

Definitions for cycling infrastructure



UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

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UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

The United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) is one of the 5 United Nations regional commissions, administered by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). It was established in 1947 with the mandate to help rebuild post-war Europe, develop economic activity and strengthen economic relations among European countries, and between Europe and the rest of the world. During the Cold War, UNECE served as a unique forum for economic dialogue and cooperation between East and West. Despite the complexity of this period, significant achievements were made, with consensus reached on numerous harmonization and standardization agreements.

In the post-Cold War era, UNECE acquired not only many new member States, but also new functions. Since the early 1990s the organization has focused on assisting the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia with their transition process and their integration into the global economy.

Today, UNECE supports its 56 member States in Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia and North America in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNECE provides a multilateral platform for policy dialogue, the development of international legal instruments, norms and standards, the exchange of best practices and economic and technical expertise, as well as technical cooperation for countries with economies in transition.

The norms, standards and conventions developed at UNECE in the areas of environment, transport, trade, statistics, energy, forestry, housing and land management, innovation or population, offer practical tools to improve people's daily lives. Many are used worldwide, and a number of countries from outside the region participate in work of UNECE.

UNECE's multisectoral approach helps countries to tackle the interconnected challenges of sustainable development in an integrated manner, with a transboundary focus that helps devise solutions to shared challenges. With its unique convening power, UNECE fosters cooperation among all stakeholders at the country and regional levels.

TRANSPORT IN UNECE

UNECE services 61 United Nations inland transport legal instruments. Several of the legal instruments are global either by design or because their success has caused them to grow beyond the ECE region. In addition to negotiating the amendments to existing legal instruments, UNECE has been active in facilitating new legal instruments. Its normative activities are enhanced with developing methodologies, guidelines, and definitions on subjects such as transport planning, data collection and the collection of transport statistics. UNECE's work on transport is governed by the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) and its 21 Working Parties, which are in turn supported by more than 40 formal and informal expert groups and in cooperation with 9 treaty bodies (Administrative Committees). Annual sessions of ITC are the key moments of this comprehensive intergovernmental work, when the results from all subsidiary bodies, as well as the UNECE Sustainable Transport Division, are presented to ITC members and contracting parties.

In addition to servicing ITC and its subsidiary bodies, the Division also services other intergovernmental bodies including the ECOSOC Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals, as well as 9 treaty bodies of United Nations legal instruments and the TIR Executive Board. In cooperation with UNESCAP, UNECE Sustainable Transport Division supports the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA). It also annually alternates with UNESCAP as the secretariat to the SPECA Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Transport, Transit and Connectivity. In cooperation with the UNECE Environment Division and WHO Europe, the Division services the Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (THE PEP). It ensures the management and oversight of the Trans-European North-South Motorway (TEM) and the Trans-European Railway (TER) projects. The Division supports the accession to and implementation of the UN legal instruments through policy dialogues, technical assistance, and analytical activities with the priority of promoting regional and subregional cooperation and capacity-building. Finally, since 2015, UNECE hosts the secretariat of the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Road Safety and since 2018 the secretariat of the United Nations Road Safety Fund (UNRSF).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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BACKGROUND

This paper contains common definitions for various types of cycling infrastructure elaborated by the 2022-2024 UNECE Group of Experts on Cycling Infrastructure Module established by the Inland Transport Committee (ITC) in 2022.

In elaborating the definitions, the Group of Experts considered the work done in UNECE countries on cycling. In doing so, the Group acknowledged that cycle and cycling had undergone a transformation in the years preceding the Group mandate which had led to the development of new types of cycle infrastructure, new road signage, new cycle definitions, and new traffic regulations in various UNECE countries and beyond. The Group considered meticulously these various developments and agreed to propose the following definitions for universal application by UNECE countries and other interested countries:

- For linear infrastructure: cycle track, cycle and pedestrian track, greenway, cycle lane, sharrows, 2-1 road, mixed traffic road, cycle street, street with contraflow cycling, bus and cycle lane, footpath with cycling allowed, specific service road, cycle route, cycle route network and cycle highway, and
- For non-linear infrastructure: cycle crossing, grade-separated cycle crossing, advanced stop line, two-stage turn provision, cycle parking, traffic light exemption for cyclists.

For each definition, The Group of Experts also prepared an explanatory note which contains, where relevant:

- (a) the source of the definition,
- (b) examples of application, and
- (c) existing signage and marking as per 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals (CoRSS, 2006 consolidated version) (in this case signs are referred to as per their Convention's name codes. for example D, 4) and/or as per the UNECE countries traffic regulations.

For ease of understanding, images of road signs and pictures of infrastructure are provided.



DEFINITIONS

I. Linear infrastructure

A. Cycle track

A cycle track is an independent road or part of a road designated for cycles, signposted as such. A cycle track is separated from other roads or other parts of the same road by structural means.

Explanatory note:

The above definition comes from CoRSS and the 1968 Conventions on Road Traffic (CoRT). However, the Group of Experts recommends a cycle track to be signposted either as compulsory or as non-compulsory. A non-compulsory signage is recommended for example if the cycle track parameters do not allow for seamless cycle traffic on the track by all cyclist user categories at any time. The Group of Experts notes that the non-compulsory signage for cycle track was not included in CoRSS prior to 2025.

The Group of Experts further notes that the provisions of the European Agreement Supplementing CoRT included in point 9 of the Annex to the Agreement, and concerning Article 10 of the Convention, are sometimes interpreted as an obstacle to introducing non-compulsory cycle tracks. Point (a) of the additional paragraph introduced by the Agreement stipulates that every driver should take exclusively, where they exist, the ways, carriageways, lanes and tracks allotted to road users in his category. Additionally, point (b) limits driving cycles on the carriageway to situations when this can be done without inconvenience to other road users, even if there is no cycle track present. The Group of Experts recognised these limitations and was of the opinion that they should be lifted.

The following signs should be used to notify cyclists about entering cycle tracks:

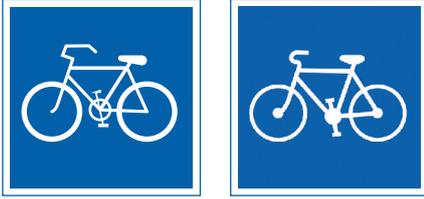
- Compulsory cycle track – sign D, 4 in CoRSS (2006 consolidated version):



- Non-compulsory cycle track – no sign in CoRSS (2006 consolidated version),
- Example elaborated by the WP.1 Group of Experts on Road Signs and Signals (GEoRSS):



- Examples used in Austria and France:



Horizontal markings can be used on cycle tracks to improve its recognisability and readability, in particular pictograms of cycles, edge and median lines.



Source A. Buczynski, Cycle track in Serbia



Source A. Buczynski, Cycle track in the United Kingdom

B. Cycle and pedestrian track

A cycle and pedestrian track is an independent road or part of a road designated for cycles and pedestrians sharing the same surface, signposted as such. A cycle and pedestrian track is separated from other roads or other parts of the same road by structural means.

Explanatory note:

This definition, building on the definition of the cycle track, is proposed by the Group of Experts.

Cycle and pedestrian tracks are typically used in location with low volumes of both cycle and pedestrian traffic.

Cycle and pedestrian track can be signposted by sign D, 11 b (CoRSS, 2006 consolidated version) which combines the symbol of pedestrians above or below the symbol of cycle:



When the cycle and pedestrian track should be compulsory for pedestrians and non-compulsory for cyclists, it can be signposted with sign D, 5 (compulsory footpath) and an additional panel permitting cyclist to use the footpath (see further under K Footpath with cycling allowed).

If the symbols of pedestrians and cycle are located next to each other and separated by a vertical line, sign D, 11 a should be used (CoRSS, 2006 consolidated version). The sign denotes path or track clearly separated either by physical means or road markings and pedestrians and cyclists are required to use the path or track reserved for them.

In the Group of Experts' view the denoting of path from track and vice-versa should be done by physical means and the markings should only be used in limited cases, for example on short distances between intersections.





Source: A. Buczynski, Cycle and pedestrian track in Sweden



Source: A. Buczynski, Cycle and pedestrian track in Portugal

C. Greenway

A greenway is an independent road designated for pedestrians and cyclists, signposted as such. Its use might be open to other non-motorised users, for example horseback riders, if signposted as such or defined in the national legislation.

Explanatory note:

This definition is proposed by the Group of Experts.

A greenway often follows a canal or a disused railroad. A greenway may include parts of the road dedicated for specific categories of its users, for example a soft shoulder for horseback riders. A greenway can be signposted either by shared pedestrian/horse rider and cycle track sign or by a dedicated greenway sign, if such exists in the national legislation.

The greenway can be signposted by a dedicated sign, such as for example in France:



Source: A. Buczynski, Greenway in France

D. Cycle lane

A cycle lane is a part of a carriageway designated for cycles. A cycle lane is distinguished from the rest of the carriageway by longitudinal road markings.

Explanatory note:

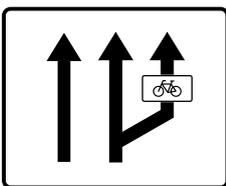
The definition comes from CoRT and CoRSS.

The Group of Experts recommends to make a distinction between mandatory and advisory cycle lanes. Mandatory cycle lanes must not be used by vehicles other than cycles. Advisory cycle lanes, if necessary, may be used by vehicles other than cycles when clear of cycles, but cycle traffic must not be endangered. Advisory cycle lane can be an indicator of the space cyclists need or of the recommended position of a cyclist on the carriageway, especially if it is not directly adjacent to the edge of the carriageway.

A cycle lane is separated from the rest of the carriageway by longitudinal line, continuous or broken. Symbols of cycles can also be used on the lane. As per article 26 bis of CoRSS (2006 consolidated version), the markings of cycle lanes should be clearly distinguished from other lines on the carriageway by being wider, and, in case of broken lines, with less space between strokes.

As both continuous and broken lines may be used to distinguish cycle lanes from the rest of the carriageway, the Group of Experts recommends using continuous lines for mandatory cycle lanes and broken lines for advisory cycle lanes.

Road markings for cycle lane can be accompanied by road signs E, 2a or E, 2b. A proposal for amending CoRSS, contained in ECE/TRANS/WP.1/2023/2/Rev.1, specifies sign E-02.2 for signposting lane reserved for other categories of vehicles and provides examples of a sign with a lane reserved for cycles. A permitted variant of an E, 2 b (E-02.2) sign indicating a cycle lane is presented below.



Source: A. Buczynski, Cycle lane in Germany



Source: A. Buczynski, Cycle lane in Ireland

E. Sharrows

Sharrows are road markings indicating recommended position of cyclists on the carriageway.

Explanatory note:

This definition is proposed by the Group of Experts.

Sharrows do not imply any restrictions or obligations, but they can serve to guide cyclists (for example, to keep safe distance from parked cars) on sections they share with motorised traffic. They can also warn other road users about the presence of cyclists. Sharrows are often used in connection with contraflow cycling, on roundabouts, or in places where cyclists can ride on a carriageway despite the existence of a segregated infrastructure (because, for example, the cycle track does not serve all directions on the next crossing).

Most often, sharrows are represented by a symbol of a cycle in combination with chevrons, either above or below the cycle. The Group of Experts recommends marking sharrows by cycle symbol placed below a dual chevron like in an example below used in Poland.



Source: A. Buczynski, Sharrows in Czechia

F. 2-1 road

2-1 road is a bidirectional road with two advisory cycle lanes marked on the carriageway, where the remaining carriageway is not wide enough for two motor vehicles other than motorcycle. Motorized vehicle drivers¹ should use the central lane in both directions, only deviating to the edge of the carriageway in the case of passing a vehicle incoming from the opposite direction.

Explanatory note:

This definition is proposed by the Group of Experts.

2-1 roads are typically used on rural roads with low volumes of motorised traffic.



Source: A. Buczynski, 2-1 road in France

¹ The term motorized vehicle drivers is used to include also agriculture vehicles which are excluded from motor vehicle definition.

G. Mixed traffic road

A mixed traffic road is a road on which cyclist share the carriageway with motorised traffic, without having a part of the carriageway (cycle lane) designated for cycles.

Explanatory note:

This definition is proposed by the Group of Experts.

Safety and comfort of cycling in mixed traffic depends on the speeds and volumes of motorised traffic. If the speeds and volumes of motorised traffic are low, it is not necessary or even desirable to designate a separate part of the road or of the carriageway to cyclists.

Mixed traffic includes, but is not limited to cycle streets, streets with contraflow cycling, and specific service roads. Sharrows may also be used in mixed traffic.

Additional legal provisions, such as minimum lateral passing distance or the obligation for drivers of motorised vehicles to change lane when overtaking the cyclists, might be considered to further improve safety in mixed traffic.

The Group of Experts developed a guidance decision matrix for mixing or separating cycle and motorised traffic. This matrix is contained in the Guide for designating cycle route networks (ECE/TRANS/369, Annex II).



Source: A. Buczynski, Mixed traffic road in France

H. Cycle street

A cycle street is a specially designed section of road or an area where special traffic rules apply and it is signposted as such at its entries and exits.

Explanatory note:

This definition is proposed by the Group of Experts.

The Group of Experts also formulated the following rules to apply at the cycle streets:

Cycle street, provisions for special regulations:

- (a) Speed limit 30 km/h,
- (b) Cyclists are exempted from any prohibition from travelling two or more abreast, if such a prohibition exists in national legislation for other situations,
- (c) Drivers of motor vehicles shall not put cyclists at risk even if traveling two or more abreast. If necessary, drivers should stop to allow cyclists to pass,

The Group of Experts also recommended conditions for when to set up cycle streets.

Cycle street, conditions for use:

- (a) Volume of cycle traffic exceeds 40% of the volume of motorised traffic.
- (b) Volume of motorised traffic does not exceed 2500 cars/day.
- (c) Through traffic of motorised vehicles has been eliminated (for example through traffic filters, a system of one-way streets, etc.).
- (d) Parking is organized in a manner that it does not impact negatively on cyclists' safety and comfort.

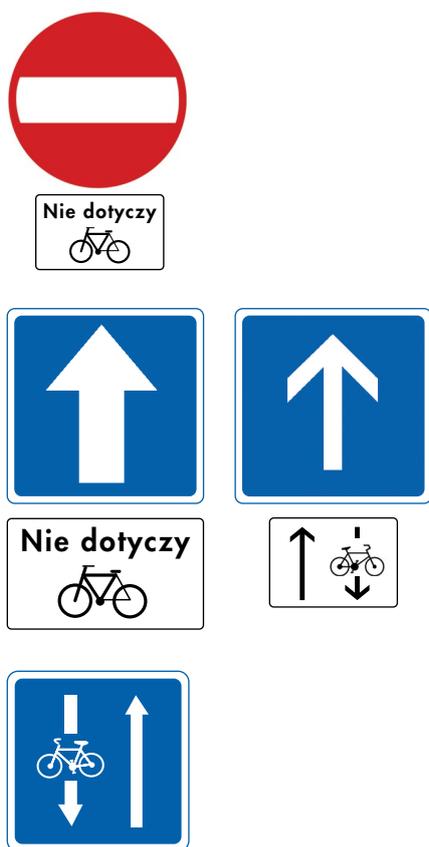
I. Street with contraflow cycling

A street with contraflow cycling is a road that is one-way for general traffic but may be used by cyclists in both directions.

Explanatory note:

This definition is proposed by the Group of Experts.

The cycling contraflow is signposted at its entries by relevant signage, for example a combination of “No entry” C, 1 sign with an additional panel H, 6 (see below an example from Poland). At the other end, sign E, 2 can be used or combination of “One way” E, 3 sign with an additional panel H, 6 (see below an example from Poland and Slovenia). Also, a dedicated contraflow cycling is used (see below an example from France).



Additionally, horizontal marking or sharrows might be used to remind motor vehicle drivers of the possibility of incoming cycle traffic.



Source: A. Buczynski, Street with contraflow cycling in Hungary

J. Bus-and-cycle lane

A bus-and-cycle lane is a lane reserved for (public transport) buses and cycles.

Explanatory note:

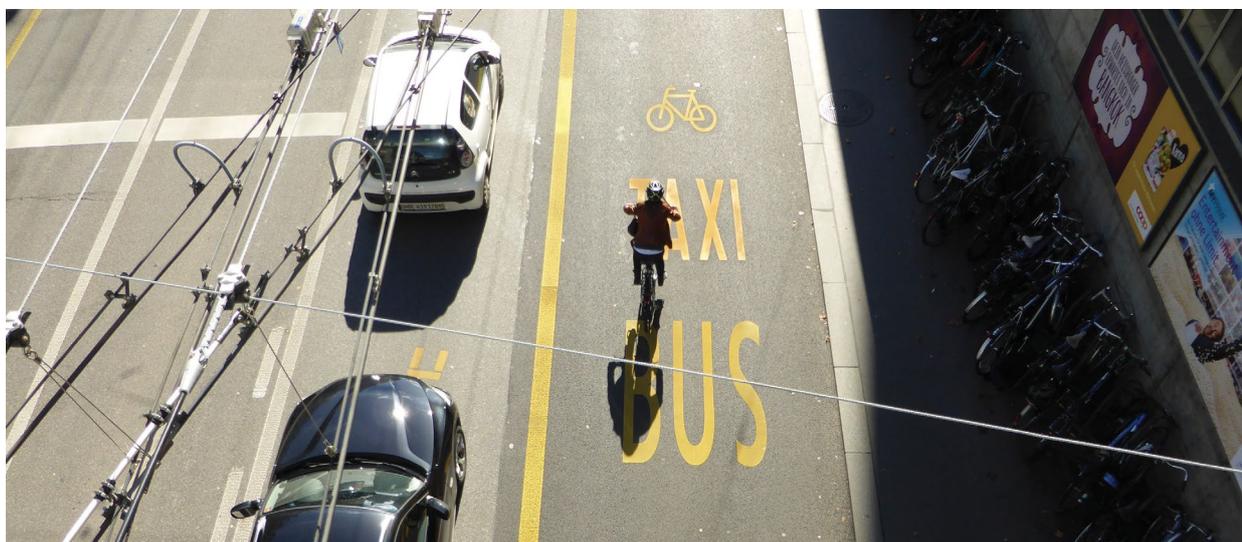
This is a definition proposed by the Group of Experts based on the definition of cycle lane.

While a bus and cycle lane is not the most attractive type of infrastructure for cyclists, in specific contexts it can be significantly safer than lack thereof. In particular, if a bus lane is located or planned next to the edge of the carriageway appropriate to the direction of traffic, and no cycle track for this direction exists, it should be marked as a bus-and-cycle lane, to avoid obliging cyclists to ride between the buses and other motorised traffic.

Horizontal markings for bus and cycle lanes usually combine the symbol of a cycle with the word "BUS".



Source: A. Buczynski, Bus and cycle lane in Austria



Source: A. Buczynski, Bus and cycle lane in Switzerland

K. Footpath with cycling allowed

A footpath with cycling allowed is a part of the road (pavement/sidewalk) or an independent road originally designed for pedestrians where cycling has been (conditionally) authorised, either by general rules or through a cycle panel under the footpath sign.

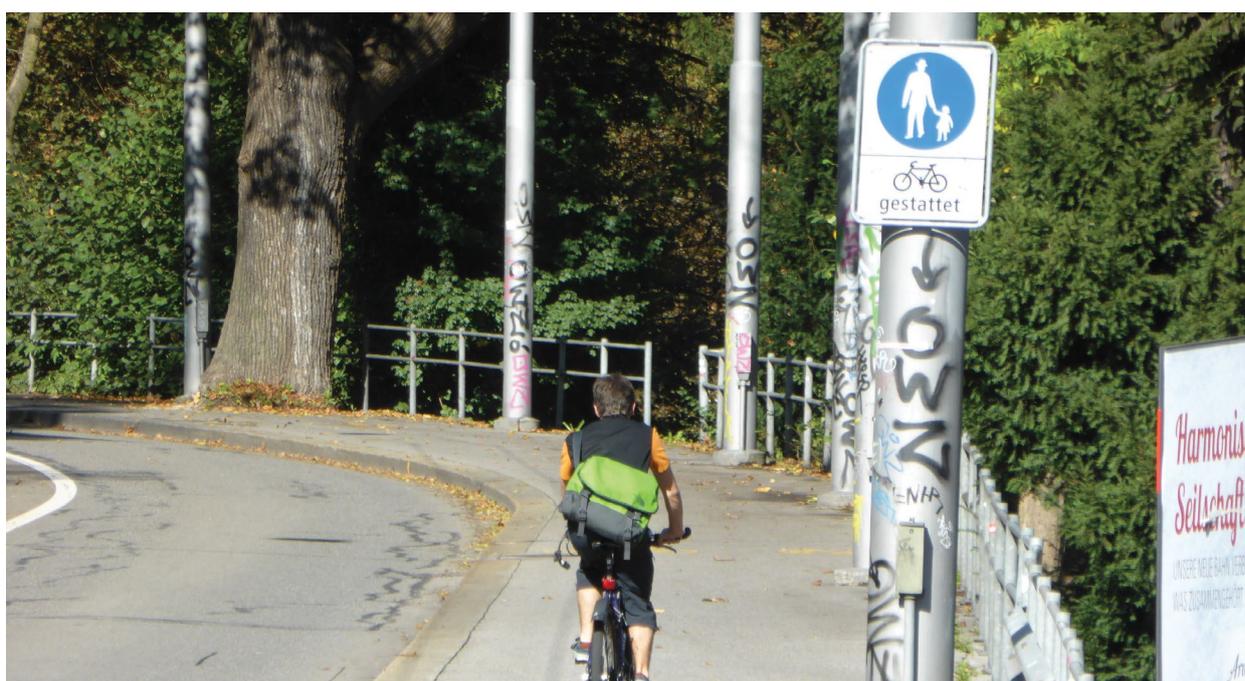
Explanatory note:

The definition is proposed by the Group of Experts.

General rules may specify conditions under which cycling on a footpath is authorised, for example if the speed limit on the adjacent carriageway exceeds a specific threshold.

Cycling can be restricted to specific hours of the day, for example the cyclists can be allowed to cycle on a pedestrian street only in the morning.

If cycling is not authorised by general rules, a combination of specific signs, relevant to the situation, should be used. Below is an example of a sign with a panel authorising cyclists to use the footpath (example from Germany):



Source: A. Buczynski, Footpath with cycling allowed in Switzerland

L. Specific service road

A specific service road is a non-public road closed to general traffic, but open to cycles and selected motor vehicles, for example agricultural, forestry, industry and/or water management vehicles.

Explanatory note:

This definition is proposed by the Group of Experts.

These roads typically carry very low motor vehicle traffic, and with proper signs, cycling can be exempted from the general prohibition to enter this road.

Different signs may be used for signposting specific service road, for example:

- (a) Sign C, 4a “No entry for power driven vehicles” (CoRSS, 2026 consolidated version) with a panel listing exemption for allowed vehicles (see below an example from Switzerland).



- (b) Specific E-category sign which combines symbols of allowed vehicles. Such sign is not included in CoRSS (see below an example from Belgium).



- (c) Sign D, 11b “Cycle and pedestrian track” (CoRSS, 2026 consolidated version) with a panel listing exceptions for power-driven vehicles (see below an example from Slovenia).





Source: A. Buczynski, Specific service road in Germany



Source: A. Buczynski, Specific service road in France

M. Cycle route

A cycle route connects at least two points through a combination of various infrastructure types (for example cycle tracks, cycle lanes, cycle streets or roads with low volumes of motorised traffic) and is equipped, where appropriate, with wayfinding solutions (road direction, confirmation and identification signs as well as road markings). A cycle route can serve commuting, recreation, tourism, or mix different purposes. Depending on its geographical scope and role in the network, a cycle route can be international, national, regional or local.

Explanatory note:

This definition is proposed by the Group of Experts.

Countries are recommended to use consistent numbering/coding of cycle routes in the network and across networks (regional and national).



Source: A. Buczynski, Cycle route in Germany

N. Cycle route network

A cycle route network is a combination of interconnected cycle routes to respond to the needs of cyclists in a specific geographical area. A cycle network can serve commuting, recreation, tourism, or mix different purposes. It can be international (such as EuroVelo), national, regional or local.

Explanatory note:

This definition is proposed by the Group of Experts.



Source: UNECE, First proposal for the devising of an UNECE cycling network

O. Cycle highway

A cycle highway is a high-quality cycle route with a focus on high-capacity service. It serves as a backbone of a cycle network by seamlessly connecting for example cities with their suburbs, residential areas and major (work) places and offers cycling experience satisfying all its users.

Explanatory note:

This definition is proposed by the Group of Experts based on the definitions elaborated in the frame of the CHIPS project.

Countries are recommended to use consistent numbering/coding of cycle highways. Cycle highways are typically numbered by a combination of letters and numbers, for example F 14.



Source: A. Buczynski, Cycle highway in Belgium



Source: A. Buczynski, Cycle highway in the Netherlands

II. Non-linear infrastructure

A. Cycle crossing

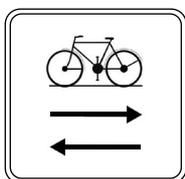
A cycle crossing is the place where a cycle track, cycle and pedestrian track or a greenway intersects with a carriageway.

Explanatory note:

The definition is proposed by the Group of Experts.

Cyclists need to interact with motor vehicles on a crossing even if cycle tracks can provide physical separation in between the crossings. If the crossing is located on an intersection, the priority on the crossing is determined by priority on the intersection; if the crossing is located between intersections, the priority needs to be determined and signposted separately.

The crossing space should be denoted by transversal horizontal markings and, if considered advisable by competent authorities, also by road signs for approaching motor vehicles. Additional road signs or markings (for example, lines indicating points at which drivers must give way) can be used to improve the readability of the crossing. In particular, in case of bidirectional cycle crossings, it is advisable to include signs informing the drivers of the approaching motor vehicles that they should expect cycles arriving from both directions, as provided in the example below from Belgium.



Source: A. Buczynski, Cycle crossing in Luxembourg



Source: A. Buczynski, Cycle crossing in France

B. Grade-separated cycle crossing

A grade-separated cycle crossing is a cycle tunnel or bridge on a cycle track which offers cyclists a way of crossing a barrier, such as a busy road or a railway line.

Explanatory note:

The definition is proposed by the Group of Experts.



Source: A. Buczynski, Grade-separated cycle crossing in the Netherlands



Source: A. Buczynski, Grade-separated cycle crossing in Belgium

C. Advanced stop line

An advanced stop line is an area on an entry arm of a junction that reserves space for cyclists and either makes it easier for a cyclist to perform a turn manoeuvre or increases the cyclists' visibility for car drivers.

Explanatory note:

The definition is proposed by the Group of Experts.

Advanced stop lines are typically applied on entry arms of intersections regulated by traffic light signals.

Advanced stop line implies that there are two sets of transverse markings preceding the crossing; when the drivers are forbidden to proceed, cyclists should stop short of the line closer to the crossing, while drivers of other vehicles – short of the further line.



Source: A. Buczynski, Advanced stop line in the Netherlands

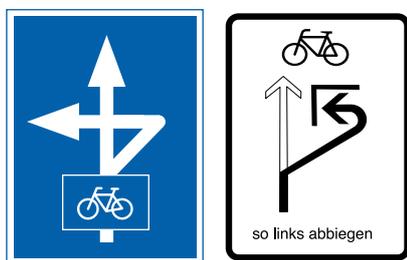
D. Two-stage turn provision

A two-stage turn provision provides space on the carriageway and/or signing allowing cyclists wishing to turn to cross the intersection in two separate stages.

Explanatory note:

The definition is proposed by the Group of Experts.

The examples of signs for two-stage turn provisions are provided below (examples from Hungary and Germany²).



Source: A. Buczynski, Two-stage turn provision in Switzerland

² This sign is used in Germany, but it is not included in the official German traffic sign catalogue. It is hence an additional non-official information sign.

E. Cycle parking

A cycle parking is a dedicated place for parking cycles. Two main types of cycle parking are cycle stands (mostly for short term parking) and cycle lockers (for long-term parking or for cycle tourist).

Explanatory note:

The definition is proposed by the Group of Experts.

Additional characteristics of cycle parking may include:

- its suitability for cargo cycles,
- its location on-street or in an area with regulated access,
- its roof-cover,
- its electric power charging options for assisted cycles.



Source: A. Buczynski, Cycle parking in France

F. Traffic-light exemption for cyclists

A traffic-light exemption for cyclists allows cyclists to bypass a traffic light. A dedicated sign underneath or next to the traffic light indicates in which directions cyclists might go without observing the traffic light while giving priority of way to perpendicular traffic and pedestrians.

Explanatory note:

This definition is proposed by the Group of Experts.

The Group of Experts notes the concerns raised in connection with Article 21 (2) (a) of CoRT which obliges drivers to stop. In the Group's view, the paragraph obliges drivers forbidden to proceed to stop short of the crossing or the transverse markings preceding it. However, this provision does not apply to cyclists making use of the traffic light exemption; if the cyclists are exempted from the traffic light, they are not forbidden to proceed. The paragraph indicates the location of stopping in case the driver is required to stop but does not create an obligation to stop on its own. Therefore, in line with CoRT (2006, consolidated version), a traffic light exemption for cyclists can be introduced in the national legislation without an obligation to stop. Examples of a sign indicating traffic light exemption (from France, Germany and Slovenia) are provided below.



Source: A. Buczynski, Traffic-light exemption for cyclists in Switzerland

Definitions for cycling infrastructure

This paper presents a set of harmonized definitions for cycling infrastructure developed by the UNECE Group of Experts on the Cycling Infrastructure Module (2022–2024). Drawing on recent developments across UNECE member countries, the Group recognized significant changes in cycling practices, infrastructure types, signage, and regulations. In response, it formulated standardized definitions intended for broad international use.

The definitions cover both linear infrastructure such as cycle tracks, greenways, cycle lanes, sharrows, mixed-traffic roads, cycle streets, contraflow cycling streets, bus-and-cycle lanes, and cycle route networks, and non-linear infrastructure, including cycle crossings, grade-separated crossings, advanced stop lines, two-stage turn provisions, cycle parking, and cyclist traffic-light exemptions.

Each definition is accompanied by an explanatory note detailing its source, examples of practical application, and relevant signage based on the 1968 Convention on Road Signs and Signals or national regulations. To support clarity, the paper also includes illustrative images of signs and infrastructure.

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