

## **DID YOU KNOW???**

### **PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE LAWS – LAWS FOR BICYCLING**

This is the last of a three-part series on pedestrian and bicycle laws. Last week's article was about pedestrians - today, we'll discuss the **laws for when you're bicycling**. Much of the information contained in this article is provided by the NYS Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations. We thank this organization for providing a comprehensive and easily understood condensation of NYS Vehicle and Traffic Laws (VTL) that are applicable to drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Bicyclists have the legal right to ride a bicycle on most public highways, except interstate highways and certain expressways. When riding on the road, cyclists must obey all the laws as if you were driving a vehicle. That means you must obey all traffic signals, signs and pavement markings [NYS Vehicle and Traffic Law (VTL), section 1230(a)].

Bicyclists may ride two abreast on roadways, but must ride single file when being overtaken by other vehicles. You may ride two abreast on a shoulder, lane or path intended for bicycling only if there is sufficient space [VTL, section 1234(b)].

Most importantly, **ALWAYS** ride with the direction of traffic [VTL, section 1234(a)]. Riding with traffic makes you more visible and predictable to motorists. If there is a usable bike lane, you must use it. If there is no bicycle lane or if it is unusable due to parked cars or other hazards, you must ride on the right shoulder or near the right edge or curb of the roadway in a manner to avoid undue interference with other traffic, unless the lane is too narrow, you are turning left, or you need to move further left to avoid hazards. The presence of an off-road path does not preclude your right to ride in the roadway.

Riding on a sidewalk is not prohibited by New York State law, but municipalities may pass ordinances prohibiting biking on sidewalks. Except for very young cyclists under parent supervision, biking on sidewalks is not recommended.

When riding a bicycle, use the same through or turning lanes as motorists. Your position when preparing for a turn is governed by the turning rules that apply to other traffic [VTL, section 1234(a)]. When preparing for a left turn, move to the center of the lane to prevent a following motorist from sharing the lane. Use hand signals before you make a turn [VTL, section 1237]. It's a good idea to make eye contact with drivers and pedestrians before changing lanes or making a turn.

Helmets are required for everyone under 14 years old, but every bicyclist should wear an approved helmet to reduce the risk of sustaining a serious head injury. Child passengers' ages one through four must also ride in a child safety seat. Children under the age of one are prohibited from being transported on a bicycle [VTL, section 1238(5)].

A bicycle must, by law, be equipped with a brake capable of making the tires skid on dry level pavement, a bell, horn or other audible device, and, if riding at night, a headlight and taillight, front and rear reflectors, spoke reflectors and pedal reflectors.

Finally, here are a few safety tips you should know. See and be seen. Be visible and predictable. Wear bright or reflective clothing. Ride in a straight line, do not weave in and out of traffic, and leave three feet between yourself and parked cars so that you can avoid a door that opens unexpectedly.

Ride safely, everyone. It's a great way to enjoy the fun and get exercise at the same time.