

Frequently Asked Questions: Karl Road Resurfacing ***September 17, 2012***

What is a bicycle lane and how does it affect motorists?

A bicycle lane is typically a five to six foot lane for the exclusive use of those using bicycles. While bicycles are considered vehicles according to the Ohio Revised Code and entitled to use any lane on the road, bicycle lanes provide bicyclists a safer option to ride at a reasonable speed outside of the flow of automobile traffic. Bicyclists must still obey all traffic laws and should ride in a predictable path. Motorists must yield to bicyclists when turning across or merging with bicyclists in the bicycle lane.

What is a shared-use lane and how does it affect motorists?

A shared travel lane, usually denoted by the presence of “sharrows” and/or “share the road” signage, is a vehicular lane marked for the shared use of both bicyclists and motorists. While bicyclists are permitted by the Ohio Revised Code to ride in any lane on any road (except limited access freeways and highways), shared travel lanes are marked to remind motorists of this shared condition. Bicyclists must obey all traffic laws and should ride in a predictable path. Motorists should exercise due care and extra space when following or passing a bicyclist. State law in Ohio allows bicyclists to ride in the middle of a travel lane to avoid hazards and to discourage passing when it is unsafe or impractical for motorists to pass.

Why are bike lanes being proposed for Karl Road north of Elmore Avenue?

The origin of the project was a recommendation for bike lanes to be added to Karl Road from the City of Columbus’ Bicentennial Bikeways Plan. In conjunction with the resurfacing of Karl Road, the Department of Public Service reviewed these recommendations and determined that the speed and volume of traffic on this section of Karl Road discourages bicyclists from safely sharing the right travel lane. In this same review, the department found that the speed and volume measures were acceptable for a road with on-road bike lanes. Adding bike lanes will improve access for those who ride bicycles to work, school, or other destinations by choice or by necessity. Improving access in the Karl Road corridor is important because many facilities and properties are solely accessible from Karl Road, and no direct parallel route exists for those traveling beyond the corridor.

Why are shared-use lanes being proposed for Karl Road south of Elmore Avenue?

The origin of the project was a recommendation for bike lanes to be added to Karl Road from the City of Columbus’ Bicentennial Bikeways Plan. In conjunction with the resurfacing of Karl Road, the Department of Public Service reviewed these recommendations and determined that it is currently not feasible to continue the bike

lane through this section of roadway, and that the speed and volume of traffic on this section of Karl Road was acceptable for encouraging bicyclists to share the vehicular travel lane with automobiles. This review was influenced by on-street parking used by adjacent residents, the residential character of the area, and relatively lower speeds and volumes of traffic in this area.

Why is the City reducing the number of automobile travel lanes from four to three? Will this make vehicular congestion worse on Karl Road?

Studies have shown that the type of change recommended for Karl Road, called a “road diet,” will have little to no impact to congestion, and likely improve safety. Roads striped with four lanes typically suffer from congestion caused by left turning traffic blocking one of the through lanes, reducing the number of through lanes to the right lane. In such instances, those driving in the left lane can be surprised by stopped traffic in their lane and sometimes suddenly stop or change lanes resulting in higher instances of rear-end and side-swipe crashes. This project will provide a center two-way left turn lane from which motorists should make left turns, leaving the one through lane generally unobstructed and likely improving the safety of driving on this road. The remaining space will be used for bike lanes to improve access for bicyclists.

Will access to my business, school, or residence be restricted or changed?

No access will be restricted as a part of this project, and access will be improved to many properties by providing a center two-way left turn lane out of the path of through traffic.

If you have questions that are not addressed by this FAQ section, please feel free to call the project consultant (Stantec) or the City of Columbus directly via the City’s 311 Call Center at 311 or (614) 645-3111.

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