Widen Paved Shoulder from 6 ft to 8 ft



Wider paved shoulders on roadways can help reduce run-off road crashes, increase stability for vehicles, and improve maneuvering space for drivers.

Implementation Strategy

How and Where to Apply

- Expanding existing paved shoulders from 6 ft to 8 ft enhances the operational and safety performance of high-speed roadways, particularly on interstates and major arterials.
- Increasing to 8 ft provides a fullwidth refuge for vehicles, reducing the likelihood of secondary crashes and supporting safer emergency maneuvers.
- This countermeasure is especially useful in segments with higher volumes, frequent breakdowns, or constrained enforcement access.

Use in a Safe System Approach Widening shoulders beyond the minimum standard supports the SSA by improving road design (Safe Roads) and creating a safer environment for drivers who make mistakes (Safe Road Users). The added width increases system resilience, helps prevent serious runoff-road.

Key Stakeholders State DOTs, Traffic Safety Analysts

Proactive Implementation

Shoulder widening from 6 ft to 8 ft is a logical upgrade during major rehabilitation, widening, or safety-focused improvement projects. The additional width should be prioritized on routes with high-speed limits, heavy freight traffic, or limited existing pull-off opportunities. Projects should also consider how the expanded shoulder integrates with adjacent roadside features—such as barriers, drainage elements, and slopes—to maximize usable space and long-term durability.

Countermeasure Overview

Objective: Keep vehicles from encroaching on the roadside

Strategy: Apply shoulder treatments

Targeted Solution



- Reduced visibility
- Driver inattention



Run-off Road



Principal Arterial Interstate



All

Safety Linkage



Run-off Road



Safer Infrastructure



Safe Roads

SAFE SYSTEM



Tier 1

Wide Shoulder on Road, Source: Wikipedia.

Selected Related Countermeasures



Advance warning for shoulder use areas

Dynamic shoulder use systems

Cost: \$\$ (moderate)

Service Life: 20 years

Benefit-Cost Ratio: 1.2:3

31%

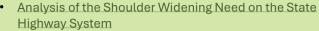
Reduces risk of fixed object, head-on, runoff-road, and sideswipe crashes in urban area.¹



Reduces risk of fixed object, head-on, runoff-road, and sideswipe crashes in rural area.²

¹ CMF ID: 6320 ² CMF ID: 6317

Resources



 Potential Safety Effects of Lane Width and Shoulder Width on Two-Lane Rural State Highways in Idaho





