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BIKE LANES TO GET NEW EPOXY PAINT

Longer-lasting paint coming to Missoula streets starting Tuesday, June 28

Missoula's bicyclists and drivers share the same wish every spring when the roads clear, for brighter, whiter paint markings on the City's bicycle lanes.

The City of Missoula has the solution: durable epoxy paint, replacing the water-soluble paint used today. That means a longer life for the markings, approximately three to five years. Clearly marked bike lanes mean safer streets and fewer conflicts between bike riders and drivers.

"I've seen conflicts start because bike riders and drivers don't know where they are supposed to be," said Phil Smith, manager of the City's bicycle-pedestrian program. "Some of that could be solved with clearer lane markings."

In addition to painting designated bike lanes, the City will also paint 168 bike route markers, or sharrows, on some streets where bikes and cars are expected to share the lane. The new sharrows will be a stencil of a bicycle with two chevrons above it. The sharrows will be difficult to miss, at nine feet long and more than three feet wide.

"The real importance of these markers is to remind both bicyclists and drivers that the street is a shared space, and they need to treat it as such," Smith said. "This says to driver and bicyclists, 'Let's share the road.' "

The word sharrow comes from the phrase "shared-lane marking."

Drivers and riders will also have to share the road, temporarily, with equipment for painting the lines and sharrows. This is the second of three summers for this painting project, with about one-third of the work done each year. This year's work will begin Tuesday and continue through the week, weather permitting. Cars cannot be parked on the street during the painting. Residents should be on

the lookout for notices that their streets will be closed to parking just before and during the painting. The City asks drivers to heed all barriers and not enter streets that have been blocked off. Cars that have not been moved by the time painting is set to begin will be moved by towing to make way for the striping.

The painting will be done by Highway Specialties, a Great Falls firm that is equipped to work with epoxy paint, by agreement with the Montana Department of Transportation. The project is being funded by federal highway funds designated for urban use.

The following streets will be painted during the project:

Higgins Avenue: Connell to South

Stephens Avenue: Mount to Orange

South Third Street West: Walnut to Russell

Russell Street; McDonald to 39th.

Spruce Street: Madison to Orange

Van Buren Street: Vine to Missoula

Van Buren Street: Broadway to railroad overcrossing

Bancroft Street: South Avenue to Southwest Higgins

Orange Street: 1st to 6th

South Avenue: Russell to Garfield

Madison Street: Broadway to Spruce

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Sharrows like these will be added to Missoula's streets this June.