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## Complete streets: Safe for people, smart for business

10 hrs ago

The other day while biking home from work I received advice from a passing car, "Get on the sidewalk!" The remainder of my ride home was unusually speedy, fueled by indignation and fantasies of what I would say to that car's passengers if I happened to catch up to it at a stop light. But the truth is, there are many reasons for confusion on this matter, and not even all avid bicyclists agree on the proper place for bicycles. Varied use of street painting, signage, and municipal ordinance has created a street environment in which it is not always intuitive where bicycles belong.

Pennsylvania's Motor Vehicle Code treats bicycles as vehicles, and grants bicyclists on the roadway the same rights and responsibilities as car drivers, with some exceptions. Bicyclists may ride on the shoulder but are not required to do so. Bikers may ride two abreast (but no more than two). Motor vehicles may overtake bicycles in a no-passing zone, but as with any instance of passing a bicycle, they must provide four feet of distance. The code prohibits biking on sidewalks in business districts or where there is a bicycle-only lane available.



Chapter 3 of Gettysburg's Municipal Code addresses bicycles, skateboards, and scooters. This chapter repeats much of the Motor Vehicle Code and clarifies where bicycles are permitted on the sidewalk. Bicycle riding is prohibited on the sidewalks along Baltimore Street, Steinwehr Avenue, Lincoln Square, and within one block of the square. It is legal to ride a bicycle on other sidewalks so long as they are not congested with pedestrians. Note that while bicycles are permitted on many sidewalks, they are not required to ride there. I am the type of rider that would always prefer to ride on the road rather than the sidewalk.

I have been participating in Main Street Gettysburg's work to develop a master plan for Baltimore Street in the borough, and there have been numerous lively discussions about how to best design a streetscape that will adequately support the pedestrian, bicycle, and automobile traffic desired for that corridor. Some of the options suggested for Baltimore Street include a dedicated bike lane, a wider sidewalk for shared bicycle and pedestrian use, or simply painting "sharrows" on the road to clarify bicyclists' right to use the lane and guide positioning so that bikers can avoid being "doored" by a parked vehicle. To see what sharrows look like, check out Queen Street between Long Lane and Steinwehr Avenue.



From what I've heard at these recent discussions, most business owners and residents of Baltimore Street agree that we want to encourage more bicycle use, but not at the expense of pedestrian space. The existing narrow and poorly-lit sidewalks do not promote the type of foot traffic desired between the square and the southern end of the street. We hope to create a "complete street," one that is safe and accessible for all types of users - pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders. We hope that by creating more pedestrian space and bicycle infrastructure, the streetscape will entice people to meander up and down the street, patronizing our businesses and appreciating the historic charm unique to our small town.

Sarah Kipp is a board member of Healthy Adams Bicycle Pedestrian Inc.

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