

Double Yellow Centerline

Q. Why do some streets have double yellow centerline, but not others?

A double yellow centerline is a valuable and effective control device used to delineate the separation of traffic lanes that have opposite directions of travel on a roadway and shall be yellow. It is intended to communicate that changing lanes or overtaking the car in front of you is not advisable.

The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) is a set of well developed, federal, and state recognized guidelines that help to indicate when such controls become necessary. These guidelines take into consideration, among other things, the number of vehicles on the roadway, width of the roadway, and necessity.

The MUTCD specifies that roadways with an average daily traffic (ADT) of 6,000 vehicles per days require double yellow centerline. Optionally roadways with up to 4,000 (ADT) may also utilize double yellow centerline.

Q. What is the purpose of a double yellow centerline?

A. The double yellow centerline is used to delineate the separation of traffic lanes to ensure traffic flows smoothly and predictably.

Q. Will a double yellow centerline reduce speeding in my neighborhood?

A. Because a double yellow centerline is used to assign the separation of traffic lanes, it is not an effective means to control speeding. Research shows that where double yellows are not installed, there is actually a reduction in speeding.

A theory is that center lines and hatching can provide a psychological sense of confidence to drivers that no vehicles will encroach on 'their' side of the road. There can also be a tendency for some drivers to position their vehicles close to a white line regardless of the traffic conditions, believing it is their 'right' to be in this position. Centre line removal introduces an element of uncertainty which is reflected in lower speeds.

Q. Will increasing the use of double yellow centerline in my neighborhood, better control traffic?

A. As with any traffic control device, incorrectly utilizing double yellow centerline sends the wrong message to motorists, creating a more hazardous situation, especially in low volume areas, such as residential neighborhoods.

Double yellow centerlines cause a substantial division of the roadway that denotes the travel way. This division becomes confusing in the event of intermittent on street parking, neighbors crossing the roadway, a stray ball that rolls into the roadway, all common occurrences on low volume residential streets.

Q. Why was the double yellow centerline not replaced on my roadway when it was repaved?

Double yellow centerline will be installed on new projects based on state and federal guidelines, to ensure uniformity in traffic control. The survey includes reviewing the following criteria outlined in the MUTCD:

- Vehicle volumes
- Visibility (sight distance) around a curve, over a hill, at grade crossings, and at bridges