

As part of its ongoing efforts to improve safety for bicycling, the City has finished placing shared lane markings, also known as “sharrows,” on portions of Daniel Street and State Street in the downtown.



Sharrows on Daniel St

The City is considering adding sharrows on Dennett Street, Junkins Avenue, Marcy Street, and portions of Pleasant Street, Maplewood Avenue, Middle Street, and Market Street. Sharrows are just one component of the complete bicycle network that will also include bicycle lanes, off-road trails, designated bicycle routes, and bicycle parking facilities.

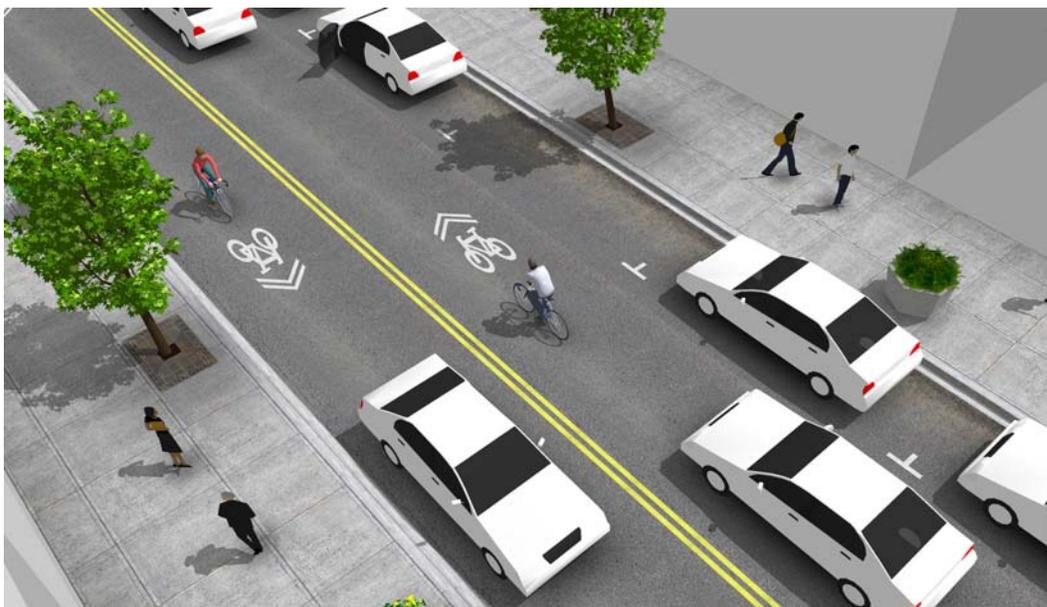
What are shared lane markings?

Shared Lane Markings, or “sharrows,” are road markings used to indicate a shared lane environment for bicycles and automobiles. Sharrows are symbols on the roadway that indicate that the travel lane is shared by both automobiles and bicyclists. Among other benefits, sharrows help alert motor vehicle drivers of bicycles on the street, recommend proper bicyclist positioning, and may be configured to offer directional and wayfinding guidance. Sharrows are particularly useful in locations like downtown Portsmouth where streets are narrow and there is little room for accommodating full bike lanes.



What should I do when I see a sharrow?

This pavement marking includes a bicycle symbol and two white chevrons. If you’re on a bicycle, you should align yourself in the travel lane in the center of the chevron.



If you're in a car or other motor vehicle sharrow markings are reminders to share the road with people on bikes. Sharing the road means you should:

- treat a bicycle rider as you would other motor vehicles, allowing them to use the full travel lane,
- only pass a bicycle rider where there is enough room to do safely,
- reduce your speed when passing a bicycle rider, and
- watch for bicycle riders when making lane changes and turns.

What are the benefits of using sharrows?

- Encourage bicyclists to position themselves safely in lanes too narrow for a motor vehicle and a bicycle to comfortably travel side by side within the same traffic lane.
- Alert motor vehicle drivers to the potential presence of bicyclists.
- Alert road users of the position bicyclists are expected to occupy within the travel lane.
- Indicate a proper path for bicyclists through difficult or potentially hazardous situations.
- Advertise the presence of bikeway routes to all users.
- Provide a wayfinding element along bike routes.
- Position bicyclists a safe distance from parked cars, keeping bicyclists out of the "door zone."
- Encourage safe passing by motorists.
- Require no additional street space.
- Reduce the incidence of sidewalk riding.
- Reduce the incidence of wrong-way bicycling.

What are their typical applications?

As sharrows are a relatively new bikeway marking in American cities, guidance on application will continue to evolve over time. Sharrows should not be considered a substitute for bike lanes or other separation treatments where these types of facilities are otherwise warranted or space permits.

How are sharrow markings different from a bike lane?

Bike lanes are a dedicated space for bicycle riders where motorists are not allowed to park, stop or drive. Bike lanes are painted on the road with bicycle symbols and a solid white line. In comparison, sharrows are used in lanes that are shared by motorists and bicycle riders.

If I see these markings, is the lane for bikes only?

No, sharrows are used in lanes that are shared by motorists and bicycle riders.

Why not just stripe bike lanes instead of sharrows on city streets?

Bicycle lanes are preferred to sharrows as a bikeway design treatment, but not all streets have enough room for bicycle lanes due to high demand for on-street parking and/or the inability to eliminate or narrow regular traffic lanes. As a general principle, widening roads to provide bike lanes is not practical in the downtown core or in residential areas. The City's typical application of sharrows will be along preferred bicycle routes where it is not practical or feasible to add bicycle lanes.

What else is the City doing to improve bicycling conditions?

The City is working toward designation by the League of American Bicyclists as a Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC). To be awarded the designation there is an application process, and communities must meet a defined set of criteria. One of the steps to achieving this designation is strengthening and improving our bicycling conditions and bicycling networks, and sharrows are one way to encourage bicycle friendly attitudes and practices.

The City's staff is in the process of selecting a professional consulting firm to assist with completion of the Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan, which will identify needs and deficiencies, develop guidelines and standards for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and identify and prioritize facility improvements. The planning process is expected to be completed within 6 to 9 months. There will be opportunities for public input throughout the course of this process. More information about this plan will be available on the City's Planning Department web site – www.planportsmouth.com.

Resource: " Urban Bikeway Design Guide " by the National Association of City Transportation Officials.
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