
Houston Bike Plan

Plan Map FAQs



**PLANNING &
DEVELOPMENT
DEPARTMENT**

The Houston Bike Plan map uses three colors when identifying different types of bike facilities. They are as identified and explained below. When reading the map, it is important to understand that a public street right-of-way is more than the width of the roadway pavement. A right-of-way is the publically-owned corridor that includes the roadway and extends out to the edge of the private property on each side. It includes not only the paved roadway, but also the curbs, the drainage ditches and sidewalks.

What do the colors on the map mean?

Green Lines represent off-street bikeways.

Such bike facilities include off-street trails and dedicated side paths/shared use paths in public rights-of-way (ROW). Examples of such facilities are bayou trails, like those along Buffalo, White Oak, Sims, Halls and Brays Bayous; Rails-To-Trails, like MKT in the Heights and the Harrisburg Rail Trail and Columbia Tap Trail in east Houston; utility corridor trails, like the CenterPoint Trail in Spring Branch east of Gessner, and shared use paths like the one along Memorial Drive, Allen Parkway, and Nicholson Street.

Blue Lines represent dedicated bikeways within public street right-of-way.

While these lines are labeled as “dedicated on-street,” this term means only that the facility would provide a dedicated space within a street right-of-way, and may or may not be actually within the street pavement. Such facilities include bike lanes (including buffered bike lanes), separated bike lanes, and in some cases may be implemented as side paths, which is a path alongside a street but outside the roadway curbs and often shared with pedestrians.

The exact configuration will be determined through future design and engineering of the right-of-way (corridor). Examples of such dedicated on-street bikeway facilities are the Lamar Street separated bikeway in Downtown and bike lanes on Lyons Avenue or Heights Boulevard.

Some corridors may be shown on the map in blue indicating a plan for a dedicated bike lane along a particular corridor, but through detailed planning and engineering of the corridor a side path may be determined as a more appropriate tool. This is why side paths are shown in both the Off-Street column (Green) and the Dedicated On-Street column (Blue) of facilities. If constructed as a side path, the bikeway is shown in green on bikeway map of existing facilities.

Magenta Lines represent shared on-street bikeways.

Such facilities include neighborhood bikeways or neighborhood shared streets. Examples of such streets are Inwood Drive, South Boulevard and Hawthorne Street. Such bike facilities are recommended for residential streets with lower traffic volume and where speeds are 30 mph or less. Thoroughfares and higher speed collector streets are not suitable as high-comfort neighborhood bikeways.

How was the Houston Bike Plan Map developed?

The Project team started by looking at previously conducted studies and plans like Livable Center Studies, Sub-regional Mobility Studies, Bicycle and Pedestrian Studies, Corridor Studies and other neighborhood plans. Other supporting information such as the transit network, stations and transit centers; local and regional destinations like parks, schools, universities, shopping and employment centers; population and employment densities including low-income and low-car-ownership households; community feedback, overall network connectivity and other factors were considered in the development of the draft network. In general, the recommendations from past studies are incorporated in the Plan map. There are some instances, however, where the team updated the previous plan's recommendations in order to create better connections and incorporate higher comfort facilities in line with the vision and goals for the Bike Plan. More information is available at houstonbikeplan.org.

Does a line on the bike plan map mean that traffic lanes will be removed?

For many projects, the answer is likely to be no. The Houston Bike Plan map shows planning-level recommendations for three broad categories of bikeway facilities: off-street, dedicated on-street and shared on-street. Once the City decides to add a bike facility that is recommended on the plan, the design and engineering phase will determine the best approach to balance the mobility needs of all users while improving safety for people in cars, bicyclists, and pedestrians. This is consistent with the Mayor of Houston's Complete Streets Executive Order. Street design may modify lane configurations to achieve this balance.

Examples of these approaches are provided in the Plan's pilot projects. One such pilot project is Kelley Street, which is currently a six-lane roadway and carries traffic at relatively low volumes. The proposed pilot project shows how this street could be restriped as a four-lane roadway with buffered bike lanes while maintaining sufficient capacity to support current and future traffic volumes. Another example is Gemini Street, which is a four-lane undivided roadway with low traffic volume and multiple access driveways. Gemini Street could be restriped as a two-lane street with a center turn lane and bike lanes, which would reduce conflicts from left turning vehicles and improve safety along the street for all users. Final design of any individual projects will occur at a later date as part of the capital planning and programming process of individual implementing agencies.

Why does the Houston Bike Plan map place some bicycle on already busy major thoroughfares?

The Bike Plan Map recommends a network of corridors and general facility types to meet the vision and goal of the Plan. As a result, it recommends bike facilities along a broad range of on and off-street corridors. Every attempt has been made to use local and collector streets as they often provide the most comfortable and safe route for a bicyclist. However, local and collectors streets do not always provide direct, convenient connection across multiple neighborhoods. In order to create a well-connected network that people will actually ride, some major thoroughfares must be included. Many bike facilities on major thoroughfares may be achieved without a change to the number of traffic lanes. Any modifications to the number of travel lanes would occur only after traffic analysis verifies that adequate vehicular capacity can be maintained.

There is a street in my neighborhood that is a good bicycle route. Why isn't it included in the Houston Bike Plan map?

Many, perhaps most, local streets in Houston are fairly comfortable for bicycling. The Houston Bike Plan map focuses on identifying routes that offer potential city-wide connections or routes between neighborhoods or to key destinations. It is not meant to map every possible local neighborhood route. The Bike Plan also suggests a process to develop more refined neighborhood-level bicycle recommendations for future planning.