



The mission of the Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition is to promote bicycling & walking in Vermont, emphasizing access, safety and education.

[www.vtbikeped.org](http://www.vtbikeped.org)

## VERMONT BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN COALITION

POST OFFICE BOX 1234, MONTPELIER VT 05601

XXX Name XXXXX  
XXX Street XXXXX  
XXX Town XXXXX

**DRAFT                      DRAFT                      DRAFT**

XXX Date XXX

Dear XXXXXXXXXXXXX:

The Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition has been requested to share the enclosed information about Vermont law about bicycles. We were told that at <time> on <date>, a <description of motor vehicle including plate #> approached a bicyclist on <street> in <town>.

We were told that <description of incident> and that the bicyclist felt <endangered, threatened, etc.> by the driver's actions. The driver was described as <description of driver>.

Vermont law requires motor vehicle drivers to drive in a manner that is safe and that respects the right of way of other vehicles on the road. Bicycles are given all the rights and responsibilities of other vehicles under 23 VSA § 1136(c). Bicyclists are legally allowed to ride on the road.

Perhaps this incident was an innocent misunderstanding. However, careless and inconsiderate motorists pose a real hazard to bicyclists. One small mistake by a motorist or bicyclist can have catastrophic results. Common sense and common courtesy make Vermont's roadways safer for all.

Everyday more and more people are traveling on Vermont's roads. Occasionally, conflicts arise when people don't know or don't follow the rules. The Coalition seeks to educate both motorists and bicyclists about rules of the road. Please feel free to share your comments with us on this issue or other experiences you have had with bicyclists or while bicycling yourself. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Becka Roolf  
Director (or volunteer chair?)

Encl.: Motorist Share the Road Card (still in production), One-page VT Bicycle Laws  
CC: State Police

**QUESTIONS** Should we send such letter to all reported incidents, or just severe ones?

One option is to send a generic "Share the Road" letter (no specific incident description) to milder incidents.

Do you think this form of outreach is effective?

# Vermont Laws Regarding Bicycles & Motor Vehicles

## Title 23: Motor Vehicles, Chapter 13: Operation of Vehicles (selected statutes)

§ 1136 (c) Every person riding a bicycle is granted all of the rights and is subject to all of the duties applicable to operators of vehicles, except as to those provisions which by their very nature can have no application. (Added 1971, No. 258 (Adj. Sess.), § 3, eff. March 1, 1973.)

§ 1136 (b) This subchapter applies whenever a bicycle is operated upon any highway or upon any path set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles subject to those exceptions stated herein.

**23 VSA § 1035. Limitations [on passing]** (a) No vehicle shall be driven to the left side of the center of the roadway in overtaking and passing another vehicle proceeding in the same direction unless authorized by the provisions of this chapter and unless the left side is clearly visible and free of oncoming traffic for a sufficient distance ahead to permit overtaking and passing to be completed without interfering with the operation of any vehicle approaching from the opposite direction or of any vehicle overtaken. In every event the overtaking vehicle shall return to an authorized lane of travel as soon as practicable and, if the passing movement involves the use of a lane authorized for vehicles approaching from the opposite direction, before coming within two hundred feet of any approaching vehicle.

(b) A vehicle shall not pass another from the rear under any of the following conditions: (1) When approaching or upon the crest of a grade or upon a curve in the highway where the driver's view is in any way obstructed. (2) When approaching within one hundred feet of, or traversing, any intersection or railroad grade crossing unless otherwise indicated by official traffic control devices; or (3) When the view is obstructed upon approaching within one hundred feet of any bridge, viaduct or tunnel.

### **23 VSA § 1139. Riding on roadways and bicycle paths**

(a) A person operating a bicycle upon a roadway shall ride as near to the right side of the roadway as practicable, exercising due care when passing a standing vehicle or one proceeding in the same direction.

(b) Persons riding bicycles upon a roadway may not ride more than two abreast except on paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles or except as otherwise permitted by the commissioner of public safety in connection with a public sporting event in which case the commissioner shall be authorized to adopt such rules as the public good requires. Persons riding two abreast shall not impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic and, on a laned roadway, shall ride within a single lane.

**23 VSA § 1119. Opening and closing vehicle doors** No person shall open the door of a motor vehicle on the side nearest to moving traffic unless it is reasonably safe to do so and can be done without interfering with the movement of traffic, nor may any person leave a door open on the side of a vehicle nearest to moving traffic for a period of time longer than necessary to load or unload passengers. (Added 1971)

For a complete copy of Vermont Statutes regarding vehicle operation, visit the Department of Motor Vehicles on the web at <http://www.dmv.state.vt.us/LAWS/LAWS.htm> or at your local office.