

Important MA Traffic Laws Related to Bicyclists, Pedestrians and Motorists



Bicyclists:

- must obey all traffic laws and regulations of the Commonwealth.
- must use hand signals to let people know you plan stop or turn, unless it's not safe.
- must give pedestrians the right of way.
- may ride their bicycle on any public road, street, or bikeway in the Commonwealth, except limited access or express state highways where signs specifically prohibiting bikes have been posted.
- may pass cars on the right.
- must have their headlight and taillight on if they are riding in the dark (anytime from 1/2 hour after sunset until 1/2 hour before sunrise).
- must facilitate passing traffic, that means to stay as far to the right as is safe*, but may take the whole lane if it is too narrow for motorists to pass them safely within the lane.
- may pass cars on the left like any other vehicle, if necessary, but do not have the right to pass cars riding in between 2 traffic lanes, even if traffic is stopped.

Motorists

- must stay a safe distance, usually defined as 3 feet, to the left of a bicyclist (or any other vehicle) when passing. If the lane is too narrow to pass safely, the motorist must use another lane to pass or wait until it is safe to pass.
- are prohibited from making abrupt right turns at intersections and driveways after passing a cyclist.
- must yield to oncoming bicyclists when making left turns.
- and their passengers must check for passing bicyclists before opening their door (\$100 fine).
- must yield to pedestrians in crosswalks (\$200 fine).
- may not enter an intersection if she/he cannot clear it before the signal changes.

Pedestrians

- must go to a crosswalk, signalized intersection, pedestrian over- or underpass, or a police officer directing traffic, if available within 300 ft (that is three times the length of a basketball court or almost as long as a football field). In the LMA, you're almost always within 300 feet of a crosswalk or signalized intersection.

*Bicyclists are allowed to ride 2 abreast, but must ride single-file when somebody is trying to pass. In an urban environment that means riding 2 abreast is never a practical solution.

(source: Mass General Law, Boston Bikes, MassBike).

