

DID YOU KNOW???

BICYCLISTS – DO NOT RIDE IN CROSSWALK

Last month a person on a bicycle was hit by a car while riding his bicycle on a crosswalk at the corner of US Route 11 (W. Main St.) and Webster St. in the village of Malone. Furthermore, this is not the first time a person riding a bike in a crosswalk has been hit in this village. The fact of the matter is that, under NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law (VTL), you cannot “ride” a bike in a crosswalk. Crosswalks are for pedestrians only, and cannot be used by someone riding a bicycle any more than it can be used to “drive” a car across a street. It is perfectly permissible, however, for a bicyclist to “walk” his/her bicycle across a street in a marked or unmarked crosswalk. In fact, in many cases it is safer to dismount and walk your bike across a street than to make a left turn while riding.

VTL, section 130, defines a pedestrian as “Any person afoot or in a wheelchair”. This can include a power (battery) assisted wheelchair. A person riding a bike is not a person afoot or in a wheelchair, and therefore is not a pedestrian.

The definition of a “crosswalk” found in VTL section 110(b) is “Any portion of a roadway at an intersection or elsewhere distinctly indicated for pedestrian crossing by lines or other markings on the surface”. This applies to marked crosswalks, which is the case on most busy streets in our villages. But, by definition, a crosswalk doesn’t have to be marked – VTL section 110 (a) defines a crosswalk as “That part of a roadway at an intersection included within the connections of the lateral lines of the sidewalks on opposite sides of the highway between the curbs or, in the absence of curbs, between the edges of the traversable roadway”. All this legal wording means that all intersections have an “implied” crosswalk even if there are no pavement markings so designating.

This all makes sense if you think about it. A person walks at a speed of about three miles/hour; a bicyclist rides at a speed of at least 10 mph, or three times as fast as a person walking. At a crosswalk, motorists expect a pedestrian, walking at an approximate 3 mph pace, not a bicyclist riding at a much faster speed.

While we are discussing definitions in VTL, you might be interested in the definition of “traffic”. Most of us think of traffic as motor vehicles. But, under the legal definition, section 152 of VTL defines traffic as “Pedestrians, ridden or herded animals, vehicles, bicycles, and other conveyances either singly or together while using any highway for purposes of travel”. Bet you didn’t know one pedestrian is defined as traffic, or that a person on horseback is also considered traffic. I bet you never thought that a herd of animals walking along a roadway was legally defined as “traffic” either. Now you know.

Back to the bicyclist that was hit while riding in the crosswalk – this is a dangerous practice and most parents, children, and anyone else may not realize how unsafe it is. If you are a parent of a child with a bike, explain to him/her not to ride in a crosswalk – walk the bike across. If you are an adult and have ridden in a crosswalk, be aware that it is against the law to do so. Walk your bike across instead.

For more information on traffic law and traffic safety, visit the Traffic Safety Board web site at: www.franklincony.org and go to Traffic Safety Board under “Departments”. Visit us on Facebook as well. You may also contact me by email at: dwerner151@verizon.net or call me at 483-1882.