



# **Bicycle Laws in North Carolina and the U.S.**

# Passing Cyclists in No-Passing Zones

Several states, including Colorado, Maine, Mississippi, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Utah and Wisconsin have laws allowing motorists to cross a solid center line to pass a slow moving bicyclist or vehicle under safe conditions.

Several other states have laws allowing motorists to pass slow moving vehicles, but do not specifically name bicyclists. Slow moving vehicles are typically defined as traveling at less than half the applicable speed limit. These laws are often directed toward farm equipment.

Several states have laws allowing drivers to cross the double yellow line when an obstruction exists in the roadway. Some have argued a slow-moving bicyclist can be considered an obstruction.

# Riding Two Abreast

- 39 states have laws allowing bicyclist to ride two abreast.
  - 21 of those states stipulate bicyclists may not impeded traffic.
- Three states, Montana, Hawaii and Nebraska, prohibit riding two abreast unless a bike lane is wide enough to accommodate it.
- North Carolina is among 8 states where riding two abreast is neither explicitly prohibited or permitted.

Source: [Bikelaw.com](http://Bikelaw.com)

# Carrying Identification

- No state that I can find specifically requires bicyclists to carry identification.
- Several states do have laws requiring road users to provide identification or identification information during a traffic stop.

# Lighting Requirements

- Most states, including North Carolina, require the use of a front lamp and a rear reflector or lamp.
- California recently proposed a law to require rear tail lights.
- Virginia requires a taillight on roads with speed limits of 35 mph or greater.

# Operating in Roadway Position

- North Carolina, along with 43 other states, requires bicyclists to ride as far to the right as practicable.
- Two states, Massachusetts and Arkansas, require bicyclists to ride in the right hand lane.
- Several states require bicyclists to use bicycle lanes if provided.
- Some states, such as Alabama, require bicyclists to use paths when they are adjacent to the roadway.
- Several states, including North Carolina, have provisions to allow bicyclist to take the full lane when needed.

# Informal Group Rides

- Beyond limiting bicyclists to riding no more than two abreast, I can find no regulations on informal group rides in any state in the U.S.
- Some states have laws banning bicyclists from impeding the flow of traffic, which can come into play with large informal groups.
- North Carolina's impeding traffic law applies specifically to motor vehicles.

# Passing Distance Requirements – Two Foot Rule

## North Carolina

- Requires drivers provide a minimum of Two Feet.

## United States

- 25 states require at least Three Feet.
- 23 states require “Safe Distance.”
- Pennsylvania requires Four Feet.
- Virginia also requires a minimum of Two Feet.

Source: League of American Bicyclists.



# Hand Signal Requirements

- Most states, including North Carolina, require bicyclists to use hand signals to indicate turns.
- Several states, such as Oklahoma, Massachusetts and Michigan, allow bicyclists to use their Right Hand to indicate a right turn.

# Aggressive Driving, Harassment and Distracted Driving

- 15 states, including North Carolina, have general laws addressing aggressive driving.
  - None specifically mention bicyclists.
- A handful of states, including California, Virginia and Oregon, have considered laws banning distracted cycling, but no such laws have passed at the state level, as of 2014.
- Some cities, such as Chicago, Philadelphia and Billings, Mont., have laws banning texting while bicycling.
- One study found that bicyclists observed texting and bicycling tended to slow down and swerve side to side.

# Headphone Use on Bicycle

- Five states regulate the use of headphones by cyclists.
  - Two prohibit all headphones. (Florida allows one headphone for cell phones, but not music.)
  - Three prohibit headphones in both ears.

Source: Bikelaw.com

# Vulnerable Road User Protections

Vulnerable Road User laws provide protections for bicyclists and pedestrians by increasing penalties for violating existing ped/bike laws and creating laws that prohibit certain actions directed at vulnerable road users.

- Five states – Delaware, Hawaii, Oregon, Vermont and Washington had VRU laws as of 2013.
- Several more, including Minnesota, Massachusetts and New York have been considering them.
- Several cities have passed VRU ordinances.

# Formal Group Permitting Regulations

- Most states, including North Carolina, have laws allowing competitive bicycling events on public roads with the approval of local law enforcement agencies or municipalities.
- Such rules usually apply to any organized event, such as a charity ride.