

Don't Cross the Yellow Line?

The majority of motorists understand the meaning of pavement markings used on streets and highways. The system is easily recognized and easy to follow. However, certain combinations of lines and colors can be confusing. Recently, Apple Valley staff was asked questions regarding the legality of crossing a yellow line. Here is the answer.

Yellow lines delineate separation of traffic traveling in opposite directions. They are also used on the left edge of divided roadways and one-way streets. In both cases, motorists drive to the right of the yellow line.

If the yellow line is broken or dashed, passing of slower moving vehicles is permitted when it is safe to do so. When the yellow line is solid, motorists must drive right of the line. Passing or driving left of a solid yellow line is prohibited. However, motorists may cross the solid yellow line to make a left turn, either from the road or a cross street. A double yellow line prohibits passing in both directions. A combination of a dashed and solid yellow prohibits passing from the side of the solid line.

An exception is the two-way left turn lane that is marked by a solid yellow line on the outside and a dashed yellow line on the inside of both sides. The solid yellow line prohibits passing, and the dashed yellow line shows separation of potential opposing traffic. Thus, the two-way left turn lane may not be used to pass another vehicle. It can be used, however, to decelerate in preparation for a left turn.

Some motorists are using the two-way left turn lane as an acceleration lane when they make a left turn onto a street. They are in the two-way left turn lane, but going straight and driving left of a solid yellow line. Thus, they are not properly using the lane and could be in violation of the laws.

Another marking that can be confusing to motorists is a truck-climbing lane on a two-lane highway. A truck-climbing lane on a two-lane highway has two lanes going up the hill and one lane going down. The single lane is separated by a dashed and solid yellow line together. This permits traffic in the single downhill lane to pass slower downhill vehicles when it is safe to do so. Some truck-climbing lanes have a double yellow line next to a single lane meaning passing is prohibited.

What if you see two sets of two dashed yellow lines on either side of a lane? It is a reversible lane also marked by overhead arrows and signs. The red X or green down arrow assign direction of flow to the lane.