

WHAT ARE THOSE SHARROW THINGS?



Q. What are those symbols in the road with a bike and two arrows?

A. They are called “sharrows” and are used to highlight that motorists and cyclists are sharing the road. The sharrows help the cyclist by helping them position themselves in the lane, away from opening car doors. They also help motorists by alerting them that cyclists are likely to be using the lane with them.

Q. Do sharrows mean that the lane is only for bicycles?

A. No. Sharrows indicate that the lane is shared by both motorists and cyclists. Shared lanes are different than a dedicated bike lane, which has a solid white line separating the car lane from the bike lane. Sharrows are used when the roadway width is insufficient for a dedicated lane.

Q. If there are no sharrows or separate bike lane are cyclists allowed to ride there?

A. Yes. Bicyclists can ride on any street in New Jersey except for limited access freeways with signs explicitly prohibiting them, such as Route 18 or Route 1 (Route 18 has a “multipath” sidewalk on the river side that is legal for cycling though). Just as every street in New Brunswick has a 25mph speed limit, unless stated otherwise (even if there is no speed limit sign), bicyclists are allowed on every street regardless of whether there is a marking or sign for them, unless stated otherwise.

Q. Are these markings going to be on every street that does not have a bike lane?

A. No. Sharrows are used in areas that cyclists are likely to use. They may be located on major streets, such as Somerset Street, to alert drivers and cyclists about where to ride. In other locations, they may be used to encourage the use of an alternate route that has a lower traffic volume but is nearly as direct as a nearby road with high traffic volume and narrow lanes. The City hopes to introduce more dedicated bike lanes and sharrows over time, but not all roads will be marked.

Q. Sometimes cyclists are so far to the left that they “take the lane”. Aren't they supposed to move to the right?

A. Not always. According to the New Jersey Traffic and Motor Vehicle Statute (Title 39) bicyclists are to stay to the right except to: 1) To make a left turn from a left turn lane or pocket; 2) To avoid debris, drains, or other hazardous conditions on the right; 3) To pass a slower moving vehicle; 4) To occupy any available lane when traveling at the same speed as

other traffic; 5) To travel no more than two abreast when traffic is not impeded, but otherwise ride in single file. Moving to the left in the lane to avoid car doors, for instance, even if it means taking the entire lane, is permitted by Title 39.

Q. What's the big deal about car doors opening?

A. A car door opening unexpectedly in front of a cyclist can be very dangerous, especially if there is other traffic around. The crash caused by being "doored" can inflict serious injury on the cyclist and on to the car and driver involved in the collision. Therefore, cyclists are encouraged to ride to the left of the "door zone" (usually about 3 feet to the left of parked cars) to avoid this hazard. One goal of placing sharrows on roadways is to make parked motorists more aware of cyclists in the area so that they check their rearview mirror for an approaching cyclist before opening their door. Another goal is to remind cyclists to ride outside of the "door zone" so that they can avoid an unexpected door opening.

Q. I never used to see these markings. Why are they being used now?

A. Sharrows are part of an effort, along with dedicated bike lanes and an information campaign to raise awareness about cycling, to encourage cycling as a way to get around in New Brunswick and to make it safer. Bicycles take up much less room on the road, lessening congestion on the road. People using bicycles instead of the Campus Bus System help make these buses less crowded. Cycling is also part of a healthy lifestyle and a way to quickly and conveniently get around town for commuting, errands or getting to class. It's also a lot of fun.