

Boulder County bicycle legislation and other tips (version 1.0)

In 2009 the Colorado Legislature passed the [Bicycle Safety Act](#) with the intent of improving road safety for both motorists and bicyclists. There is also other [relevant state legislation](#) that applies to motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians on our roadways, as well as City of Boulder. These [local ordinances](#), among other items, specifically address bicyclist conduct on multi-use paths and in crosswalks. The selections listed within are not intended to be entirely comprehensive; each piece of legislation should be reviewed individually.

3 Feet to Pass!

- **Motorists:** Give bicyclists 3 feet of separation when passing—it is OK to cross the centerline (when safe/clear) to give adequate space to a bicyclist. If there is oncoming traffic, simply slow down and wait for the next safe passing opportunity. [42-4-1003\(1\)\(b\)](#)
- **Bicyclists:** Enjoy that extra separation and breathe a little easier!

Crowding/ Threatening/ Harassing a Bicyclist

- **Motorists:** Do not drive “unnecessarily close to, toward or near a bicyclist.” [42-4-1008.5\(1\)](#) Roadside signs serve as a reminder to “Be Aware—Pass With Care.”
- **Motorists:** “Any person who knowingly projects any missile (any object or substance) at or against a bicyclist commits a class 2 misdemeanor.” [18-9-116\(2\)\(3\)](#)
- **Bicyclists:** Do not hesitate to report these careless driving or misdemeanors to the appropriate authorities.

Riding with friends

- **Bicyclists:** Two (2) bicyclists may ride two abreast, but “shall not impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic.” [42-4-1412\(6\)\(a\)\(b\)](#) When there’s a car(s) back, or you are traveling around a curve, transition to single-file riding. Being respectful to motorists in this situation is one of the best ways to avoid souring relationships between bicyclists and motorists. Remember, ‘courtesy is contagious.’ Riding more than two abreast is prohibited on City of Boulder multi-use paths. [City of Boulder 7-5-6](#)
- **Motorists:** Be patient with bicyclists as they maneuver to single-file, and pass with care (remember the 3-foot separation law).

Ride Right

- **Bicyclists:** In most cases a bicyclist “shall ride far enough to the right as judged safe by the bicyclist.” [42-4-1412\(5\)\(a\)\(I\)](#)
 1. Go with the flow, and always ride in the same direction as automobile traffic (rare exception: a counter-flow bicycle lane).
 2. It is OK to not ride in the gutter or on the very edge of the road.
A bicyclist shall not be expected or required to ride without a reasonable safety margin on the right-hand side of the roadway. [42-4-1412\(5\)\(b\)\(II\)](#)
 3. It is OK to move from the shoulder or ‘take the lane’ (ride in the center of the lane), to avoid debris or if the lane is too narrow to be safely shared with automobiles.
A bicyclist shall not be expected or required to ride over or through hazards at the edge of a roadway, including... surface hazards, or narrow lanes. [42-4-1412\(5\)\(b\)\(III\)](#)
 4. It is OK to overtake vehicles (stopped or moving in the right-hand lane), but
 - a. Do not overtake or pass the first vehicle stopped at an intersection unless you (bicyclist) are preparing to turn right and the vehicle is not signaling a right turn. [City of Boulder 7-4-34\(a\)\(5\)\(A\)](#)
 - b. Do not overtake or pass a moving vehicle signaling a right turn [City of Boulder 7-4-34\(a\)\(5\)\(B\)](#)
 - c. Do not overtake a vehicle that is stopped or slowed for a pedestrian [City of Boulder 7-4-77](#)
- **Motorists:** Be aware that bicyclists have the legal right to move from the shoulder or to the center of the lane because of hazards or if the lane is too narrow to safely share.

Ride Left

- **Motorists:** Pay special care at intersections, especially when turning right, as bicyclists on your right may be traveling straight through the intersection. Also, be aware of bicyclists that may not be traveling in the right most lane, most notably in left-turning situations or on one-way streets.
- **Bicyclists:** There are several situations you may encounter that necessitate positioning yourself to the left of a lane or roadway.
 1. Avoid a ‘right hook’! It is OK to move left to avoid the danger of a right-turning vehicle when bicycling straight through an intersection.
Upon approaching an intersection when right turns are permitted and there is a dedicated right-turn lane, a bicyclist may ride on the left-hand portion of the dedicated right-turn lane even if the bicyclist does not intend to turn right. [42-4-1412\(5\)\(a\)\(III\)](#)

2. It is OK to use a lane other than the right-hand lane when:
 - a. Turning left: Preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private roadway or driveway; **42-4-1412(5)(a)(II)(A)**
 - b. Passing. Overtaking a slower vehicle. **42-4-1412(5)(a)(II)(B)**
 - c. One-way road. A person operating a bicycle upon a one-way roadway with two or more marked traffic lanes may ride as near to the left-hand curb or edge of such roadway as judged safe by the bicyclist... (Subject to the essentially the same conditions as typical right-side riding.) **42-4-1412(5)(c)**

Lights & Reflectors

- **Bicyclists:** When riding between sunset and sunrise (or other times with poor visibility as described in **42-4-204**), bicyclists must have a white front light and both side and rear reflectors visible under car headlights at significant distances.
Every bicycle... shall be equipped with:
 1. A lamp on the front emitting a white light visible from a distance of at least five hundred feet to the front. **42-4-221(2)**
 2. A red reflector... which shall be visible for six hundred feet to the rear... **42-4-221(3)**
 3. Reflective material ... to be visible from both sides for six hundred feet... or, in lieu of such reflective material, with a lighted lamp visible from both sides from a distance of at least five hundred feet. **42-4-221(4)**
 4. Additional lights such as a 'red blinky' are permissible. **42-4-221(5)**
- **Motorists:** With or without the required visibility aides installed, bicyclists can be especially difficult to see near sunrise or sunset—please take care to look-out for bicyclists.

Signaling

- **Bicyclists:** Just as you would in a car, you are required to signal when turning or stopping.
 1. ...Every person riding a bicycle shall signal the intention to turn or stop in accordance with the provisions of section **42-4-903**;
 2. Except that a person riding a bicycle may signal a right turn with the right arm extended horizontally. **42-4-1412**
 3. A bicyclist is excepted from giving the hand and arm signal continuously if the hand is needed in the control or operation of the bicycle or electric assisted bicycle, but it shall be given for a substantial period while stopped waiting to turn. **City of Boulder 7-5-8**
- **Motorists:** Be aware of bicyclists using their arms to indicate an upcoming turn, but also take care in the event an inexperienced bicyclist does not signal their turn.

Crosswalks & Intersections

- **Bicyclists:** Bicyclists have several rights and responsibilities in and around crosswalks.
 1. Within the City of Boulder, there is an 8 mph speed limit for bicycles in a crosswalk during the immediate approach, entry and traversal of any crosswalk that spans a roadway. **City of Boulder 7-5-5(a)**
 2. Bicyclists have the rights and duties of a pedestrian in a crosswalk **7-5-5(b)**, including among other items, not entering "a roadway where a warning traffic control device is located unless such device is activated." (flashing yellow crosswalk signs) **7-5-15(f)** Where applicable, do not enter an intersection unless the pedestrian control signal exhibits a steady or flashing "Walk" indication. **City of Boulder 7-5-15 (b)**
 3. At an intersection, do not overtake or pass the first vehicle stopped at an intersection unless preparing to turn right and the vehicle is not signaling a right turn.
 4. When bicycling on the street or a bicycle lane, yield the right-of-way to pedestrians or bicyclists in a crosswalk.
- **Motorists:** Be aware of bicyclists entering intersection or mid-block crosswalks, and treat them just as you would a pedestrian.
 1. **Yield to Pedestrian Required.** A driver shall yield the right-of way to every pedestrian on a sidewalk or approaching or within a crosswalk. **City of Boulder 7-4-23**
 2. **Stop at Crosswalk Required.** Whenever any vehicle is stopped at a marked crosswalk or at any unmarked crosswalk at an intersection to permit a pedestrian to cross the roadway, the driver of any other vehicle approaching from the rear shall not overtake and pass such stopped vehicle. **City of Boulder 7-4-77**

Don't ride on the sidewalk!

- **Bicyclists:** Riding on sidewalks and the Pearl Street Mall is generally prohibited; exceptions include sidewalks in most all residential or public districts and sidewalks designated as multi-use paths. **City of Boulder 7-5-10**

Resources:

- [Bicycle & Pedestrian Laws](#) [source: [Bicycle Colorado](#)]
- [Share the Road License Plate](#)
- Colorado DOT [Share the Road Campaign](#)
- Go Boulder/ City of Boulder [Share the Road Campaign](#)
- Go Boulder/ City of Boulder [Safe Streets Campaign](#)