Bike/Walk Midland: Shared Lane Markers

Midland is developing significant on-street infrastructure as part of implementing the NMT plan approved by the city council in 2009. When completed, there will be an extensive network of signed bicycle routes on low-traffic side streets, and bike lanes or shared use lanes on several busier streets like Eastlawn, Swede, Sugnet, Orchard, and portions of Ashman and Rodd (from Nelson to downtown).

These changes will enhance safety for bicyclists and provide easy access to businesses, schools, workplaces, churches, parks, and other major destinations in Midland. The goal of these improvements is to increase bicycle use, and of course that means bicyclists and motorists will have some collective learning to do. The shared lane markings on Ashman and Rodd allow bicycles to use the full right hand lane and require cars to yield to bicycles when they are present in that lane. When no bicycles are present in the lane, cars may use the lane as a normal traffic lane.

Two frequent questions about bike lanes and shared use lanes are "How does the bike make a left turn when the lane is on the right hand side of the street?" and “How does a car make a right turn when there is a shared use lane a bike lane?”

There are two ways to make a left turn as a cyclist, and the first is the method bicycles should use on any street. Using the concept of "vehicular cycling," the rider checks for traffic, signals with an extended left arm, moves to the left into an open space in preparation for the turn, and turns when traffic is clear. This same technique is used whether the bike lane is on the right side of a three lane street (Ashman/Rodd), whether there is a left turn lane at an intersection, or simply to make a turn in the middle of a block.

If overtaking traffic is heavy and/or the bicyclist is uncomfortable behaving like a vehicle, the cyclist can "become a pedestrian" at the intersection by moving to the right, entering the street’s crosswalk parallel to the direction of travel, and stopping at the far side of the street, turning to face the direction of the desired left turn direction. Once the light changes or traffic clears, the cyclist can proceed in the street like other vehicles.

Right turns by cars follow the normal rules of the road. In the case of shared lanes on Ashman and Rodd, the car moves to the right lane when no bicycle is present and makes a normal right turn. When there is a bike lane, the car driver must yield to bicycles when present, making a normal right turn once bicycle traffic clears.

For more information: www.midland-mi.org/government/departments/planning/Planning/planninghome.htm