Bicycling on Streets

Lane Positioning. Ride in a straight line on the right far enough from the edge to avoid hazards, to be visible, and to discourage motorists from passing too closely within the same lane. Ride at least 5 feet from parked cars to avoid opening doors (see below). In lanes wide enough to share side by side with motorists, move a bit farther left to remain visible. Move a bit right to facilitate passing when doing so does not compromise your safety, as when a long stretch of a parking lane is unoccupied. Do not weave in and out of empty parking spaces.

Be predictable and conspicuous following all traffic regulations. Following traffic laws and communicating are keys to safe bicycling. Knowing and following the rules helps all road users properly anticipate and react to each other. Bright and reflective clothing, lights at night and a lane position away from the edge of the street will make you more visible.

Don't ride on the sidewalk. It is illegal to ride on the sidewalk in business districts. While sidewalks may be appropriate for young children and bicyclists moving at pedestrian speed, motorists are less likely to see or yield to faster bicyclists on the sidewalk, increasing the risk of a crash.

Never ride against traffic. Riding against traffic is dangerous and illegal. Motorists and pedestrians are not looking for cyclists riding the wrong way down a street.

Control the lane. Move toward the center when the lane is too narrow for motorists to pass safely (with at least 3 feet separation), at intersections, or when moving at the same speed as other traffic. Some roads too narrow to share side by side are marked with sharrows and BIKES MAY USE FULL LANE signs.

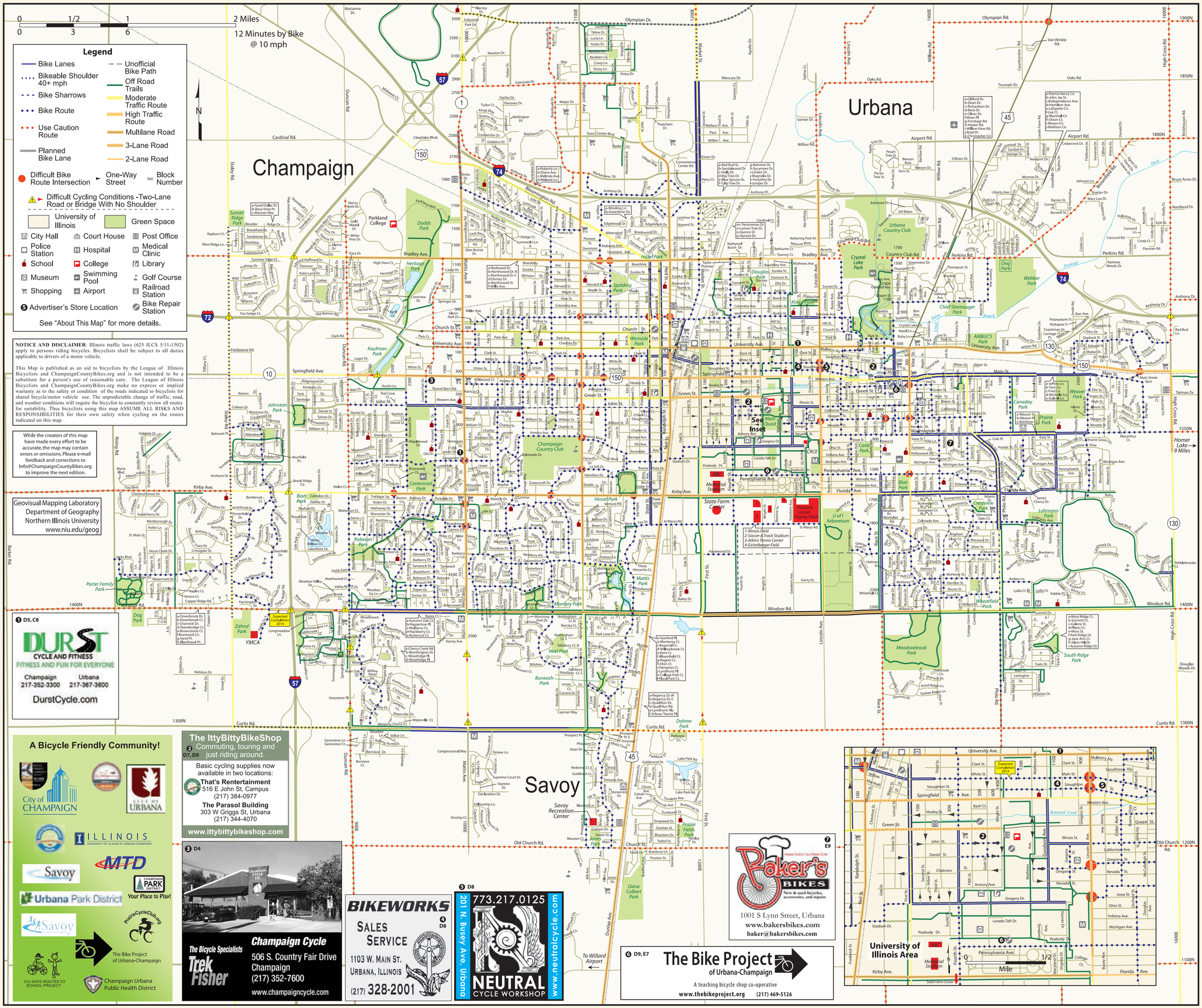
Defensive Bicycling requires being vigilant and prepared to avoid the mistakes of others. Be alert, scan the road, and expect the unexpected. While many motorist-bicyclist crashes are the legal fault of the motorist, a well positioned and aware bicyclist can nonetheless anticipate and avoid many crashes. Many experienced bicyclists find that using a mirror helps them stay better aware of the traffic around them.

Intersections. At intersections, use the center of the rightmost lane going in your direction following lane markings. If you can't change lanes to turn left, ride across the street to the other side and align yourself with traffic. Using the center of the lane (even when turning right) will control the lane, make you more visible and discourage motorists from attempting to turn in front of you. Never move to the right side of any vehicle that may turn right, especially trucks and buses. Remember to signal your turns and lane changes.

The Door Zone is the area along the side of a parked car where an opening door can strike or startle a cyclist, resulting in serious injury or death. It's not just striking the door that is the danger. A bicyclist may go over the door, bounce off the door or be thrown into traffic by clipping the handlebar or by swerving to avoid the door.

When riding on a street with a bike lane, ride at least five feet from parked cars. This is usually near the left edge of the bike lane, but you may need to ride on the left line or outside of the bike lane.

Civility. In addition to following the rules of the road, cooperation and courtesy help to make our trips by walking, bicycling and motoring safer and more enjoyable for all. A friendly wave will show your appreciation for another road user's cooperation and encourage more of the same.



NOTICE AND DISCLAIMER: Illinois traffic laws (625 ILCS 5/11-1502) apply to persons riding bicycles. Bicyclists shall be subject to all duties applicable to drivers of a motor vehicle.

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While the creators of this map have made every effort to be accurate, the map may contain errors or omissions. Please e-mail feedback and corrections to Info@ChampaignCountyBikes.org to improve the next edition.