

Multiuse Trails Speed Limits

From Rails to Trails:

On most multi-use trails, the recommended speed limit is around 15 miles per hour; however, this can vary depending on the specific trail, local regulations, and the level of pedestrian traffic, with some areas requiring slower speeds in congested areas or near trailheads.

Key points to remember about multi-use trail speed limits:

- **Check local signage:**
Always check for posted speed limits on the specific trail you are using as they may differ.
- **Yield to pedestrians:**
Regardless of the speed limit, always yield to pedestrians and slower users on the trail.
- **Be mindful of conditions:**
Adjust your speed based on trail conditions like weather, visibility, and terrain.

Signage and Trail Etiquette

Clear signage is one of the most important attributes to reducing user conflicts on trails. Stop signs and indicators of a stop ahead when approaching intersections allow for appropriate stopping distances of all speeds of riders. Signs reminding faster users to keep left and to announce when they are passing can also decrease conflict along the trail.

In ABQ:

Speed Limit: The maximum speed for all bicycles (analog and e-bikes) on all trails is 20 mph, unless a lower speed is posted. All unpaved trails on Open Space that are now open to e-bikes, or may be in the future, will have a maximum 15 mph speed limit, or lower in some areas, as posted.

In Portland, OR:

Instead of imposing formalized restrictions on trail users, Portland's Share the Path Campaign emphasizes trail etiquette. Guidelines advising to "use safe speeds at all times" and reminding that "slower traffic has the right of way" stress to faster users that it is their duty to slow down and be mindful of others. This approach allows for more flexibility, and it accommodates the varying traffic of the trail throughout different seasons, times and days. It does not restrict fast riding entirely, but instead allows for higher speeds when the conditions are appropriate.

AASHTO Design Standards:

The American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO) Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities does not specify a maximum speed for bicyclists along trails. Instead, it outlines that shared-use paths should be

designed for a speed that is “at least as high as the preferred speed of the fastest common user.” The guide recommends that design on long segments in flat areas accommodate users at 18 mph and that sections of trail with hilly terrain accommodate riders at up to 30 mph.

The AASHTO guide is clear that designing for slower speeds—by decreasing sight distance, for example—should not be selected to artificially reduce user speeds, as the result can make conditions unsafe for fast riders. Instead, design elements such as road curvature and a centerline stripe can both slow bicyclists and decrease user conflicts. Wider trail widths can also ease conflict by allowing for more types of users simultaneously.

Some jurisdictions with 15 mph limit:

Boulder, CO

Summit County, UT

Olympic Discovery Trail, WA State

Spokane Centennial Trail, WA & ID

American River Parkway, Sacramento

Marin County, CA

Mt. Vernon Trail, DC