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Share the road with care

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It may seem like more madness than method to many travelers along some stretches, but the city's ambitious effort to encourage bicycling and calm motorized traffic through new striping and symbols holds promise for safer, more efficient mobility.

How to get through the transition period is the rub.

"We are a car culture," notes Kim Irwin, head of the urban advocacy group Health by Design. "We're not used to paying attention to cyclists."

Or to a proliferation of bike paths on the asphalt, some duly lined and set at the right side, others -- known as "sharrows" -- in the same space as cars. Add the various busy corridors in the city where two lanes become one, and motorists, cyclists and pedestrians alike are on a learning curve.

The latter is called a "road diet," and it works. A Federal Highway Administration report issued last year noted drastic declines in crashes in cities where traffic lanes were narrowed or reduced to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists.

Taking Indy down the path those cities have chosen, toward a healthier mix of transportation, is a mission uniting the Ballard administration with groups such as Irwin's and many a local resident. Changing culture, however, is more than just a matter of painting lines.

The city and its Office of Sustainability and Department of Public Works have assumed the task of education, but more remains to be done if the designations and the etiquette are to become common knowledge. The city has information on its website, officials attend community meetings and stories have appeared in the media.

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With lots of complaints as well as lots of compliments having been received, much more outreach is planned for the coming year, a city spokesman says. That includes 55,000 fliers, proposed cooperative efforts with driver's education programs and the state Bureau of Motor [Vehicles](#) and partnerships with organizations and businesses.

"The city is doing a lot," Irwin acknowledges. "The opportunity is there to do more, absolutely."

Down the road, the payoff will be a more civil and more livable community. For now, the architects of that breakthrough must take care to get the [car](#) culture up to speed.

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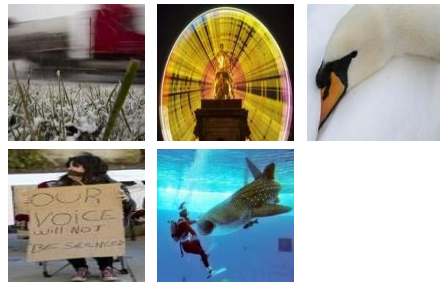


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