

What does THIS Mean?



These roadway stencils are known as **shared lane markings, or sharrows, and they're now in downtown Lafayette.**

- Sharrows provide visual cues to drivers and bicyclists, that reinforce the existing rules of the road and help both parties align themselves within a shared travel lane.
- Sharrows improve safety by directing bicyclists to move a little further away from parked cars than they would normally ride in the absence of sharrows, thereby reducing their risk of getting "doored". Drivers can also see how much space to give when safely passing a bicyclist.
- The City has added sharrows on several streets where there is not enough room for full-width bicycle lanes, e.g., on Mount Diablo Boulevard between Mountain View Drive and First Street, and between the Lafayette Park Hotel and Pleasant Hill Road; and on Happy Valley Road between Deer Hill Road and Mount Diablo Boulevard.
- The sharrows are painted on the pavement in the vehicle lane closest to the curb.
- Sharrows do not indicate separate bike lanes: a motorist can still drive over the sharrows. But if a bicyclist is nearby, drivers can use the sharrow to judge spacing so driver and bicyclist can share the lane safely. Otherwise, motorists should drive behind the bicyclist until it's safe to pass or move into the adjoining travel lane to pass.

Frequently Asked Questions



What are sharrows?

“Sharrows” is short for “**shared lane pavement markings**” which indicate that motorists and bicyclists are to share the travel lane.

As a bicyclist, what should I do in the presence of sharrows?

We’ve placed the sharrows outside of the parked car’s “door zone.” Bicyclists should ride through the center of the sharrow with parked cars on their right and passing vehicles on their left.

As a motorist, what should I do in the presence of sharrows?

Slow down and drive carefully. Sharrows indicate that you are sharing the road with bicyclists. Because the travel lane is too narrow for safe side-by-side travel by motorists and bicyclists, motorists should slow down and either wait for the bicyclist to turn off the roadway, or wait until you can move safely into an adjacent lane.

Can I still drive in lanes where there are sharrows?

If there is not an accompanying white stripe with the marking then it is not a bicycle lane; it is a sharrow. You may still drive in that travel lane. You may encroach over the sharrow if there are no bicyclists next to you.

Why not just stripe bicycle lanes?

We’re using the sharrows because there isn’t enough room for bicycle lanes. This is because of a combination of a high demand for on-street parking and the inability to either eliminate a travel lane or narrow the existing travel lanes. It is also physically too difficult and prohibitively expensive to widen the roadway.

Why not just use sharrows instead of bicycle lanes?

Bicycle lanes are still the best solution for creating safe conditions for all roadway users on high vehicle volume streets. With bike lanes, motorists are not delayed by the presence of slower-moving bicyclists in front of them and bicyclists don’t feel intimidated by the presence of following motorists who wish to pass them. Sharrows will be added on roads where adding bike lanes is not feasible.

What does Lafayette hope to accomplish with the sharrows?

We want to create safer conditions for all roadway users on busy streets where we should have bicycle lanes but cannot. We hope to do this by moving bicyclists a little further away from parked cars than they would normally ride in the absence of sharrows and creating a little more awareness and separation between passing motorists and bicyclists than would normally exist.

Do sharrows work?

They seem to. A 2003 study in San Francisco showed that in the presence of sharrows, bicyclists moved further away from parked cars and passing motorists moved further away from cyclists than in the absence of sharrows. California has adopted sharrows as a standard roadway treatment, and San Francisco, Oakland, and Berkeley have already painted hundreds of them on their streets.