

BICYCLING LAWS • MONTPELIER, VT

Know your rights & responsibilities!

This is an educational publication from the Montpelier Police Department, in collaboration with the Montpelier Bikes Project of the Montpelier Energy Team.

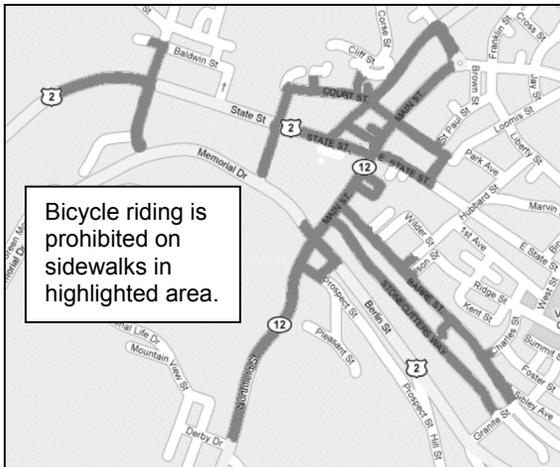
Bicyclists are legal users of Vermont's roadways, and as such are subject to traffic laws, just as any other vehicle. Bicyclists fare best when they act and are treated as drivers of vehicles. Below is a summary of the most important bicycling-related laws.

MONTPELIER ORDINANCES

BICYCLE OPERATION ON SIDEWALKS. "It shall be unlawful to operate bicycles on the sidewalk in the Central Business District as defined by zoning regulations." Ch. 10, Art. VIII, Sec. 10-807.

The Central Business District includes Main St. through downtown to Spring St.; State St. from Taylor to Cedar St. (on East State); Barre St. from Main St. to Granite St., Langdon St.; Court St. See map below.

You may walk your bicycle on the sidewalk in this area. This ordinance applies to bicyclists of all ages.



BICYCLES TO YIELD TO PEDESTRIANS.

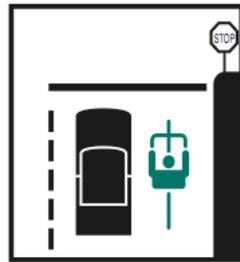
"When sidewalks are shared by bicyclists and pedestrians, bicyclists must give right-of-way to pedestrians." Ch. 10, Art. VIII, Sec. 10-808. Bicyclists must also yield to pedestrians in crosswalks.

VERMONT STATUTES

SAME RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES AS MOTOR VEHICLES. "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." **23 VSA § 1136(c)**

OBEYING TRAFFIC SIGNALS. The above law means that bicyclists must obey traffic lights and signs.

RIDE ON THE RIGHT. "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." **23 VSA § 1139(a)**



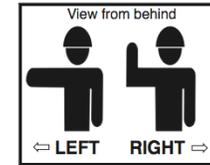
RIDE ON THE RIGHT.
Wrong-way riding is
a leading cause of
bicyclist crashes.

TWO ABREAST. "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... 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 § 1139(b)**

NOT REQUIRED TO USE BIKE PATH. A law on the books that required bicyclists to use bike paths was repealed in 2004. As a result, bicyclists are permitted to ride on the road, even when there is an adjacent path.

USING LIGHTS AT NIGHT. "No person may operate a bicycle at nighttime unless it is equipped with a lamp on the front, which emits a white light visible from a distance of at least five hundred feet to the front, and with a red reflector on the rear, which shall be visible at least three hundred feet to the rear when directly in front of lawful upper beams of head lamps on a motor vehicle. Lamps emitting red lights visible to the rear may be used in addition to the red reflector." **23 VSA § 1141**

HAND SIGNALS. "All signals to indicate change of speed or direction, when given by hand, shall be given from the left side of the vehicle and in the following manner: (1) Left turn. - Hand and arm extended horizontally. (2) Right turn. - Hand and arm extended upward. (3) Stop or decrease speed. - Hand and arm extended downward." **23 VSA § 1065(a)**



RIDING ON ROAD SHOULDERS. While it is not legal to drive on a shoulder, 19 VSA 2301(3) grants bicyclists permission to ride on shoulders. This statute states that "paved road shoulders are considered bicycle lanes"; which the statute defines as for preferential use by bicycles.

RIDING THROUGH CROSSWALKS. Bicyclists do not have the right-of-way in crosswalks under state law. If you want the legal right-of-way at a crosswalk, you must dismount your bicycle to become a pedestrian.

In an urban environment, most crashes with cars are caused by a motorist turning into a bicyclist's path. Ride defensively: ride visibly and ring a bell if needed, use lights at night, and signal your turns.

FINES. Per 23 VSA 1141(a), bicyclists may be subject to fines of \$25 plus fees (total \$55) for bicycle-specific laws. Fines are the same as for motorists for general traffic laws: around \$200 for running a red light, for example. Points may be given on your driving license, even if you are riding your bike.

THE LAWS ALSO APPLY TO CHILDREN. "The parent of any child and the guardian of any ward may not authorize or knowingly permit any such child or ward to violate any of the provisions of this subchapter." **23 VSA § 1136 (a)**

Kids are most likely to be hit by a car when they ride into the street without looking or yielding, or do not stop at a stop sign or red light.

HELMET USE. The law does not require helmets in Vermont. However, the Montpelier Bikes group and the Montpelier Police Department strongly encourage the use of helmets by both adults and children. Parents are especially encouraged to make sure that your child's helmet fits correctly, and to be a good role model for your child by wearing a properly-fit helmet yourself.

Over 80% of bicycling head injuries could be prevented by wearing a helmet.

Helmet safety check:

Do the Eyes Ears Mouth Test to see if your helmet fits correctly. If your helmet does not fit correctly, it will not protect you if you crash and hit your head. Your helmet should not be wobbly on your head.



Check with your EYES. Can you just barely see the brim of your helmet when you look up? Is your helmet level across the middle of our forehead, about 2 fingers width above your eyebrows?

Check your EARS. Do the helmet straps form a Y right under your earlobe? Look in a mirror, or feel the straps with your fingers.



Check with your MOUTH. Do the helmet straps go under your chin and fit snugly but without pinching? When you OPEN your mouth WIDE, do you feel the helmet pull on the top of your head.

If your helmet fit does not pass the test, ask for help from a friend or family member. It is very hard to adjust your own helmet straps, even for adults.

Get someone to help you – it will go much faster and you'll look smart wearing your helmet the right way.



Images from National Traffic Highway Safety Admin.

NEED TO GET LEGAL?

Great Deals on Lights & Safety Gear

Bring in this brochure to receive:

10% off lights or reflectors

> Onion River Sports

20 Langdon St., Montpelier, VT 05602
802-229-9409 www.onionriver.com

~ OR ~

Low-cost lights

> Freeride Cooperative Bikeshop

89 Barre St., Montpelier, VT 05602
www.freeridemontpelier.org
Current hours posted on their website and on the door of the shop.

OFFERS VALID 2009.

RESOURCES FOR SAFE RIDING

• LOCAL ADVOCACY & SAFETY CLASSES

Montpelier Bikes
montpelierbikes.blogspot.com

• TIPS FOR SAFE RIDING

bicyclesafe.com

• STATEWIDE ADVOCACY

Vermont Bicycle & Pedestrian Coalition
vtbikeped.org

Developed by Becka Roof for Montpelier Bikes, in collaboration with the Montpelier Police Dept.

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Disclaimer: While every attempt has been made to accurately represent state laws and city ordinance, this is not a legal copy of the law. All users are responsible for their own caution, judgment, and safety.

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The Montpelier Bikes Project supports the fair and judicious enforcement of bicycling laws. We want our rights to bicycle on our nation's streets; with those rights come responsibilities.

Please note: as part of the Montpelier Bikes Project, the City of Montpelier may consider revising bicycling-related ordinances in 2009. To get on the list to learn about public meetings, please email info@goinggreenvt.com

Distributed by the Montpelier Police Department in cooperation with:

Montpelier Bikes



OUR MISSION:

To build a bicycling culture in the City of Montpelier for active transportation, personal health, environmental benefit, downtown business support, youth mobility, community livability, & pure joy.