

Bike Lanes

Frequently-Asked Questions

Q: What is a bike lane?

A bike lane is simply an extra travel lane on the roadway that is intended for preferential use by bicyclists.

Q: Are there special rules for riding in bike lanes?

No, all individuals traveling in bike lanes must follow the same rules and regulations as other roadway users, including riding with the flow of traffic and following applicable traffic signs and other traffic control devices.

Q: If a bike lane is present, must bicyclists ride in the bike lane?

No. Bicyclists making turns, passing other bicyclists, avoiding road hazards, etc. may move out of the bike lane. In some cases, a bike lane may just be on the uphill side of the road – in these cases it is very important that bicyclists do not ride the wrong way down the uphill bike lane.

Q: May motor vehicles enter bike lanes?

Yes. Motorists turning into driveways, avoiding road hazards, entering parking spaces, etc. may cross bike lanes just as they may cross other types of lanes. Motorists, including motorcyclists, may not use bike lanes as travel or parking lanes.

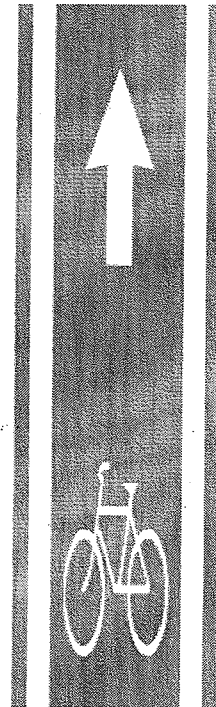
Q: What is the purpose of bike lanes?

The primary purpose of a bike lane is to allow bicyclists and motorists to travel at different speeds without impeding one another. Additionally, bike lanes may:

- support and encourage bicycling as a means of transportation
- help define road space
- promote a more orderly flow of traffic
- encourage bicyclists to ride in the correct direction, with the flow of traffic
- give bicyclists a clear space to be so they are not tempted to ride on the sidewalk
- remind motorists to look for cyclists when turning or opening car doors
- reduce the chances of motorists and bicyclists straying into each other's path
- make it less likely that motorists will swerve across the centerline while passing bicyclists
- decrease the stress level of bicyclists riding in traffic

Q: Where and when is it appropriate to install a bike lane?

Bike lanes have advantages and disadvantages and are not always the most appropriate option. A number of criteria are evaluated such as roadway width,



traffic speeds and volumes, roadway slope, level of bicycle usage, connectivity of destination points, neighboring land uses, and available funding.

Q: Are bicyclists safer when in bike lanes?

Perhaps. Most traffic control devices, such as signs, signals and pavement markings, are intended to enhance the safety of roadway users. Bicycle lanes are generally installed in locations where it is more challenging to ride, such as on roads with high motor vehicle volumes and/or speeds or on roads with steep grades ... *thus, bike lanes are generally installed in locations where bicycling is more challenging to begin with.* Many roadway hazards, like broken glass, potholes, and crossing traffic, are not reduced by the installation of bike lanes. Importantly, bicyclists should NEVER ride in the "door zone" (within 3 feet of parked cars) whether there is a bike lane or not!

Q: If there is no bike lane, where are bicyclists supposed to ride?

Bicyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as motor vehicle operators and must follow the same rules and regulations. In most cases, bicyclists simply ride near the right-hand side of the road, traveling in the same direction as other traffic. In other cases, such as when preparing turn left, bicyclists should move to the left-hand side of the travel lane. In narrow travel lanes where it is not safe for motorists to pass bicycles, bicyclists are legally allowed to "take the lane" by riding in the middle of the lane.

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 mobility may ride on sidewalks.

Q: Must bicyclists move to the side of the road if an emergency vehicle (in emergency mode) is approaching?

Yes. Emergency vehicles may need to swerve into bike lanes, parking lanes, etc. to pass traffic. All road users should move out of the way so as to provide as much space as possible for emergency responders.

Q: What can bicyclists do to improve their safety and comfort when riding in traffic?

Bicycling is generally a very safe and healthy activity, but there are some obvious risks. Most bicycling crashes simply involve falls or collisions with stationary objects; very few involve motor vehicles, though those crashes tend to result in more severe injuries. Bicyclists can best prevent crashes by developing their bicycle handling skills, by remaining alert to surrounding traffic and roadway conditions, by anticipating driver behavior, and by riding in a predictable manner.

Q: How can I learn more about bike lanes, bicycle safety, or other transportation-related issues?

Contact Tim Logue (274-6535) or Kent Johnson (274-6528) in the City of Ithaca Engineering Office.

