

Frequently Asked Questions for Bike Routes and Lanes.

Q. Should I ride with or against traffic?

A. You must ride in the same direction as cars. A bicyclist has the same rights and duties as motorists, for example, stopping at red lights and stop signs.

Q. Where are good places to ride?

A. New Jersey's dense network of secondary roads offer many opportunities to ride. The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) offers two long distance guides and a series of eighteen geographically diverse bike tour map guides. These tour guides are available in Portable Document Format (PDF).

Q. Where do I ride if there is no shoulder or bike lane and the travel lane is too narrow to share?

A. The best approach is to position yourself several feet out into the lane where motorists will see you and not be invited to squeeze by in the same lane. On narrower lanes, ten feet or less, a bicyclist might actually "take the lane", i.e., position themselves at or near the center of the lane. This enables them to be seen by overtaking vehicles and gives the message that the overtaking vehicle must move left to pass when it is safe to do so.

Q. May I ride on major roadways?

A. In New Jersey, relatively few roads are closed to bicycle traffic. However, toll roads and some freeways, including interstates are closed to bicyclists. Some of these roads are accessible if you obtain a permit from the NJDOT.

Q. Who has the right of way, a bicyclist or a pedestrian?

A. Bicyclists, like motorists, must yield the right of way to pedestrians.

Q. How do I make a left turn at a busy intersection?

A. With the proper skills and experience, a bicyclist may move to the left (after checking other traffic) to the left side of the lane or into a left turn lane and execute a left turn, as would other vehicular traffic. If conditions seem too difficult to do this, a bicyclist can always ride to the far corner, reposition themselves on the crossing street and proceed when they have the right of way; or, they can dismount and walk across the road, then remount and proceed.

Q. Do I have to wear a helmet?

A. Currently, children under the age of 17 are required to wear a bicycle helmet when riding a bicycle. Helmets have been shown to reduce the incidence of head injuries. A recent review of 5 well-conducted, case-controlled studies identified a 63 percent to 85 percent reduction in the risk of head and brain injuries for all ages of bicyclists. It makes sense for all bicyclists to wear one.

Q. Can I ride a bike on the sidewalk?

A. While riding a bicycle on a sidewalk is not prohibited by New Jersey statutes, some municipalities have passed ordinances prohibiting bicycle traffic on certain sidewalks. This prohibition is usually posted. It should be noted, that sidewalks are for pedestrians. Riding on sidewalks can cause conflicts with pedestrians and, like wrong way riding, can lead to crashes since it places bicyclists in situations where others do not expect them. Except for very young cyclists under parental supervision, sidewalks are not for bicycling.

Q. Isn't riding on the road unsafe?

A. It depends on a rider's confidence and competence and the road. Statistics indicate bicycling is about as safe as driving or riding in a car. Local streets and bicycle compatible streets are generally easier than busy arterials.

You should practice your bike riding skills and make sure you know the rules of the road so you can ride with confidence. If you encounter difficult situations beyond your skills, such as at a busy intersection, you can always stop, dismount and walk your bike.

Q. What are Shared Roadway Bicycle Markings (Sharrows)?

A. Sharrows are used to remind motorists that bicyclists are allowed to lawfully use this portion of a lane. Sharrows are used to assist bicyclists with positioning on a shared roadway. They also alert motorists of the location a bicyclist may occupy within the traveled roadway.

Q. What are Bicycle Lanes?

A. A bicycle lane is a designated traffic lane for bicyclists, marked by a solid white line. Different from a simple white line showing the edge of the road, a bicycle lane follows specific width requirements and is clearly marked as a bike lane.

Q. What is the simple guidance for use the bike route or lanes?

A. Treat a bicycle lane the same as other traffic lanes. Bicyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as vehicle and motorcycle drivers. Respect the right-of-way of bicyclists because they are entitled to share the road with other drivers.

You may park in a bicycle lane if your vehicle does not block a bicyclist and/or there is not a "No Parking" sign posted. Drivers of motorized bicycles should use bicycle lanes carefully to avoid collisions with bicyclists. Do not squeeze a bicyclist off the road.

Bicyclists may occupy the center of the lane when conditions such as a narrow lane or road hazard make it unsafe to ride in a position that may provide room for a vehicle to pass.

With any slow-moving vehicle or bicycle, drivers should follow at a safe distance. When it is safe the bicyclists should move to a position that allows vehicles to pass. Remember, bicyclists are entitled to share the road with other drivers.

When you are making a right turn and are within 200 feet of the corner or other driveway entrance, you must enter the bicycle lane only after ensuring there is no bicycle traffic, and then make the turn.

Here are some critical points for drivers and bicyclists to remember. Motor vehicle drivers must:

Pass a bicyclist as you would a slow-moving vehicle. Allow sufficient clearance, and ample room for movement and unexpected road conditions. Change lanes and pass with caution only when it is safe.

Always look carefully for bicyclists before opening doors next to moving traffic or before turning.

Allow bicyclists enough room to avoid colliding with vehicle doors that are opened into traffic.

Merge toward the curb or into the bike lane only when it is safe.

Not try to pass a bicyclist just before making a turn. Merge safely where it is allowed, then turn.

Not drive in a bike lane unless initiating a turn at an intersection or driveway, and not more than 200 feet in advance.

Make a visual check for bicyclists when changing lanes or entering traffic. Bicycles are small and may be hidden in a vehicles blind spot.

Be careful when approaching or passing a bicyclist on a two-lane highway or freeway.