

31-1.06 Shoulders

In urban and many suburban areas, the availability of ROW generally precludes the use of shoulders. However, many low-volume urban streets may have shoulders rather than a gutter, curb, or curb and gutter. Where shoulders are included, use the width provided from the rural tables in [Chapters 32](#) and [33](#) for the applicable functional classification. Also, consider providing a curb and gutter or gutter at the outer shoulder edge. This may reduce construction costs and will confine drainage runoff to the shoulder area.

31-1.06(a) Functions

The following are some of the important functions of shoulders:

- provides structural support for the traveled way;
- provides support for guardrail and prevents erosion around guardrail posts;
- prevents or minimizes pavement edge drop-offs;
- provides space for emergency and discretionary stops;
- improves roadside safety by providing more recovery area for run-off-the-road vehicles;
- facilitates maintenance operations (e.g., snow removal and storage);
- facilitates pavement drainage;
- provides space for pedestrian and bicycle use; and
- provides space for mailbox turnouts.

31-1.06(b) Shoulder Types

There are several types of shoulders that may be used on local public agency (LPA) roads. A general discussion of the various shoulder types follows. The tables in [Chapters 32](#) and [33](#) present the minimum requirements for shoulder types based on functional classification and design traffic.

1. **Paved.** Paved shoulders are constructed with Hot Mix Asphalt (HMA) or concrete. They provide an all-weather surface with the ability to support occasional vehicle loads in all kinds of weather without rutting. Paved shoulders are usually used on arterials but may be provided on collectors, especially those with high-traffic volumes or substantial current or projected bicycle use. In some instances, a shoulder curb may be included to control drainage. The thickness of a paved shoulder will vary based on a number of factors (i.e. use as a parking lane, as part of stage construction, off tracking during turning maneuvers, etc.).