

# Agricultural Considerations When Designing Municipal Roadways

Road design for provincial highways is handled by the Ministry of Transportation (MTO), while municipalities are in charge of their own road allowances. This means that, while roads across Ontario are generally similar, they're not all exactly the same.

## Things to keep in mind for farm equipment on roads

When planning road work, it helps if municipalities understand the needs of local farmers:

- The standard vehicle width on public roads doesn't apply to loose loads like hay or straw.
- Farm equipment is generally exempt from width, length, and weight limits when used on the road (some exceptions for certain highways).
- This exemption also covers equipment towed by trucks.
- However, farmers can be held liable if their equipment causes damage to roads or bridges.

When operating wide equipment, drivers must:

- Stay right of the centreline and give half the road to oncoming vehicles.
- Move right when being passed.
- Keep right near hills, curves, bridges, tunnels, and railway crossings—especially when visibility is limited.

## Grading, Clearances and Accesses

Variation of municipal road allowances affects how gently roads can be graded. When building or upgrading roads, it's important for municipal staff to consider that farm equipment needs to stay clear of steep slopes, ditches, and drop-offs. Slopes over 30 degrees can affect a tractor's stability. OFA recommends:

- Shoulders should be wide and gently sloped to avoid sharp drop-offs.
- Hydro lines must have enough vertical clearance—especially at field entrances.



- The province sets general road design guidelines, but each municipality follows its own bylaws and road design standards.
- Municipalities need to consider agricultural vehicles when designing their roads.

## Did you know?

The standard vehicle width on public roads is 2.6m.

## Other resources

- For additional municipal resources to support agriculture, visit [ofa.on.ca/GrowAg](https://ofa.on.ca/GrowAg).
- To learn about safe design of road projects, visit [goodroads.ca](https://goodroads.ca) and search "Road Safety Audits"

For more information, visit: [ofa.on.ca/issues/transportation](https://ofa.on.ca/issues/transportation)

### **Municipal Roadway Design**

Since local road standards can vary, OFA’s recommendations are meant as general guidance. For example, while the minimum lane width is 3.0 metres, wider lanes are better where speed limits are higher—like 3.3m for roads over 40 km/h, and 3.5m for roads over 50 km/h.

### **Roundabouts and Traffic Circles**

Roundabouts force all traffic to intersect in one direction, so it’s important to consider agricultural equipment by:

- Designing a traffic circle with time for traffic to safely reduce speed before entering.
- Ensuring the radius is sufficient for long and wide loads to navigate the traffic circle.
- Ensuring curbs are flattened to allow equipment to navigate the traffic circle.

### **Agricultural Expertise and Agricultural Impact Assessments (AIAs)**

Municipalities designing roadways always benefit when they engage with local agriculture expertise about the movement and safety risks associated with large, slow-moving farm equipment.

One way to ensure the safety and continuation of normal farm activities is to contact your local Federation of Agriculture and Agricultural Advisory Committee (if your municipality has one) before beginning infrastructure projects.

Municipalities should also undertake Agricultural Impact Assessments (AIAs) as a routine step during municipal projects.

#### **Viewpoints:**

“Road safety is a big focus...as is advocating for better roads and transportation infrastructure and regulations that reflect the needs of our modern agriculture industry – one of the biggest pillars of the provincial economy.”

- *Louis Roesch, Director, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, May 2025*

“Farm equipment is much larger than it used to be, and many rural roads have narrow shoulders that don’t let farmers pull safely off to the side to let someone pass.”

- *Bill Groenheide, Director, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, September 2024*



- Most municipal road allowances are around 20 metres, but they can vary — some in Niagara Region go up to 42m.
- Farm equipment access to fields and operations should not be impeded by upgraded rail corridor crossings.

#### **Did you know?**

The higher the speed limit, the wider the road should be.

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