

Appendix B: Roadway Prism

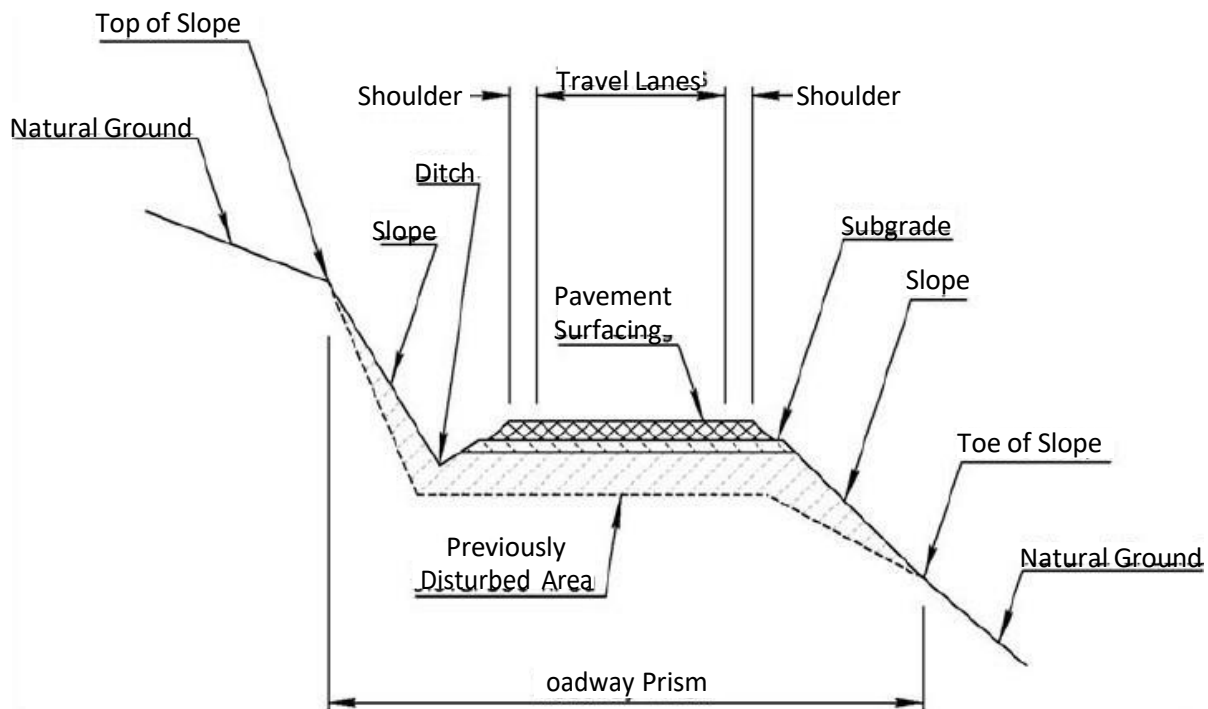
The roadway prism is the area previously disturbed during road construction. There is little chance of disturbing environmental resources while working within the roadway prism unless there is a resource nearby, such as nesting birds, which may be disturbed by noise, night-time light, or the unexpected presence of people. The width of the road prism can vary widely depending on factors including the age of the road, construction techniques, and slope. On older roads in flat or very rocky areas, the roadway prism may extend as little as 1 foot past the edge of pavement, while on more modern roads and areas with more slope, the disturbed prism may extend 20 feet or more to the edge of a fill slope or cut ditch (Figure 1). The median may or may not have been disturbed during construction.

Ways to determine the width of the disturbed road prism:

- 1) Look for the edge of the road subgrade in the field. This is definitely part of the road prism and should be free of environmental resources.
- 2) Look for cut/fill edges in the field. If the road is in a cut, the area within the cut is considered disturbed.
- 3) Look for the edge of existing natural vegetation to show the boundary of the previously disturbed area (Figure 2).
- 4) Review aerial images, such as Google Earth, to determine if the previously disturbed area is evident.

Working outside the road prism without going through environmental review risks disturbing unrecognized cultural or biological resources or hazardous materials.

Figure 1. Illustration of Roadway Prism



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Figure 2. The person in this photo is outside of the previously disturbed roadway prism. The fill slope for the road, presence of desert pavement and creosote bushes which pre-date construction of the interstate, are all indicators of the location of the road prism. The road prism ends near the base of the fill slope, as indicated by the yellow line.

