or descriptive design information. Design guidelines are included for freeways, arterials, collectors, and local roads, in both urban and rural locations, paralleling the functional classification used in highway planning. The book is organized into functional chapters to stress the relationship between highway design and highway function. An explanation of functional classification is included in Chapter 1.

These geometric design guidelines are intended to provide operational efficiency, comfort, safety, and convenience for the motorist. The design concepts presented herein were also developed with consideration for environmental quality. The effects of the various environmental impacts can and should be mitigated by thoughtful design processes. This principle, coupled with that of aesthetic consistency with the surrounding terrain and urban setting, is intended to produce highways that are safe and efficient for users, acceptable to non-users, and in harmony with the environment.

This publication supersedes the 2004 AASHTO publication of the same name. Because the concepts presented cannot be completely covered in this one document, references to additional literature are given at the end of each chapter. These references include works that were cited or consulted in the development of the chapter or are of interest to the discussion of the subject matter therein. Of these documents, only those balloted and published by AASHTO represent AASHTO policy.

1 Highway Functions

1.1 SYSTEMS AND CLASSIFICATIONS

The classification of highways into different operational systems, functional classes, or geometric types is needed for communication among engineers, administrators, and the general public. Various classification schemes have been applied for distinct purposes in different rural and urban regions. Classification of highways by design types based on the major geometric features (e.g., freeways, conventional streets, and highways) is the most helpful approach for highway location and design procedures. Classification by route numbering (e.g., U.S., State, and County) is the most helpful approach for traffic operations. Administrative classification (e.g., National Highway System or Non-National Highway System) is used to denote the levels of government responsible for and the method of financing highway facilities. Functional classification, the grouping of highways by the character of service they provide, was developed for transportation planning purposes. Comprehensive transportation planning, which is an integral part of total economic and social development, uses functional classification as an important planning tool. The emergence of functional classification as the predominant method of grouping highways is consistent with the policies contained in this publication.

1.2 THE CONCEPT OF FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION

This section introduces the basic concepts needed for understanding the functional classification of highway facilities and systems.

1.2.1 Hierarchies of Movements and Components

While the accommodation of bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users is an important consideration in the planning and design of highways and streets, the functional classification of a highway or street is primarily based on motor vehicle travel characteristics and the degree of access provided to adjacent properties. Motor vehicle travel involves a series of distinct travel movements. The six recognizable stages in most trips include main movement, transition, distribution, collection, access, and termination. For example, Figure 1-1 shows a hypothetical highway trip using a freeway, where the main movement of vehicles is uninterrupted, high-speed flow. When approaching destinations from the freeway, vehicles reduce speed on freeway ramps, which act as transition roadways. The vehicles then enter moderate-speed arterials (distributor facilities)