

Shared Lane Markings (aka "Sharrows") Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Q. I've seen new pavement markings with a bike and two chevrons/arrows above it on streets in Oakland and San Francisco. What do they mean?

A. These are "Shared Lane Markings" (aka "sharrows") that show where cyclists should ride to avoid being hit by a suddenly-opened car door. Although it is motorists' responsibility to check before opening the door, riding too close to parked cars (in the "door zone") can lead to serious injury.

Q. But on some streets, cyclists riding over the sharrows will take the entire lane. Aren't they supposed to move to the right?

A. Not always. According to the California Vehicle Code (CVC) Section 21202, cyclists must stay to the right *except* to pass other cyclists or vehicles, to prepare to make a left turn, or when necessary to avoid conditions that make it unsafe to continue along the right. Such conditions include fixed or moving objects, surface hazards, or lanes too narrow for a bicycle and vehicle to travel side by side. Moving to the left in the lane to avoid car doors, for instance, even if it means taking the entire lane, is permitted by the CVC.

Q. Can't cyclists just look into parked cars as they ride and see if someone is about to open the door?

A. This can be very difficult. All road users need to constantly scan the entire roadway for safety. Checking every parked car for a driver diverts cyclists' attention from other roadway hazards. Also, it is often impossible to see drivers when large parked vehicles block the view of other parked vehicles, or due to tinted windows, headrests, etc. Car drivers should check their side-view mirror or look back prior to opening their door. It is the driver's responsibility should any collision occur (CVC Section 22517).



Q. If I see sharrows in a lane, is the lane only for bikes?

A. No. Sharrows are used in lanes shared by bicyclists and motorists when there is not sufficient width or a need for a bike lane. In contrast, bike lanes set aside a pavement area for bicyclists and are marked by a solid white line and a different symbol.

Q. So, if I don't see sharrows, then it's not a shared lane and bicyclists aren't supposed to be there?

A. No. Cyclists can ride on any street in California except for limited access freeways with signs that prohibit cyclists. Just as every street in Oakland has a 25mph speed limit unless stated otherwise (even if there is no speed limit sign), cyclists are allowed on every street with or without sharrows, bike lanes, or bike route signs.

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

A. No. These markings will be used primarily on streets designated as part of the Oakland Bikeway Network, particularly on streets that form a crucial link but do not have sufficient street width to allow for bike lanes and have a safe speed limit.

Q. What streets now have sharrows?

A. As of December 2011, sharrows can be seen on the following streets:

- 2nd St, Brush to Oak Sts
- 20th St, San Pablo Ave to Telegraph Ave
- 38th Ave, E 12th St to Foothill Blvd
- 38th Ave, Brookdale Ave to MacArthur Blvd
- Foothill Blvd, 14th to Lakeshore Ave
- Foothill Blvd, 36th to 41st Aves
- Fruitvale Ave, E 12th St to MacArthur Blvd
- Market St, 57th to 61st Sts
- West Grand Ave, Broadway to Telegraph Ave

To learn about other sharrow projects in development, go to www.oaklandbikes.info.

Adapted from materials developed by the San Francisco Department of Parking and Traffic, with thanks to San Francisco