ADVICE FOR SAFE DRIVING

8 WAYS TO SHARE THE ROAD WITH BICYCLISTS

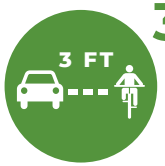
In Massachusetts, bicyclists and drivers have the same rights and responsibilities when sharing the road.[1] But people on bikes are often put in dangerous situations because of avoidable mistakes made by drivers. Use these best practices to help all road users feel safe.

1 Follow traffic laws and pay attention.

Drive the speed limit and help bicyclists anticipate your next move by using your turn signal. Driving slower lessens the damage in a crash and can save lives.

2 Drive with respect.

Be mindful and be patient. Aggressive behaviors like yelling or honking are counterproductive and pose safety hazards to cyclists.



3 Give bicyclists room on the road.

Drivers should leave 3 feet or more space when passing a person riding a bike.[2] Only cross dashed lines to pass when it is safe.

4 Prevent collisions at intersections.

At an intersection, people on bikes have the same "right of way" as drivers. For right turns, check mirrors and blind spots, and if allowed to, merge into the travel lane closest to the curb. For left turns, allow bicyclists to clear the intersection first.

5 Use caution at driveways.

Bicycle-vehicle collisions often happen on sidewalks. Look both ways when exiting a driveway, especially if a school is nearby.

6 Anticipate roadway obstacles.

People on bikes may need to go around potholes or debris. Leave space, and if you must pass, do so slowly to prevent a crash. Drive slowly near puddles to avoid splashing.

7 Avoid "dooring" bicyclists.

First, check sideview and rearview mirrors for people passing on bikes. Then exit by looking back and opening with the hand furthest from the door.[3] This technique is called the "Dutch Reach."

8 Do not look at your phone.

Massachusetts law prohibits drivers from using electronic devices. If a phone call is necessary, you must either pull over and park your car, or put the device in hands-free mode so you can use both hands to operate your vehicle.

BIKING SAFETY IS A SCHOOL PRIORITY.

Students and families are encouraged to bike to and from school. Do your part to create a safe travel environment, and practice awareness and extra caution on and around school grounds.

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) is a program offered by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. The SRTS Program works to increase safe biking and walking among elementary and middle school students by using a collaborative, community-focused approach that bridges the gap between health and transportation. **Learn more: www.mass.gov/safe-routes-to-school**

MASSACHUSETTS Safe Routes to School
MASS.GOV/SAFE-ROUTES-TO-SCHOOL

[1] See a summary of Massachusetts' Bike Laws: **https://www.massbike.org/laws**
[2] See General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts: **Chapter 89, Section 2**
[3] See General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts: **Chapter 90, Section 14**

Know and Obey These Common Bicycling Road Markings, Signs, and Signals

Massachusetts has a variety of road markings, signage, and signals to designate bicycle lanes. Here are some types you may encounter.

Sharrows

Shared Lane Markings, or "sharrows," indicate a shared roadway and the direction of travel. Drive cautiously and expect a higher volume of people on bikes—often using the full roadway.

Bike/Bus Lanes

Some cities and towns allow people on bikes to travel in bus lanes, which are often marked with red paint.

Bike Box

This green intersection marking gives a clear area for people on bikes to stop and wait for a green signal. Sometimes this is to help a bicyclist turn left more safely at an intersection. When approaching a red light, drivers should stop and wait behind these green bike boxes.

Hand Signals

If it is safe to do so, bicyclists may signal when they need to make a turn or stop. This shows the view from the back.

Bike Signals

These are separate traffic signals specifically designated for the speed and flow of people on bikes to allow for safer crossing at intersections. They are commonly used with separated bike lanes or on frequently used bicycle routes.

Shared Roadway Sign

Massachusetts law allows for people on bikes to ride in the full lane of traffic, so all lanes are generally shared lanes. The only exceptions are where bicycle traffic is specifically prohibited, such as on expressways.

Paved Shoulder

Both bicyclists and motorists have equal right to use the shoulder. While motorists should only cross the line onto a shoulder if they are making a right turn, a bicyclist may use the shoulder as a travel lane.

Protected Bike Lanes

This exclusive travel area for bicyclists is separated from other traffic by curbs, medians, parked cars, and other barriers.

It is illegal to drive or park in bike lanes of any kind.

What Rights Do Bicyclists Have?

In Massachusetts, bikes are considered vehicles. People riding bicycles have the right to space on the road.[4] Under most conditions in Massachusetts, bicyclists can:

- Share the same lane with drivers.
- Use the full lane.
- Pass vehicles on the right.
- Ride on some roads side-by-side with other bicyclists.
- Use hand signals to indicate a stop or turn. The motion does not have to be continuous or made at all if both hands are needed to safely operate the bicycle.
- Not use bike lanes, paved shoulders, or other bike infrastructure when it is unsafe to do so.
- Ride on sidewalks for safety reasons when biking outside of business districts. However, riding on sidewalks may be restricted in some communities.

[4] See General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts: **Chapter 85, Section 11B**