

# Golf Path Curbing

by **STANLEY J. ZONTEK**  
North-Central Manager,  
USGA Green Section

**A**S AGRONOMISTS for the USGA Green Section, we see hundreds of golf courses each year. Nearly all of them are on some sort of cart path installation or maintenance program. These paths are generally installed in areas of wear and tear where traffic makes the management of quality turfgrass practically impossible. Because of the nature of the game, these wear areas are first seen near greens and tees where traffic congregates. The path is then installed, and that's it!

Unfortunately, what occurs next is a deterioration of the turf along the edge of these paths in areas where the carts drive off the man-made surface. Even though a path is provided, the people often stray from the path and wear out the adjacent turf, thereby defeating the original purpose of the path. Herein lies the purpose of this article . . . to suggest the proper installation of curbing in order to better control cart traffic and save the adjacent turf, to improve the overall appearance and playability of the golf course.

Figure 1 illustrates an all too common occurrence. A quality cart path has been installed, but the area immediately adjacent to the path is worn bare. Why? Is it that the path is improperly located? Is it in an area several feet from where carts routinely travel? Or could it be that when it is time to stop the vehicle, the driver pulls the golf cart off the path, thus inadvertently starting the gradual deterioration of the turf adjacent to the path. I believe all of these situations contribute to this prob-



Figure 1. A common occurrence — worn area adjacent to paved cart path.

lem, but the latter illustration is more often than not the case, especially near greens and tees. Perhaps the golfer unconsciously feels he is exercising accepted rules of the road by pulling off the path.

**A**S A MOBILE society, we have been educated *en masse* to respect the written or understood rules of the road. One such rule when you stop your vehicle is *never* leave it on the pavement; pull it to the side, off the paved surface in order to allow other traffic to go by. This rule works well on highways with shoulders designed expressly for this purpose. On golf courses, however, this results in worn areas near greens and tees that quickly become bare, muddy, dusty and generally an eroding eyesore. Besides just looking bad, these worn areas adjacent to existing paths are a headache to maintain and to play from.





**F**IGURE 2 illustrates an important final step in a good cart path development and maintenance program: the installation of a curb in potential wear areas. The curb essentially makes the cart path, which is an expensive project anyway, function as intended and support the vehicle while leaving the adjoining turf intact.

The secret of success in this installation program, whether done initially or long after installation, is to make the curb blend into the area and not stand out as an eyesore and maintenance problem. Figure 2 illustrates this point. The curb has an attractive built-in look. Also, and most importantly, note that the soil behind the curb is raised so the grass is at the same level as the top of the curb. This greatly eases mowing. Compare this feature and savings to the extra hand work and bother involved with free-standing fences, stakes and ropes, all of which must be removed and replaced every time the area is mowed.

When constructing these four- to six-inch curbs, there is a good choice of materials to use. The most common are asphalt and treated wood beams or ties, even though stone, brick, or block also could be effectively used. Things to consider are the character of the course, the price of each material, the ease of installation and material availability.

One point should be stressed again. No matter what material you use, build the curb into an existing bank, or create your own bank by backfilling with soil behind the curb. It will not only look better, but this new curb will also be easier to maintain.

**I**N SUMMARY, even though we may not like it, golf carts will continue to be an enigma. More paths will inevitably be installed on many courses. Old paths will have to be widened or repaired. When doing such work, remember the importance of traffic control and good golf cart usage by designing and installing effective curbs. They can be successful in keeping these vehicles **ON THE PAVED SURFACE WHERE THEY ARE SUPPOSED TO BE**, especially near greens and tees. They also can serve to direct water away from potential washout areas.

If properly designed and installed, cart paths with curbs can function practically unnoticed without being another maintenance headache to the golf course superintendent. They can even help him do a better job of maintaining a neater and more playable golf course by controlling traffic, saving turf, diverting water, easing maintenance and eliminating an eyesore.

## Support National Golf Week

The Green Section of the United States Golf Association salutes the Professional Golfers Association for its annual contributions to turfgrass research. Through its National Golf Week Fund, the PGA has contributed over \$288,000 to the USGA Green Section Research Program since 1952. These funds not only make it possible for the USGA to support a number of worthwhile turfgrass research projects, but also help train leaders in the field of turfgrass management.

Research findings from funds channeled through the USGA Green Section Research Program benefit golf. All Green Section recommendations benefit the player, the course and the game. National Golf Week will be played June 22-29, 1981.

*Figure 2. Well-installed curbing, wood on left, Ozaukee Country Club, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; asphalt on right, Firestone Country Club, Akron, Ohio.*

