

Shared Lane Markings (“Sharrows”)

Frequently-Asked Questions

Q: What are Shared Lane Markings?

Shared Lane Markings (or “Sharrows” – short for **shared-use arrows**) are experimental pavement markings designed to remind motorists and bicyclists where bicyclists should generally ride when sharing a standard travel lane with other traffic. Bicyclists should ride over the center of the symbol in the same direction as traffic (see illustrations to the right).



Q: Are the rules different in locations with Sharrows?

No, bicycle users and motorists must still follow the typical traffic rules and regulations. The markings simply serve as a reminder of the existing rules.

Q: So, if the rules are the same, what are the benefits? – what’s the point?

Not all bicyclists behave properly around motor vehicles, and not all motorists behave properly around bicyclists. Experimental use of Sharrows in other communities has shown that both bicyclists’ and motorists’ behavior improved after the installation of the markings. The markings encouraged bicyclists to ride farther away from parked cars (outside of the “door zone”), to follow a more predictable path (reduced weaving around parked cars), and to ride with the flow of traffic (reduced wrong-way riding). For motorists, the markings increased their awareness that bicyclists may be present and led to more careful passing of bicyclists. The presence of the markings also led to a reduction of bicycle riding on sidewalks. (In the City of Ithaca, *bicyclists may not ride on sidewalks* or other areas intended for pedestrian-only use. Exceptions: In the City of Ithaca, children age 10 and under, and anyone who, because of a disability, uses a bicycle as a means of transportation or mobility may ride on sidewalks)



Q: As a motorist, how should I drive on streets with Sharrows?

If bicyclists are not present, drive in the travel lane as you normally would – your right-hand tires will likely travel directly over the Sharrow markings. If bicyclists are present, simply slow down and pass with care. When passing, please be careful to not endanger on-coming traffic – if traffic is heavy, please be patient and wait for a suitable gap in traffic before passing.

Q: As a bicyclist, must I ride over the Sharrows?

No. The markings simply indicate where bicyclists would be expected to ride under ordinary conditions. If bicyclists are turning left, passing other cyclists, avoiding potholes, etc., they may position themselves away from the markings. Also, if cars are not parked along the curb, bicyclists may ride well to the right of the markings – but, cyclists should not weave in and out between parked cars.

Q: Where is the City of Ithaca going to install the Sharrows?

The markings have been placed on Cayuga Street between Spencer Street and York Street. If the experiment is successful, additional locations will be considered.

Currently, Sharrows are “experimental markings,” which means that the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) must grant permission to municipalities who wish to test this marking on an experimental basis. The City of Ithaca has received such permission. Positive similar experiments in dozens of U.S. cities has led the FHWA to consider adoption of Sharrows as a standard marking that can be routinely used without special permission.

Q: Why not just install standard bike lanes?

Sharrows are not intended to be a substitute for standard bike lanes, rather they may be a good option where bike lanes are otherwise warranted but insufficient space is currently available. Such is the case on Cayuga Street.

Q: How can I learn more about this experiment with Sharrows?

Contact Tim Logue (274-6535) or Kent Johnson (274-6528) in the City of Ithaca Engineering Office or at timlo@cityofithaca.org or kjohnson@cityofithaca.org