Martin Luther King Jr. Trail

Four-mile-long trail originally built over 40 years ago, one of the first recreational trails in the city
Part of Fairmount Park, which is 14 square miles of park that straddles the Schuylkill River north of Center City Philadelphia
Also serves as a major commuting route for residents in the NW part of the city and nearby suburbs
Original trail pavement was very old, and was patched up throughout the years. In some places, there was very thin layers of asphalt and not any clearance to tree roots.
There were curb cuts, but not in compliance with ADA or AASHTO regulations
But a beautiful trail, hundreds of mature trees, views of the Schuylkill River, and historical monuments
We had a mandate: completely rehabilitate the trail, but do with minimal cost and do not remove any healthy trees
So we examined the entire trail and looked at where we could do a simple mill and overlay. Roughly half of the 4 miles was a mill & overlay (or just an overlay with no milling), but about half of the trail required complete rehabilitation. We had to examine where we could move the trail, if possible, without disturbing trees. We also raised the grade of the trail where possible.
We also widened the trail in some places where it was less than 10’ wide, it is now uniformly 10’ wide.
ADA ramps were built to share-use standards. AASHTO bike guide states (animation)
We did not have to modify traffic signals at all (pretimed)
Also went above and beyond to highlight the ramps. Only place concrete is used is at the ramps. Added yellow centerline and sharks teeth to highlight to cyclists that this is an important crossing.
Another crossing
Not this parking lot, but a separate parking lot also has about 20 ADA parking stalls for the trail and the Adaptive Sports Rowing Center
Precedents in Seattle, Indianapolis, and Paris, among other places
MLK Drive Trail Project Details

- Required agency coordination between Philadelphia Parks & Recreation Department and Philadelphia Streets Department
- Total cost: $1.4 million
- Funded by:
  - City of Philadelphia
  - PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources
  - PA Dept. of Community and Economic Development
  - Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission Regional Trails Program (William Penn Foundation)
Now we will take a look at a very different trail, this one located along the other major river in Philadelphia, the Delaware River Trail.

This new trail was borne out of the Master Plan for the Central Delaware, which was released after much public input in 2012. The trail is meant to act as a ribbon that connects a series of waterfront parks that are to be located about a half mile apart from each other, with mixed-use private development, placemaking, and ecological restoration working together to creating a vibrant riverfront.
The Delaware River Waterfront Corporation is the nonprofit corporation that is charged with implementing the master plan. Over the past decade, DRWC has created and maintained several exciting public spaces along the riverfront, including...
However, the need for a cohesive trail along the riverfront was sorely needed. NV5 was brought on board to start studying the trail soon after the master plan was completed. Our task was to reimagine the way people would connect to the riverfront spaces. As you can see here.....
More than enough room for a shared-use path, so we looked at a segregated path and developed cross sections at different locations. The widths varied along the two-mile stretch of the central riverfront. We did have the ability to remove the northbound Columbus Blvd. bike lane, and move the curb out a few feet to gain even more space.
Before final design began, we put together a memo of the special design elements of the project for discussion with the city of Philadelphia Streets Department, the mayor’s Office of Transportation, Infrastructure, and Sustainability (OTIS), and PennDOT. This would be the first of its kind trail in both the city and the state, so we had some design and logistical hurdles to get over, and we had to get some into a comfort zone with what we intended to do. We didn’t want any surprises at late stages in design. Some of those elements, which we’ll go through in more detail, include:

Elements of Design

- Separation between bikeway and sidewalk
- Controlled pedestrian crossings of bikeway
- ADA Ramps
- Vehicular parking
- Driveways/signalized intersections
- Entrances to buildings and public spaces
Separation between bikeway and sidewalk: where possible we added landscape buffers. Not always space to do this....
Sometimes sidewalk and bikeway had to be immediately adjacent. Wanted to maintain 5’ buffer from road (AASHTO Bike Guide) and 1% minimum slope toward roadway for drainage. We used precedents established in places like Seattle and Paris, but acknowledge that there is updated guidance on this specific type of block. Limited in options. I would really encourage people to do research on what has been done in other places, consider drainage/green stormwater infrastructure, reach out to your local ADA advocacy community as a part of your planning and design process to discuss what users would like to see.