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City Deploys New Signs Downtown

Harrisonburg, Va. – The City of Harrisonburg’s Public Works Department is deploying new signs downtown that are intended to provide additional awareness of, and protection for bicyclists. The new signs bear the message “Bikes May Use Full Lane” and are intended to bolster the effectiveness of the “sharrows” found on downtown streets. Sharrows are the illustration of a bicycle with arrows marked on the pavement. Familiar to most who have driven in downtown in the past several years sharrows indicate that the lane is a shared lane for motor vehicles and bicycles.

The idea was brought to the City’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee, a subcommittee of the Transportation Safety and Advisory Commission, in October of 2017 for consideration as a strategy to help validate a bicycling maneuver used when cyclists enter operationally difficult or ambiguous areas, such as when on-street parking forces them into the lane. In such circumstances, it is safer for the cyclist to be in the center of the travel lane, indicating to faster moving traffic to change lanes to pass, rather than having the cyclist and vehicle squeezed into the lane side by side, where there is not enough space for both to safely travel. Changing lanes to pass is easily done on the major streets downtown, Main Street and Liberty Street. On the cross streets, drivers should either wait to pass until the cyclist can move back over to the right side of the lane or use extra caution in making a passing maneuver that will take them at least partially into the oncoming lane of traffic.

In researching the application of the sign, which is a standard sign found in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, Public Works staff found that they have been recently deployed in other Virginia localities for similar purposes. “Encouraging trips by bicycle in the downtown helps reduce congestion and increases parking availability,” said Erin Yancey, Public Works Planning Manager. “The new signs are another step we can take to ensure safety for all users of the streets.”

Bicyclists are also reminded that where there is adequate space to ride on the right-hand side of the lane, this space should be used to not unreasonably impede the flow of traffic. Bicyclists are held legally accountable for obeying all traffic laws when operating as a vehicle in the street.

The City of Harrisonburg is centrally located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. It is home to almost 55,000 people. More information about the City of Harrisonburg is online at www.HarrisonburgVA.gov.



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Sharrow on S. Main Street, Harrisonburg, Virginia



Example Sharrow/Bikes May Use Full Lane sign combination

