

# Share the Road

**A bicycle is a vehicle.**

**Any person riding a bicycle has all of the same rights and responsibilities as a driver of any other vehicle.**

**Don't be the cause of a car-bike crash - learn how to safely share the road.**

*(Unfortunately, some motorists do not know or obey the rules for sharing the road with bicycles, so always ride defensively.)*

*from the Maryland Driver's Handbook of Maryland Department of Transportation*



## **SHARING THE ROAD WITH BICYCLES**

Bicycles are legally entitled to use the road. On roads where the speed limit exceeds 50 m.p.h., bicycles must use the shoulder except where prohibited. On urban and rural roads, special care must be exercised when operating a motor vehicle near a cyclist. Cyclists are smaller and harder to see. They are also subject to road conditions (drainage grates, debris, and glass) that normally do not concern motorists. Sharing the road with the occasional cyclist requires only a little care and patience.

## **FOLLOWING A CYCLIST**

As you approach a cyclist, slow down. Avoid the use of your horn. Cyclists can usually hear an approaching vehicle and loud noises can surprise the bicycle operator, causing an accident. Do not follow closely. Bicycles can stop and maneuver quickly. Be prepared for a cyclist to swerve to avoid a road hazard. Young cyclists are particularly likely to make surprising changes in direction.

## **PASSING A CYCLIST**

When passing a cyclist, wait until it's safe, allow adequate clearance (usually about three feet) and return to your lane when you can clearly see the cyclist in your rearview mirror. Do not use your horn. Do not attempt to share the lane with the cyclist. Reduce your speed, follow the bicycle and wait for a safe opportunity to pass.

## **RIGHT AND LEFT TURNS**

A bicycle is not restricted to the right side of the road. Cyclists are expected to use the turn lanes. Merge safely with bicycle traffic when turning. Do not make right turns across the path of bicycle traffic. It is common for an experienced cyclist to reach speeds of 20-30 m.p.h. and be closer than you think.

## **RULES FOR MOTORISTS:**

1. Bicycles are required to ride on paved shoulders, where they exist, or as far right in the lane as possible only when the lane can be safely shared by a car and a bicycle, side by side. Even then, there are certain conditions that allow a bicyclist to "take the travel lane," such as:

- The bicycle is overtaking and passing another vehicle proceeding in the same direction
- The bicycle is preparing for a left hand turn.
- There are unsafe conditions in the roadway, such as fixed or moving objects, parked or moving vehicles, pedestrians, animals, potholes, debris or glass.
- The lane is narrow in width making it unsafe for a motor vehicle and a bicycle to share the lane side by side.

2. Bicyclists are not restricted to the right lane of traffic. When the bicyclist is changing lanes to make a left turn, they are to follow the same path any other vehicle would take traveling the same direction.

3. Motorists should merge with bicycle traffic when preparing for a right hand turn. Avoid turning directly across the path of bicycle traffic. Experienced cyclists often ride 25-30 miles per hour and may be closer than you think.

4. When turning left at an intersection, yield to oncoming bicyclists just as you would yield to oncoming motorists.

5. DO NOT blast your horn when approaching bicyclists -you could startle them, causing an accident.

6. Look for bicyclists before opening your car door.

7. In inclement weather, give cyclists extra trailing and passing room, just as you would for other motorists.

8. Safe passing of bicycles requires special consideration:

- Aerodynamic effects from winds off large vehicles can cause a bicycle to be suddenly pulled toward the larger vehicle by two or three feet, depending on the relative speed between the two vehicles.
- Always allow at least three feet to the left of the bicycle when you are passing.
- DO NOT attempt to share the lane with the bicycle when passing. Reduce your speed and move into the next or oncoming lane to pass. If there is oncoming traffic, then continue to slow and follow the bicycle until oncoming traffic clears.

9. Expect the unexpected from children. Children on bicycles are often unpredictable in their actions. A common accident type for young cyclists is mid-block rideouts - entering the roadway from a driveway, alley, or curb without slowing, stopping or looking for traffic.

10. Look both ways at intersections before turning. Bicycles may be found riding incorrectly facing traffic and create special hazards at intersections.

Be alert to the causes of the most common motorist/bicycle collisions. A motorist turning left will overlook or misjudge the speed of the oncoming bicycle traffic. When turning right, the motorist should slow and merge with the bicycle traffic for a safe right hand turn. Motorists failing to yield the right-of-way at a stop sign to a bicyclist is the third most common cause of collisions. At intersections, right-of-way rules apply equally to bicycles and motor vehicles.