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NEWS RELEASE

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City presses forward with new array of cutting-edge bike facilities

City Council to approve a study of Sharrows, Bike Boxes, Colored Bike Lanes and Bikes 'May Use Full Lane' signs

The dull gray and black city streets may take a new hue and pattern after the city embarks on a study of new bicycle facilities, some of them in shades of green, blue or red.

The City Council Thursday is expected to authorize a contract with UT's Center for Transportation Research to study the effectiveness and possible locations of initial sharrows (shared lane markings), bike boxes, colored bike lanes and "Bikes May Use Full Lane" signs.

"Although this is a fairly small study, this is a humongous step forward for encouraging bicycling and making it safer in Austin," said Rob D'Amico, president of the League of Bicycling Voters, the area's bicycle advocacy nonprofit that has lobbied for the projects. "This study will lay the groundwork for actually putting the paint on the pavement and getting these facilities in place, which we hope will happen in the coming year or so."

Sharrows are marked with white stencils—usually a carrot top arrow and a bicyclist—to inform motorists and bicyclists that they are encouraged to share the lane, rather than having the bicyclist ride to the far right of the lane. "Sharrows were originally designed to get bicyclists out of the door zone, the area along parked cars where bicyclists can strike or be struck by doors, often with devastating results," D'Amico said. "But they've also been used lately more as a way to get bikes integrated safely with auto traffic, and in areas of high bicycle use that are too narrow for a separate bike lane."

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Bike boxes, often colored pavement, are placed at intersections and are intended to provide a buffer between bicyclists and auto traffic waiting at signals. The boxes let bicyclists turn more safely, wait at the front of queues and can also aid in getting across lanes to make left turns. Colored bicycle lanes have been used to increase visibility so that motorists are more aware of their intended use. And the "Bikes May Use Full Lane" signs recently have been used to let bicyclists merge into full traffic lanes to avoid the perils of construction, narrow lanes and other hazards.

"People are pretty accustomed to seeing white paint markings for bike lanes nowadays," D'Amico said. "But these new types of facilities may be a little strange at first. We hope that the study will wrap up by this summer, and that actual pilot projects for these techniques will follow shortly after."

Thursday's council agenda also includes a "wish list" for a possible federal economic recovery stimulus package. Included on the list is a package for \$2.6 million in new bicycle facilities, projects that the city has in its hopper for quick construction.

The League of Bicycling Voters also is in the midst of a public involvement process to form a "Top 5" list of major, new bicycle facility investments to enter the planning stage. To get more information on LOBV's "Project Catapult," visit www.lobv.org.

The League of Bicycling Voters is Austin's voice for bicyclists. LOBV is a nonprofit advocacy organization promoting better policy decisions and more resources to increase the number of bicyclists in the Austin area.