

Poorly Designed Roads Harm Rural Neighborhoods

Road Work Ahead!

Your rural neighborhood road is scheduled for an “improvement” project!

The design of this project is going to have significant effects on your family, your neighbors, and your neighborhood, for better or for worse. It will either promote neighborhood safety and integrity or degrade it. It will either add value to the neighborhood character or decrease it, possibly ruining forever the qualities that you and your neighbors value most.

Rural neighborhood safety and integrity depends fundamentally on the ability to walk and cycle safely and comfortably, not only for adults, but especially for children. Beyond serving as access for motorized vehicles, there is a complex web of valued

activity revolving around a neighborhood road. In fact, the road is an integral part of any neighborhood and its value to the neighborhood lies in a host of activities that connect people as neighbors:

- ✓ Walking to the neighbors
- ✓ Kids walking to the school bus
- ✓ Kids walking or biking to their friend’s home
- ✓ Walking for exercise
- ✓ Family bike riding
- ✓ Bicycle commuting
- ✓ Accessing by wheelchair
- ✓ Meeting and talking with neighbors

Because the very concept of neighborhood depends on these human (pedestrian) scale activities, it is not an exaggeration to state **that without a safe**


neighborhood road, there will be no neighborhood! In rural areas other activities such as horseback riding contribute significantly to the lifestyle, and depend on road characteristics for safety.

Safe, walkable neighborhoods are healthier places to raise kids and have lower crime rates and higher property values.

Unfortunately for rural neighborhoods and the people who live there, conventional road building practice does not take the safety of neighborhood residents into consideration. A design process is used that focuses on increasing automobile speeds and traffic volumes, frequently changing beautiful rural neighborhood roads into highway style motorways that blight the neighborhood and degrade its integrity and safety.


Highway-Style Design

Takes This:
(Existing)



Right of Way

And Turns It Into This:
(Improved)



Right of Way

An Invitation to Speed

Dangerous Design Features

- Wide (usually 11-12 ft.), straightened, flattened driving lanes are an invitation to speed. Experts recommend 9-10 ft. for safe neighborhoods.
- Wide paved shoulders increase the scale of the road, increasing traffic speeds. Shoulders are not safe nor comfortable places to walk next to speeding traffic, especially for children.
- Wide, shallow-sloped ditches are designed to allow motorized traffic to drive off the road and then drive back on. These ditches increase the scale of the road, increase traffic speeds, and take up excessive width in the right of way that might otherwise be used for safe pedestrian and bicycle access.
- Further “clear zone” outside of ditches increases a drivers tendency to speed and destroys the local character given by roadside features.

Speed Kills

The most important consideration in designing a safe neighborhood road is the speed of the automobile traffic. Studies have repeatedly shown that, regardless of posted speed limits, motorists will drive faster when given the safety cushion of a wider road and greater sight distances. When motorists drive faster, pedestrian accidents are both more likely and more serious. The probability of a pedestrian being killed is 3.5% when struck by a vehicle traveling at 15 miles per hour, but increases more than tenfold to 37% at 31 miles per hour and increases to 83% at 44 miles per hour.

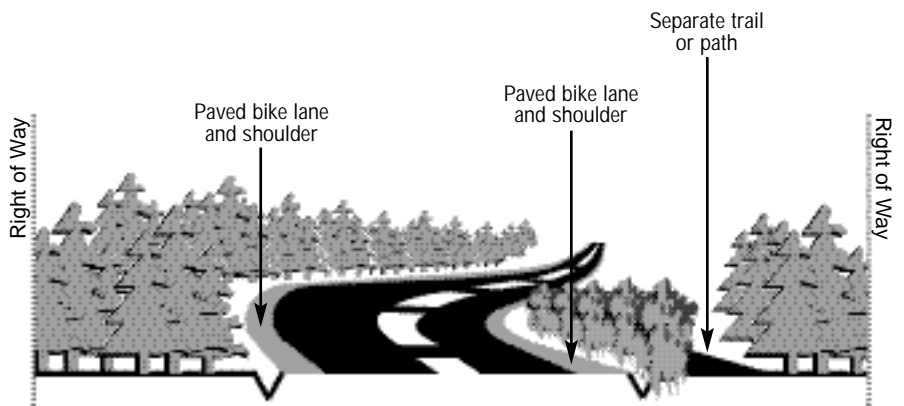
One way to decrease speeds and the detrimental effects of traffic in rural neighborhoods is to retain the existing features of rural roads that tend to slow traffic, such as narrower traffic lanes and curves. These features give rural roads and neighborhoods their charm and rural character.

Highway-style roads have no safe, comfortable place to walk and cause increased traffic speeds and volumes in rural neighborhoods.

Highway-style roads have the look and feel (and sometimes the dimensions!) of an interstate highway rather than a rural neighborhood road. In addition to being unsafe for children and residents, they increase traffic noise and are ugly when compared to the scenic, winding country road that they frequently replace.

Copies of this neighborhood notice can be downloaded from www.SafeRuralRoads.com.

A BETTER WAY



Improved federal road design policies address the danger of poorly designed roads.

These policies state that pedestrians and bicyclists *must* be given safe, comfortable access to our local roads. They advocate “thinking outside the pavement” when designing roads to include neighborhood character and safety. They recommend including citizens in the design process from the beginning so neighborhoods can be improved instead of blighted by road building.

Furthermore, in Clallam County, Washington, our adopted land use policies have the following goals:

- Improve neighborhood safety and integrity
- Retain rural character
- Decrease sprawl

These policies should guide any proposed road project.

Help build a better future for yourself, your neighbors, and your community:

- ✓ Ask the project engineer for a list of the project’s goals.
- ✓ Contact your neighbors and organize your ideas about what you want for the neighborhood.
- ✓ Are the project goals compatible with neighborhood goals?
- ✓ Will the design improve neighborhood integrity and safety?
- ✓ Talk to your county planners and the road department and tell them what you want.
- ✓ Ask them how the project will meet the goals of adopted local land use policies and federal transportation policies.
- ✓ If pedestrian safety is high on your list of concerns, tell them that the project design should help slow traffic speeds and give safe separate access for kids and pedestrians.
- ✓ Contact your county commissioner with your ideas/concerns.

To read more about public process and/or rural road design and to see a checklist for evaluating a project in your neighborhood, go to www.SafeRuralRoads.com. Or call your commissioner for a copy of the publications, *Roadwork–Public Process and Roadwork–Design Standards*.