

How to plant **Share the Road** signs in your community.



Background: Like in many parts of the country, bicycling at all levels is very popular throughout the wine country of the Finger Lakes region of New York. Numerous bicyclists challenge themselves with rides around each of the eleven lakes, as well as compete in a wide variety of organized events—charity rides, centuries, triathlons and other big challenges. Our small club, TNMC, in Canandaigua, New York has been riding in the area for twenty years. On occasion we enjoy making some sort of philanthropic contribution to our community. Most recently, we decided to seek the placement of *Share the Road* signs throughout major roads in our town.

Objective: Based on our club’s familiarity with local roads, our goal was to identify the best places for *Share the Road* signs and then ask the town, county and state to put them in place. We concluded that the quickest way to accomplish this objective was to have the members of TNMC fund the signs and ask the transportation departments to provide the posts and installation. TNMC selected locations within the Town of Canandaigua boundaries, as the majority of our members live in the town. As you can guess, our intent was to benefit pedalers and drivers alike with safer roads.

The Outcome: After a relatively simple work effort that took about six months, twenty-three sets of signs (the diamond shaped bicycle and the rectangular *Share the Road* sign pictured above) dot key places on roads throughout our small community of about 16,000 people. You can also attempt to accomplish this wonderful and beneficial project by following the five easy steps outlined below.

Five Steps to Place Signs in Your Community

1 > Involve your club: First, identify a couple of members in your club who, working together, can take the initiative to get your sign project off the ground. Communicate the plan to members and ask them to make donations to fund a number of *Share the Road* signs throughout the town, county and/or region where you most often ride. Feel free to share TNMC’s success story.

You may not want to be too ambitious, however. Decide on a reasonable number of signs for your area so as not to burden your local highway departments. Each pair of signs will cost about \$100 for the set. Set a target total dollar amount to raise for this project and request members to make donations by a certain date. Depending on the size and participation of your club, a \$10-20 donation per individual could suffice. At TNMC, as a small club, each member’s donations amounted to about \$80 to fund the signs.

Incidentally, if you are not in a club gather some fellow pedalers and follow these steps. A few signs are better than no signs at all.

2 > Identify the suggested locations for the signs: The two leaders, and also interested active members, can make suggestions on where signs would be of benefit within the geography you have identified. Make a spreadsheet to summarize your suggestions. On the spreadsheet, include a column for: The road's name, note if it is a town, county or state road, note whether the sign faces east/west/north/south and a column for the exact suggested location (example, 100 yards south of Oak Street). We also included a note on the spreadsheet that said, "Please place each sign so it will not intrude in someone's yard or view."

3 > Identify the town/city/county/state highway department contacts: During this process, we learned that each of these departments makes their own decisions. We first approached the Town Highway Supervisor first and were thrilled by his enthusiasm. From him we learned of the contacts for the other highway departments. Get a name, phone number, mailing address and email address for future use. We found it very easy to find each contact except for the New York State DOT, which is a large organization and, it turned out, has an individual assigned for this type of project, by region.

> Write and send a proposal letter: Draft a letter that outlines your request and your offer to fund the signs. You can use the same base letter for all of the departments. Mention that you are working with their peer departments in the area, thereby involving everyone in the highway department community for one common goal of safety. Include a copy of your complete spreadsheet with the suggested sign placement locations for all the suggested signs on all of the roads.

- *A sample letter may look like this:*

Dear (name of highway supervisor or responsible contact):

The purpose of this letter is to request your support for the placement of *Share the Road/Bicycle* signs on selected (town, city, county, state) roads within the (town, city, county) of (name).

As a member, I represent a group of cycling enthusiasts in a local bicycle club, (club's name), who have been frequently riding our roads for (number of) years. The region, as well as our local community, is an excellent environment for bicycle riding for numerous residents, as well as for an increasing number of tourists. We believe everyone—you, drivers, and pedalers alike—can benefit from safer roads.

In the interest of increasing safety and awareness, (club's name) is offering to fund up to (xx) sets of signs on roads under your jurisdiction. Our club's funds are committed and are ready to submit to you upon approval of this request. We only ask that you order the signs from your approved supplier and then provide for the installation at your convenience. Also be aware that we are proposing the same for (town, city, county, state) roads and hope each highway department will approve our proposal.

Please find a copy of the suggested sign locations based on our almost (number of) years of experience riding in the area. (Club name) respectfully requests your approval to proceed in the interest of improved riding and driving for all. Thank you.

Close your letter with contact information.

5 > Patience is the last step: You should find that the smaller the highway department the faster the response to your letter. In our case, the town enthusiastically was on board immediately. The county took about a month and asked us to fill out a request form and submit a small fee. The state DOT responded in about six months after conducting its own research. Incidentally, the New York state DOT declined our offer to fund the signs and bore the cost in full for signs on state roads. They also decided to place more signs than originally requested. It does not hurt to follow up on occasion with each department to be sure your request remains on the front burner.

As for actually obtaining the signs, in our situation the town purchased them from their approved sign provider. They not only purchased the signs for their own town's needs, but also for the county's needs. We were then sent a total invoice from the town and paid the bill from club member's donations. As mentioned, the state ultimately obtained and paid for their own signs. One final thought. In our area where we have snowy winters, the signs were installed in the fall and early winter after the heavy road-related workload in the summer had ended.

Good luck with your Share the Road sign project in your community!

Support is here: If you should have any questions specifically about this project, feel free to contact Peter Bud of TNMC via email at peterpaulbud@gmail.com

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