



*When a partial cart path is curved away from the direction golfers will be driving, it creates a larger area for carts to exit or enter a path.*

## DO WE REALLY NEED THOSE CART PATHS?

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The main purposes for golf course cart paths are obvious – provide golfers using a cart with access to the course and protect the grass from concentrated cart traffic. Cart paths are especially important during periods of unfavorable weather when cart traffic would likely result in damage to the course. Golfers may not be aware, but cart paths also have several other important functions.

Cart paths can act as a guide around a course. Golfers who visit a course regularly typically do not require any help with directions from hole to hole, but many courses frequently host players who are not familiar with the layout. Being able to easily identify the location of the next hole can help to improve pace of play and golfer satisfaction. This is especially true if the next tee is not visible from the previous green or in areas of the course where multiple holes intersect.

Another added benefit that cart paths provide is their ability to capture and divert water when it is raining. Since the cart path is a hard surface that does not absorb water, it can be used to steer water into drainage basins and away from key playing surfaces. This is particularly important in low areas where ponding can occur. The curbing along the edge of a cart path can serve a dual purpose of directing water to a catch basin and helping to steer traffic away from areas where carts are not permitted to drive.

Golfers may notice paths are wider than what is necessary to accommodate the cart they are driving. This is because the maintenance team also routinely uses cart paths to access the course and their equipment is often wider than a golf cart. Additionally, it is not uncommon to see wider paths where golfers have a tendency to park, such as near tees or putting greens, so it is easy to pass a parked cart without driving on the turf.

Depending on the amount of play and the local climate, continuous cart paths may not be deemed necessary and paths will only be installed near tees and greens. When intermittent paths are used, creating wide exit and entry points by curving the path away from the direction of travel makes it possible for cart traffic to be distributed over a larger area. If the path ended abruptly in the direction golfers are likely to drive, traffic will be concentrated and turf will decline.

While cart paths may not be the most aesthetically pleasing feature of a golf course, they have many functions. Without cart paths golfers wishing to use a cart during adverse weather conditions would not have access to the course, turf health would suffer in high-traffic areas, and those unfamiliar with the layout of a course could find it challenging to navigate from hole to hole. However, cart paths are only effective if they are used properly, so we should always remember to follow entry and exit signs and keep cart wheels on the path when parking, especially around tees and greens.