

Chapter 6—Enforcement Related to Bicyclists

Enforcement is one of the 5 E's of Complete Streets. The others are Education, Encouragement, Engineering, and Evaluation. This section is a compilation of Ohio laws and common sense rules for bicyclists. Other sections will cover similar information for other users, such as pedestrians, transit users, and motorists.

Bicycling is a useful, sustainable form of transportation. According to the Ohio Bicycle Federation's Digest of Ohio Bicycle Traffic Laws, people that follow the rules of the road and recommended techniques can reduce their crash risk by 80 percent. Ohio State law (Ohio Revised Code §4501.01) states that a bicycle is considered a "vehicle" and therefore must follow the same laws that apply to cars and trucks, which especially means not to ride against traffic and to ride predictably.

Recommended Print Resources

A guide entitled *Ohio Bicycling Street Smarts* by John Allen, issued by the Ohio Department of Public Safety, acts as an operator's manual for cyclists. While laws state what a driver is allowed or not allowed to do, they do not necessarily tell a driver how to operate the vehicle safely. The *Ohio Bicycling Street Smarts* guide is meant to act as a manual specifically for the purpose of encouraging good riding habits for cyclists. For hardcopies of the booklet, please contact the State Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator Heather Bowden at Heather.Bowden@dot.state.oh.us. You can also view the [Street Smarts booklet online](#).



◀ Cover of "Ohio Bicycling Street Smarts" by John Allen.

(Source: [ODOT webpage](#))

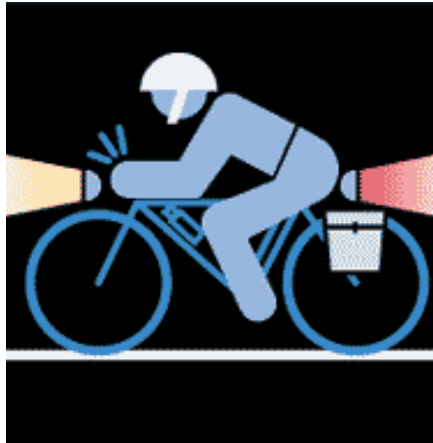
Required and Recommended Equipment

The following equipment is *required* by Ohio state law (Ohio Revised Code §4511.56):

- At night a front white lamp, either steady or flashing, must be mounted to the bicycle or the helmet and must be turned on at dark.
- Red rear reflector to be seen by the headlamps of a motor vehicle.
- Colorless front reflector.
- At night a red rear light is required, either steady or flashing. The red rear reflector is not required if the light can be seen as well as the reflector.
- A bell or horn is optional.

The following equipment is strongly *recommended* by the *Ohio Bicycling Street Smarts* guide:

- Helmet – One that fits snug, level and covers the forehead. Helmets reduce the risk of serious head injury by 85 percent.
- Rear-view mirror – A helmet mounted mirror is useful for shock-proof rear visibility, though it can be difficult to get used to it. A handlebar mirror could be a more convenient option.
- Bicycling gloves – Gloves offer more shock comfort on the handlebars and protect the hands in the case of a fall.
- Tools – A small tool kit with tire patch, tire pump and the knowledge to use them.
- Baggage – A mounted water bottle and small bag for tools and extra clothes is helpful as it eliminates the need for a backpack, resulting in a lighter ride.
- Locks – Locks help to secure the bike and easily removed parts.
- Fenders and rain cape – This will help the bicyclists to stay dry when riding in wet conditions.



◀ Bicyclist shown at night with helmet, rear red light, and front white light.
(Source: [Bay Area 511 Bicycle Safety](#))

Bicyclists in Sidewalks

Bicyclists are generally prohibited from riding in crosswalks and sidewalks.

- Exceptions are often made for child bicyclists. This is due to their slower speed, which is usually more similar to a person walking.
- While municipalities may allow (or prohibit) bicycles to use the sidewalk, they cannot require bicyclists to use the sidewalk (Ohio Revised Code §4511.711).
- Riding a bicycle on the sidewalk reduces the cyclist's visibility to motor vehicles, and increases their risk of getting in a crash.
- If riding a bike on the sidewalk, extra caution at driveways and intersections must be used.



▲ Children riding on the sidewalk in Carbondale, CO.

(Source: www.pedbikeimages.org / Dan Burden, 2006)

Multi-Use Paths (MUPs)

Multi-Use Paths (MUPs) are also known as trails or “bike trails.” However, they are open to both bicyclists and pedestrians, as well as skater, roller bladders, and other non-motorized users. Many MUPs in Central Ohio are next to rivers and therefore are typically considered recreational in nature. However, people use them for commuting or other trip purposes. The following are rules for MUP users from the [Columbus Recreation and Parks webpage](#):

- Motorized vehicles, including motorcycles and scooters, are not permitted. Pets are not permitted on Greenway Trails.
- Bicyclists and skaters must **yield to pedestrians**.
- All users should keep to the right side of the trail, listen for audible signals, and allow faster trail users (runners and bicyclists) to pass safely.
- **Users should always pass on the left, and give an audible warning when passing others.**
- A single file should be maintained when others are within 100 feet. It is important to slow down and form a single file in congested conditions, reduced visibility, and other hazardous conditions.



◀ Multi-Use Path (MUP) in Columbus, OH.
(Source: MORPC, 2010)

Multi-Use Path (MUP) sign ▶ reminds users to keep right in Monterey County, CA.
(Source: [Mari Lynch blog](#))



Bike or Equestrian Paths

The majority of paths in Central Ohio are multi-use paths. However, pedestrians may encounter a bike or equestrian (horse) path.

- Generally, paths that are not multi-use paths are not paved. Some bicycle users (such as recumbent) may find it difficult or impossible to travel on unpaved paths.
- Bike paths that are “off-road” are recreational in nature. They are not intended for use by non-bicyclists.
- Equestrian paths or trails are also recreational in nature. **Bicyclists are generally required to yield to horses.**



▲ Bicyclists stop and wait for a horse and rider to pass.

(Source: [Horse and Man website](#))



▲ Bike Trail that is not a Multi-Use Path at the Alum Creek State Park, Ohio.

(Source: [MTBikeTrail.com website](#))

Passing Transit Vehicles and Delivery Trucks

When passing any vehicle, a bicyclist should pass on the left and return after safely clearing the other vehicle (Ohio Revised Code §4511.27). This is especially important when passing a vehicle stopped in the road, or in the bike lane. This can include delivery trucks or transit vehicles.

- **Bicyclists should always pass on the left**, unless passing on the right is explicitly permitted. Rarely will passing on the right be permitted, as it is very dangerous and oftentimes illegal.
- Since vehicles stopped in the road or bike lane are stopped temporarily, bicyclists need to be cautious, even when passing on the left. The other vehicle may start moving forward or to the left. It is wise to provide three feet of clearance when passing.

Riding in Roundabouts

A roundabout is a one-way, circular intersection in which traffic flows around a center island. There are two options that bicyclists have when encountering a roundabout:

- **Dismounting and walking the bike.** If uncomfortable riding through the roundabout, or any intersection for that matter, the bicyclist must get off the bike and travel through the roundabout as a pedestrian, using the marked crosswalks to cross each leg of the roundabout.
- **Ride bicycle as a vehicle.** When riding on the road through the roundabout, it is important to control the lane and turn when exiting the roundabout. The roundabout should be treated the same by bicyclists as by drivers of motor vehicles.
- As at any intersection, bicyclists (like motor vehicle drivers) must yield to pedestrians in the crosswalks.



◀ How to navigate a roundabout as a pedestrian or bicyclist.

(Source: [FHWA Roundabout website](#))

Railroad Crossings

Bicyclists should exercise extra caution at railroad crossings. At those crossings, it is particularly important to **stay alert and avoid distractions**, such as texting and using headphones (Operation Lifesaver Inc., [Safety Tips](#)).

- As any other transportation users, bicyclists must **look both ways before crossing railroad tracks**.
- An additional hazard for bicyclists at railroad crossing is from the tracks themselves. As such, it is critical for the bicyclist to **cross the tracks at a 90-degree angle** to avoid having the bicycle tires stuck in the tracks.
- Trains have the right of way all of the time over emergency vehicles, cars, law enforcement, bicyclists, and pedestrians.
- Bicyclists must always yield to flashing lights, whistles, closing gates, crossbucks, or stop signs at a railroad crossing (Texas Department of Insurance, [Railroad Crossing Safety Fact Sheet](#)).
- Crossing is forbidden after the lights begin to flash and the gates begin to drop.

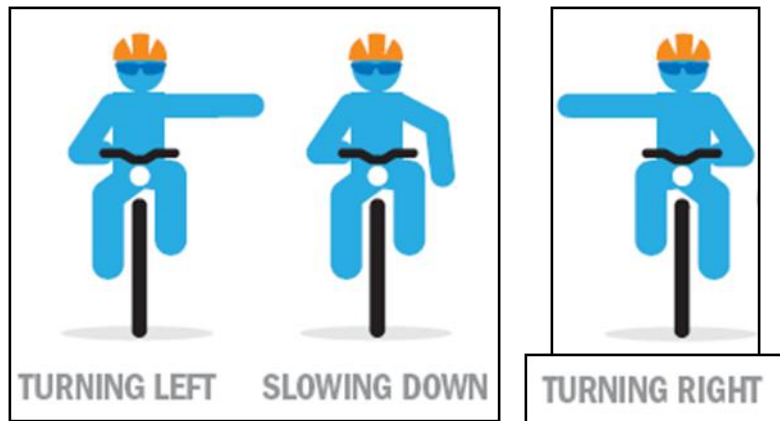


◀ Gates are closing at a railroad crossing.

(Source: Korve, et al.)

Other Consideration for Bicyclists

- A person guilty of operating their bicycle while under the influence (DUI) can be assessed points to their driver's license (Ohio Revised Code §4511.52).
- Bicyclists must signal their turns appropriately unless their hand is necessary to maintain control of your bike (Ohio Revised Code §4511.39).
- Turn signals for a bicyclist are as follows (Ohio Revised Code §4511.40):
 - Left turn – left hand and arm extended horizontally.
 - Right turn - right hand and arm horizontally and to the right side of the bicycle
 - Stop or decrease speed – left hand and arm extended downward.



- Cyclists who are riding together must not travel more than two abreast per lane (Ohio Revised Code §4511.55).
- Bicyclists should avoid riding on metal surfaces, oil slicks, painted roadway markings or steel-gridded bridge decks as they will be especially slippery.
- Cyclists should avoid the door zone next to parked cars and to allow 3-5 feet of empty space between the bicycle and the parked car (with door unopened).
- Bicyclists should not weave between parked cars to allow motorists to pass them. This is unpredictable to other drivers and therefore reduces visibility. It is safer to continue in a straight line where motorists can see them.

Sources

Columbus Recreation and Parks webpage. "Trails Rules and Etiquette" page. <http://parks.columbus.gov/content.aspx?id=%2027067> (retrieved May 24, 2011)

Korve, Hans W., et al. Integration of Light Rail Transit into City Streets. Washington, DC: Transit Cooperative Research Report 17, Transportation Research Board, 1996. As cited in Federal Highway Administration. Railroad-Highway Grade Crossing Handbook - Revised Second Edition August 2007. Section 9: Special Issues. <http://www.ite.org/bookstore/gradecrossing/sec09.htm> (retrieved May 12, 2011)

Ohio Bicycling Street Smarts. John Allen, 2001. Issued by the Ohio Department of Public Safety. For hardcopies of the booklet, please contact the State Bike/Ped Coordinator Heather Bowden at Heather.Bowden@dot.state.oh.us or view [online](#).

Operation Lifesaver Inc. Safety Tips page. <http://oli.org/education-resources/safety-tips/safety-tips-and-facts/> (retrieved May 12, 2011)

Texas Department of Insurance. Railroad Crossing Safety Fact Sheet. <http://www.tdi.state.tx.us/pubs/videoresource/fsrailroadcross.pdf> (retrieved May 12, 2011)

Examples of ►
how to make turn
signals as a
bicyclists.

(Source: MORPC Bike User
Map)