

City Sidewalks, A Limited Resource Needs Management.

Mobility is the prize...every person should be able to safely get anywhere anytime at a reasonable cost. Personal vehicles, buses, trains and bikes, motorized or not, are the many technologies of travel available in a complete multi-modal transportation system. Walking is inherently a part of each mode whether the walk to the car is short or the walk from the bus stop to work is long; in every case, walking is required.



Non-vehicular pathways with designated lanes for walkers, bikers and skaters are here; robot lanes may be next.

Walking is served by pathways and sidewalks. The development of pathway and sidewalk systems is the responsibility of local government including small cities and towns. While walking in the street or through the travel lanes of a parking lot are all too common, they are not the best answer to improving pedestrian safety. Dedicated paths and sidewalks for robots, motorized scooters and electric bikes may be next.



Sidewalks need to be ready for anything.

Utility Corridors. Sidewalks in urban areas also are convenient corridors for utilities. Certainly streetlights, directional and safety signs, plants and furniture are commonly located between vehicular travel lanes and buildings. 5G equipment will also occupy this space along with utilities, stormwater facilities and facilities for the physically impaired. Outdoor dining and merchandise racks must also be accommodated in selected spots. Sidewalks are crowded places, even before the crowds arrive.

New Users. Planning for the many uses of the space between streets and buildings is not to be taken lightly. Design and regulatory ideas need to emerge to find equitable and effective ways on how to consider the various demands placed upon this interstitial space. Thinking beyond current users to include robots, drop-off areas for autonomous vehicle drivers, electric scooters and bikes, food trucks and last-mile delivery trucks is the challenge. The electric scooter barrage of fast, dangerous and randomly strewn machines along the sidewalk is a precursor of ever-increasing demands on sidewalks. “Everyone is fighting for curb space”; design and permitting need to respond.