

'Sharrows' promote road sharing in Belmont Shore

By Karen Robes Meeks, Staff Writer

Posted: 06/26/2009 07:13:15 PM PDT



The City of Long Beach Traffic Paint crew apply a 5-foot wide green lane for the first "sharrow," or new Shared Lane Marking, an arrow-like design painted on the roadway to mark a bicycling route along 2nd Street in Belmont Shore between Livingston Drive and Bay Shore Avenue on Thursday. (Diandra Jay/Staff Photographer)

LONG BEACH - For some, the freshly painted green-striped bicycle lane running through the heart of Belmont Shore's commercial district was a mystery, drawing curious stares and mixed reactions from the citizenry.

But for local cyclists such as Russ Roca, the new sharrows, or Shared Lane Markings, on Second Street are a significant step toward shedding light on their rights to the road.

"It's a huge deal," said Roca, who has been "car free" for eight years and relies primarily on his bicycle to get around town.

"This isn't a special privilege that's granted to cyclists. It's something that's in the California Vehicle Code.



The city of Long Beach is installing its first "sharrow" or new Shared Lane Markings, an arrow-like design painted on a roadway to mark a bicycling route. It's used to alert motorists to slow down and guide cyclists to a safer spot.

Paul Penzella Staff Artist

"I mean, (the sharrow's) a really bold statement by the city," he said. "I



Charlie Gandy, the city's new mobility coordinator. (Diandra Jay/Staff Photographer)

can't wait to ride it."

Today, hundreds of cyclists are expected to try out the city's first sharrows, which run along Second Street from Livingston Drive to Bay Shore Avenue.

Located on the center right lane of both sides of Second Street, the 5-foot-wide sharrows alert motorists to slow down and guide cyclists to a safer spot.

The new green stripes don't take a lane away from motorists, said Charlie Gandy, the city's new mobility coordinator.

"All we're doing is expressing existing laws on the street," he said.

The new lanes are part of a larger effort to make Long Beach a bicycle-friendly city. In the last two years, the city has received about \$11 million in grants to provide new bicycle lanes throughout town, training and education to the public and staff - including Gandy - and to bring to reality the city's 2001 Bicycle Master Plan.

In April, the city asked the Federal Highway Administration to be the testing ground for the bike lane. (Only a handful of cities in the nation have the colored sharrows.)

"We're drawing attention from other professionals around the country because what we're doing here is innovative, and this sharrow program is part of that. Long Beach is one of the first cities in this nation to use this tool to reduce the conflict between motorists and bicyclists."