BikeAthens Guide to Local Bike Infrastructure

How to navigate Athens multi-modal streets by car & bike
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This guide provides a quick reference and overview of local bike facilities—bike lanes, bike boxes, etc... with an emphasis on how to safely and courteously navigate our multi-modal streets whether in a car or an a bike.

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Promoting walking, cycling, and public transit as solutions to transportation needs in Athens through education, advocacy, and community service.

We envision a comprehensive transportation network all Athenians can use with comfort and ease.
Shared-Use Markings ("Sharrows")

Shared lane markings or “sharrows” (for “shared-use arrows”) are used to highlight an area of expected bicycle traffic or a designated bike route. Often placed in the center of the travel lane, sharrows encourage bicyclists to ride where they are predictable and visible.

Importantly, the presence of the sharrow does not designate any part of the roadway as either exclusive to motorists or bicyclists. Rather, the symbols highlight that the travel lane is shared. Even if the street does not have sharrows, or other bike facilities, you should follow these suggestions whether in a car or on a bike.

When you drive:
- Of course, you may ride in lanes where shared lane markings are present.
- Be alert for bicyclists who may be traveling in the same lane. You are allowed to drive on or over the markings and are not restricted to driving to the left of the symbols.
- As with any street, bicyclists are allowed to ride on the road. If you find yourself driving behind a bicyclist and need to pass, overtake the bicyclist at a safe speed and at a safe distance.
- Georgia state law defines safe passing distance as at least 3 feet. As a result, you often may need to change lanes to pass bicyclists. You may cross the double yellow line when passing a cyclist, assuming it is safe and clear to do so. There are exceptions! (See § 40-6-44; 40-6-45)

When you bike:
- Sharrows are merely advisory; it is not required that you ride over them.
- By law, in a shared travel lane you should always ride “as far to the right as practicable.” Practicable means safe and reasonable. There are specific exceptions (see § 40-6-294)
- You should always ride so that you are predictable and visible, and always travel in the same direction as traffic.
Bikeable Area

The bikeable area is not a bike lane. It does however, provide extra room to facilitate safe passing and make cycling more comfortable. The dotted-line means cars may enter the area. These markings give bicyclists a space to ride, but are also available to motorists if space is needed.

**When you drive:**
- You should drive to the left of the bikeable area.
- Of course, you may cross the bikeable area at intersections and driveways.
- As always be alert to bikes, and **yield when necessary**.

**When you bike:**
- Be prepared for a motorist to enter the bikeable area.
- Always use caution and assume turning or merging motorists do not see you.
- You are not required to ride in the bikeable area. As with any shared lane, By law, you should ride "as far to the right as practicable." **Practicable** means safe and reasonable. There are specific exceptions (see § 40-6-294).
- You should always ride so that you are **predictable and visible**, and always **travel in the same direction as traffic**.

Hawthorne Ave.
Bike Box

A bike box is a type of advanced stop bar. The bike box includes two elements 1) an advanced stop line for motorists to wait behind and 2) a marked spaced for bicyclists to wait in. When the traffic signal is **RED**, motorists must wait behind the bike box and behind the stop line. Bicyclists are allowed to ride into the bike box and wait for a green signal. When the traffic signal turns from **RED** to **GREEN**, motorists must yield to bicyclists waiting in the bike box before proceeding or making a turn. During the **GREEN** phase of the signal, the intersection operates as normal!

The purpose of a bike box is to allow bicyclists to wait at the front of traffic queues so they are more visible to motorists. This improves the safety of bicyclists at intersections.

**When you drive:**
- If the traffic signal is **RED**, you must wait behind the bike box and behind the advanced stop bar.
- When the traffic signal changes to **GREEN**, you must yield to bicyclists who are waiting in the bike box.
- Look for additional bicyclists that may be approaching on your side.

**When you bike:**
- As you approach an intersection with bike box you may ride up to the front of the traffic queue. If the traffic signal is **RED**, you may wait in the bike box.
- When the traffic signal changes to **GREEN**, you may proceed through the intersection or make a turn. If the light changes to **GREEN** as you approach the bike box, yield to right-turning vehicles that reached the intersection before you.

Sanford Dr.
Bike Lanes

A bike lane is a striped and signed lane reserved exclusively for bicycle traffic. In Athens, bike lanes are either 4 or 5 feet wide and marked with a solid outside line.

Dotted lines at intersections, driveways, and some bus stops indicate a shared use area, where cars may cross the bike lane.

When you drive:
- In Athens-Clarke County, there is no law that requires a bicyclist to ride in a bike lane. Even on streets with bike lanes, expect to see bicyclists in other lanes.
- Whenever you cross a bike lane to prepare for a turn or to park, always yield to thru bicyclists.
- A bike lane is restricted to bicycle traffic, except in instances when you need to turn, enter or leave the roadway or park adjacent to the bike lane.
- When parking next to a bike lane always look for approaching vehicles.

When you bike:
- As you approach an intersection or shared use area be alert, look around, and assume others do not see you. Wait behind motorists who may be in the shared spaced preparing to turn.
- Whenever you enter or exit a bike lane, make sure to look behind you, signal, and yield to vehicles already in adjacent travel lanes.
- **Always travel in the same direction as traffic, unless** the pavement markings indicate 2-way traffic, such a combination yellow stripe!. (For example, Sanford Dr. between Baldwin St. and Hooper St.)
- Athens-Clarke County does not require you to ride in a bike lane. You should use adjacent lanes to pass another bicyclist, to avoid being too close to parked cars, to avoid obstructions or unsafe conditions, or to prepare for a turn. But again, **always look, signal, and yield when changing lanes.**
Green Bike Lanes

In Athens, green bike lanes are used to highlight areas where the bike lane crosses a busy intersection. To increase visibility and safety at these locations, bike lanes are colored green to remind motorists they should look for bikes and yield when necessary. The green paint does not change the legal status of the person using the bike lane, nor the person driving a motor vehicle.

When you drive:
- When turning across a green bike lane look in your blind spot for bicyclists crossing the intersection.
- Remember, crossing a bike lane is like crossing a motor vehicle lane, and you must look and yield accordingly.

When you bike:
- In a green lane, as you approach an intersection, **be alert to cars that may turn across the bike lane**.
- Assume the person in the motor vehicle does not see you. Be ready to apply your brakes and slow down.

Lumpkin St.
Buffered Bike Lanes

A buffered bike lane is regular bike lane, but it also includes a marked buffer between the bike lane and adjacent travel lanes. The purpose of a buffered bike lane is to provide extra room for both cyclists and motorists. The buffer is placed between the bike lane and travel lane. The buffer is marked with white chevrons to indicate that no vehicles are allowed to travel in the buffered area.

When you drive:
- A buffered bike lane is restricted to bicycle traffic, except in instances when you need to turn; enter or leave the roadway.
- You are not allowed to drive in the bike lane or buffered area, even to pass other motorists.
- Whenever you must cross a bike lane to prepare for a turn, look over your right shoulder for bicyclists approaching the intersection. As with all bike lanes, you must yield when the bike has the right of way.

When you bike:
- The buffered area is not intended for opposite flow bicycle traffic, unless specifically designed and marked for counterflow traffic, such as the combination yellow stripe seen on Sanford Drive.
- Whenever you enter or exit the bike lane, make sure to signal and yield to vehicles already in adjacent travel lanes.
**Protected Bike Lanes**

A protected bike lane is an on-street bike lane that uses vertical elements to physically separate bikes from motor vehicle traffic. Where the protected bike lane is present, it is important for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians to be alert.

**When you drive**
- Do not drive over the physical barrier and enter the bike lane.

**When you walk**
- Always *look* for bike traffic before crossing a protected bike lane.

**When you bike:**
- Be alert for pedestrians that may suddenly step-off the curb and into the bike lane.
- As you approach an intersection, use caution and assume turning or merging motorists do not see you.
- **Stop at all stop signs, including bicycle-specific stop signs!** Bikes must follow the same rules as other vehicles!
PASS WITH CARE

Give bicycles 3 FEET when passing.

made possible through a grant from the Georgia Governor’s Office of Highway Safety