

Why I use the term “Edge Lane Road”

Current terminology centers around the terms “Advisory Bike Lane” and “Advisory Shoulder”. This terminology has a number of problems. I use the term “Edge Lane Road” to refer to the entire road and “edge lane” to refer to the outside lanes.

My reasons for using the terms “edge lane” and “edge lane road” are:

- 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 that baggage.

- The current names are not mode neutral

Some folks use “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 are intended to support both bikes and peds - what do we call those? What name do we use when we support equestrians, scooters, personal mobility devices, horse-drawn buggies, etc?

The essence of the road is not the type of vulnerable road user it is intended to support; its essence is the preferential space created by the edge lanes and the center lane used for two-way motor vehicle traffic.

- 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.

Edge lane roads only work as an inseparable whole.

- 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.

- A role beyond vulnerable road users

This treatment has the potential to 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 certainly not.

- “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.