

Why “Edge Lane Road” makes sense

Current terminology for this treatment centers around the terms “Advisory Bike Lane” and “Advisory Shoulder”. These terms create problems. Here are the reasons the terms “Edge Lane Road” (ELR) to refer to the entire road and “edge lane” to refer to the outside lanes are superior:

- The edge lanes are neither bike lanes nor shoulders

While this may not matter in casual conversation, it matters greatly in the technical, regulatory, and legal settings which are common in our work. Per the MUTCD and state vehicle codes, neither bike lanes nor shoulders are intended for vehicular travel. Edge lane is a new term and does not carry the baggage that comes with these other terms.

- The current names are not mode neutral

Some folks advocate using “Advisory Bike Lane” when bikes are the intended benefactors and “Advisory Shoulder” when pedestrians are supported. This approach is unsustainable. We already have installations that support both bikes and peds - what do we call those? What name do we use when the treatment supports equestrians, scooters, personal mobility devices, horse-drawn buggies, etc?

The essence of the road is not the type of vulnerable road user it supports; its essence is the space created by the edge lanes and the shared use behavior required of all road users.

- The current names hide the uniqueness of this road behind old jargon

The current names imbue the edge lanes with an existence independent of the entire road. It implies these edge lanes can be added to any road. This has resulted in “advisory bike lanes” being added to roads with centerlines. This configuration is worse than sharrows - and that’s saying something.

ELRs only work as an inseparable whole. The treatment is a shared street, not individual lanes for VRUs.

- A role beyond vulnerable road users

This treatment has the potential to significantly reduce single-vehicle, roadway-departure crash rates on rural, 2-lane roads even if a road never sees a vulnerable road user. While “Advisory Shoulder” may be a reasonable name for this use, the term “Advisory Bike Lane” is not.

- “Edge lane road” is already used in other countries

Official Danish guidance already uses this name and residents of other countries are familiar with the terminology. This is not something coming out of the blue.

- “Advisory Bike Lane” has the potential to engender bikelash

This new treatment can trigger vehement opposition from fearful folks. It is best to not give that energy a “bike” focus.

- Are you referring to the lanes or the entire road?

The current names are used interchangeably to refer to the entire road and to the edge lanes. Unique names for these two items makes communication easier and accurate. The “edge lanes” refer to the outside lanes and “edge lane road” refers to the entire road.