

Bicyclists fare best when they act and are treated as drivers of vehicles.

Safe and Legal Bicyclists Ride Predictably When They:

- **Ride on roads, with traffic.**
- **Signal their turns.**
- **Obey traffic signals and signs.**
- **Turn from the appropriate lane.**
- **Use lights and reflectors at night.**
- **Ride in the right most lane serving their destination, and as far right as practicable, but not as far right as possible.**
- **Take the travel lane by riding in the center or just right of center, when a lane is too narrow for a car and bicyclist to ride side by side.**

Resources

A **Share the Road brochure** is available for or motorists and bicyclists. This was published as a cooperative effort of the Connecticut Department of Transportation, the Capitol Region Council of Governments, and the Central Connecticut Bicycle Alliance. Giving this brochure to motorists and bicyclists when you comment on their risky behavior can help to reinforce safe behavior.

Copies of the brochures (both in English and Spanish) can be ordered by contacting:

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BICYCLES & MOTOR VEHICLES:

SAME ROADS – SAME RULES – SAME RIGHTS

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Contact Sandy Fry sfry@crcog.org 860.522.2217 x220 for more information.

The Challenge of Bicycle Traffic Enforcement

Generally law enforcement officers have an in depth knowledge of traffic laws as they relate to motor vehicles but frequently they have not been taught about bicycle safety and the laws as they apply to bicyclists. A better understanding of safe bicycle operation can help law enforcement officers to enhance the safety of all users.

This handout introduces issues related to bicycle law and safe bicycle operation. Below are some basic principles for bicycling in traffic:

1. **Bicyclists have a right to ride on public roadways** (except for the few locations where bicycle use is prohibited.)
2. **Motorists and bicyclists must share the road.** Motorists need to give bicyclists the same right of way they would give to other vehicles.
3. **Except for children, riding on sidewalks is less safe than riding on the road.** Sidewalk riding puts the bicyclist where they are not expected by motor vehicle operators.
4. **Wrong way riding is extremely hazardous for bicyclists.** Bicyclists who ride facing traffic cannot see traffic signs and signals and are not expected by motor vehicle operators.
5. **Visibility is key for safe bicycling.** Lighting and reflectors are essential for visibility for nighttime bicycling. Bicyclists who hug the curb or edge of the highway are less visible to motorists and put themselves at risk.

What to Enforce?

Your enforcement actions can let motorists and bicyclists know when they are exhibiting risky behavior, and can help to prevent future crashes. National studies have identified the following violations as common contributing factors in bicycle-motor vehicle crashes.

Cyclists Contribute to Crashes When They:

- Ride against traffic on roadways.
- Turn left from the right side of the road.
- Fail to yield when entering roadways from driveways.
- Fail to yield at stop or yield signs.
- Swerve in front of cars.
- Cycle at night without lights.

Motorists Contribute to Crashes When They:

- Turn left in front of bicyclists.
- Turn right in front of bicyclists.
- Fail to yield at stop or yield signs.
- Open car doors into paths of bicyclists.
- Fail to yield when entering roadways from driveways.
- Fail to allow 3 feet of separation when passing bicyclists.

BICYCLES & MOTOR VEHICLES – SAME ROADS – SAME RULES – SAME RIGHTS

Connecticut Bicycle Laws:

Bicyclist's Status – Traffic laws apply to persons riding bicycles. Bicyclists riding on a highway are granted all of the rights and are subject to all of the duties applicable to the driver of a vehicle, with certain exceptions. (14-286a)

Lane positioning – When riding on roadways, bicyclists are to ride as near to the right side of the roadway as practicable, except:

1. When making a left turn; or
2. When passing another vehicle proceeding in the same direction, or
3. When passing pedestrians, parked vehicles, animals, or obstructions on the right side of the highway, or
4. When the right side of the highway is closed for construction (14-286b)

Left turns – Bicyclists may choose between a vehicular style left turn or a pedestrian style left turn(14-286c). For the pedestrian style left turn, approach as close as practicable to the right hand curb or edge of the highway, proceed across the intersecting roadway and make such turn as close as practicable to the curb or edge of the highway on the far side of the intersection.

Riding 2 abreast – Riding 2 abreast is permitted as long as doing so does not impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic. Riding more than 2 abreast is prohibited except on paths or roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles. (14-286b)

Hand Signals – Bicyclists are required to give the same turn signals as motorists, with the exception that a right turn may be indicated by extending the right hand and arm horizontally. Signals need not be given continuously. (14-286c)

Use of sidewalks – Local ordinance may prohibit bicyclists from using sidewalks. Where permitted, bicyclists must yield to pedestrians and give audible signals before passing pedestrians. Bicyclists using sidewalks have all the rights and responsibilities of pedestrians. (14-286, 14-286a)

Lights and other equipment on Bicycles – Bicyclists must use lights during the times and under the conditions that motor vehicle operators must use lights. When lighting is required, a front lamp, with a white light visible from at least 500 feet is required. A rear reflector and side reflectors on both sides which are visible from at least 600 feet are required. A bicycle shall be equipped with a braking device sufficient to enable the operator to stop within 25 feet on dry, level and clean pavement when moving at a speed of 10 miles per hour. (14-288)

Two or more on a Bike – Bicycles shall not be used to carry more persons at one time than the number for which it is designed and equipped, except that an adult rider may carry a child securely attached to his person in a backpack or sling (14-286b)

Helmet use – Children 15 years of age and under must wear a bicycle helmet when bicycling on a highway. (14-286d)

Vehicles Passing Bicycles – Safe passing distance means not less than three feet when the driver of a vehicle overtakes and passes a bicyclist (14-232). A vehicle operator who overtakes and passes a bicyclist proceeding in the same direction shall not make a right turn unless the turn can be made with reasonable safety and without impeding the travel of the person riding the bicycle (14-242).

Bicycle Safety Education: What Cyclists are Taught League of American Bicyclists' Smart Cycling Program

The League of American Bicyclists (LAB) has developed a comprehensive bicycle education program for bicyclists of all ages and abilities. LAB Cycling Instructors (LCIs), trained by the LAB, are located throughout the country with more than 20 instructors teaching in Connecticut. The Smart Cycling curriculum is currently the only bicycle education program that is being taught in Connecticut.

It is helpful for police officers to understand how bicyclists are taught to operate on the road, so that they can properly interpret behavior they see on the road.

The basic precept of the LAB Smart Cycling program is this:

Bicyclists fare best when they act and are treated as drivers of vehicles.

With this philosophy in mind, the Smart Cycling program teaches students to operate their bicycles in accordance with the traffic code and specifically emphasizes:

- Bike with the flow of traffic and obey traffic signs and signals.
- Yield when entering a roadway.
- Yield when changing lanes.
- Do not pass on the right.
- Position properly at an intersection (in the right most lane that goes to your destination).
- If riding on a sidewalk, ride at a walking pace and stop or yield at every driveway and intersection.
- Use hand signals when changing lanes, making a turn, or stopping.

Smart Cycling provides students with specific instructions regarding lane positioning that can help bicyclists avoid crashes. These may, on the surface, appear to be in conflict with the statute requiring that bicyclists operate as far right as practicable, but in fact they help to define what practicable means:

- **Lane positioning: in a lane that is too narrow to share safely, the bicyclist should take the lane, by riding in the center of the lane or just to the right of center.** A narrow lane is one in which there is not enough room for a motorist to pass a bicyclist within the lane while allowing a 3 foot passing buffer. Moving left in such a lane helps cue an overtaking driver who might otherwise misjudge passing space. **In this situation, the bicyclist in the center of the lane is riding as far right as practicable**
- **Lane positioning adjacent to parked cars: ride 3 to 4 feet from parked cars.** This enables the bicyclist to avoid a car door being opened directly into the bicyclist's path. This may cause a bicyclist to ride outside of a marked bicycle lane if the marked lane forces the bicyclist into the "door zone". Bicyclists are taught NOT to weave in and out of parked cars but to maintain a predictable straight line of travel.
- **Lane positioning to avoid hazards: continually scan and avoid storm grates and surface hazards and cross any railroad tracks with the bicycle perpendicular to the tracks.**