

**Arlington County Police Department**  
**Law Enforcement Guide**

**Enforcing Bicycle Traffic Laws**



## **About the Arlington Safe Bicycling Initiative**

The overall mission of the Arlington County Police Department is to keep motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians safe in the County of Arlington. To do this, law enforcement will have to be respected and trusted by all segments of Arlington's diverse community, including the cycling community.

The SBI will begin by educating motorists, cyclists and law enforcement in the county concerning the laws that apply to cycling. When motorists and cyclists are educated on the laws regarding cyclists, each can share a mutual understanding of what their responsibilities are toward one another.

If motorists and cyclists can predict the actions of one another based on the legal rights each possess, crashes will occur less and respect between motorists and bicyclists will increase.

### Goals:

- To decrease the number of vehicle/bicycle crashes.
- To increase motorists' understanding of bicycle issues and laws.
- To increase cyclists' understanding of traffic issues and laws.
- To increase bicycle-motorist respect.
- To build trust between cycling and public safety communities.

*“Changing the behavior of motorists and cyclists through education on existing laws will save lives and promote respect.”*

## Introduction

The ultimate goal of any law enforcement traffic program is to prevent crashes and save lives. We do this in most cases by enforcing the laws by which both motorists and cyclists must abide to maintain a safe journey. Enforcing these laws changes problematic behaviors and when such behaviors are modified, fewer crashes occur.

If motorists and cyclists know the law, it is easier for each to co-exist on a roadway due to a mutual understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

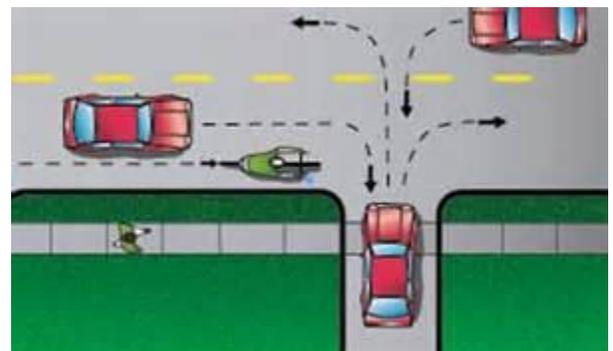
### **Common Cyclist Violations to Enforce**

- Not riding on the right-hand side of the road with the same direction as traffic (46.2-806)
- Failure to obey all traffic signs and signals (14.2-65)
- Failure to use hand signals to communicate intended movements (46.2-848)
- Not equipping their bicycles with a front white light and either a red reflector or a lamp emitting a red light to the rear (when operating after sunset and before sunrise) (46.2-1015)
- Cyclists 14 years of age or younger not wearing a helmet while riding or being carried on a bicycle on any highway, sidewalk, or public bicycle path (14.2-64)

*In Virginia, a cyclist is considered to have the rights and responsibilities of a motorist when operating on a highway. Other vehicles on the roadway must respect the right of the cyclist to travel safely on that roadway. Cyclists riding on the sidewalk, shared-use path, or across a roadway on a crosswalk, shall have all the rights and duties of a pedestrian.*

### **Common Motorist Violations to Enforce (in relation to cyclists)**

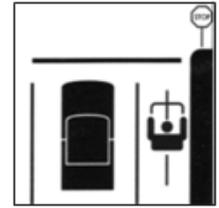
- *Failure to Yield (to cyclists)*
  - when entering a roadway (46.2-821)
  - when turning left (46.2-825)
  - when turning right at red light (cyclist in crosswalk) (46.2-835)
- *Unsafe Passing (must give cyclist 3 feet) (46.2-839)*
- *Unlawful speed forfeits right-of-way, a driver of any vehicle traveling at an unlawful speed shall forfeit any right-of-way which he might otherwise have (46.2-823)*



## **Specific Laws and Rights Regarding Cyclists**

### **A bicycle is a vehicle – 46.2-800 / 14.2-65**

A bicycle shall be a vehicle while operated on the highway.



### **Opening and closing motor vehicle doors; Dooring – 46.2-818.1**

No operator shall open the door of a parked motor vehicle on the side adjacent to moving vehicular traffic unless it is reasonably safe to do so.

A violation of this section shall constitute a traffic infraction punishable by a fine of not more than \$50. No demerit points shall be awarded by the Commissioner for a violation of this section.

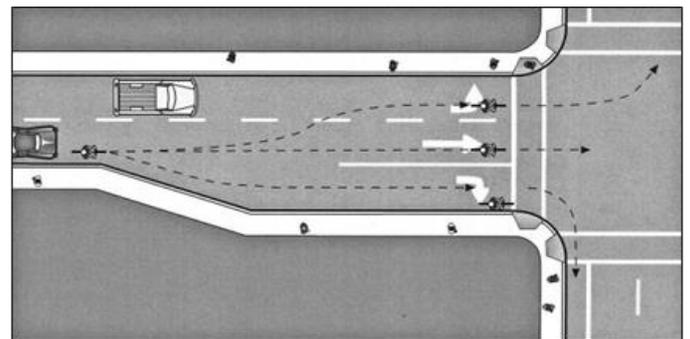
The provisions of this section shall not apply to any law-enforcement officer, firefighter, or emergency medical services personnel engaged in the performance of his duties.



### **Cyclists ride on the right with traffic – 46.2-905**

Any person operating a bicycle (etc.) on a roadway at less than the normal speed of traffic shall ride as close as safely practicable to the right curb or edge of the roadway, except under any of the following circumstances:

- (A) When overtaking and passing another vehicle proceeding in the same direction;
- (B) When preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway;
- (C) When reasonably necessary to avoid conditions/hazards; such as substandard width lanes.
- (D) When avoiding riding in a lane that must turn or diverge to the right; and
- (E) When riding upon a one-way road or highway, a person may also ride as near the left-hand curb edge of such roadway as safely practicable



### **No more than two abreast – 46.2-905**



Persons riding bicycles (etc.) on a highway shall not ride more than two (2) abreast. Cyclists shall not impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic, shall move into a single file formation as quickly as is practicable when being overtaken from the rear by a faster moving vehicle, and, on a laned roadway, shall ride in a single lane.

### **Motorist must leave 3 feet when passing – 46.2-839**

Any driver of any vehicle overtaking a bicycle (etc.) proceeding in the same direction shall pass at a reasonable speed at least three (3) feet to the left of the overtaken bicycle (etc.) and shall not again proceed to the right side of the highway until safely clear of the overtaken bicycle (etc.).



### **Must have light on front, reflector on back – 46.2-1015**

Every bicycle (etc.), when in use between sunset and sunrise shall be equipped with a headlamp on the front emitting a white light visible from a distance of at least five hundred feet (500') to the front, and either a red reflector or a lamp emitting a red light, which shall be visible from a distance of at least five hundred feet (500') to the rear, when directly in front of lawful lower beams of head lamps on a motor vehicle.



### **Cyclists must yield to pedestrians on sidewalks – 46.2-904**

A person riding a bicycle (etc.) on a sidewalk, shared use path, or across a roadway on a crosswalk, shall yield the right-of-way to any pedestrians and shall give an audible signal before overtaking and passing the pedestrian.

### **Children must wear helmets -14.2-64**

Every person fourteen (14) years of age or younger shall wear a protective helmet that meets the standards promulgated by the American National Standards Institute in the American National Standard for Protective Headgear for Bicyclists or the Snell Memorial Foundation's 1990 Standard for Protective Headgear whenever riding or being carried on a bicycle on any highways, sidewalk, or public bicycle path.

### **How and where pedestrians to cross highways – 46.2-923**

When crossing highways, pedestrians shall not carelessly or maliciously interfere with the orderly passage of vehicles. They shall cross, wherever possible, only at intersections or marked crosswalks. Where intersections contain no marked crosswalks, pedestrians shall not be guilty of negligence as a matter of law for crossing at any such intersection or between intersections when crossing by the most direct route.

### **Drivers to stop for pedestrians – 46.2-924**

The driver of any vehicle on a highway shall yield the right-of-way to any pedestrian crossing such highway:

- At any clearly marked crosswalk, whether at mid-block or at the end of any block;
- At any regular pedestrian crossing included in the prolongation of the lateral boundary lines of the adjacent sidewalk at the end of a block;
- At any intersection when the driver is approaching on a highway or street where the legal maximum speed does not exceed 35 miles per hour.

No pedestrian shall enter or cross an intersection in disregard of approaching traffic. Pedestrians crossing highways at intersections shall at all times have the right-of-way over vehicles making turns into the highways being crossed by pedestrians.

### **Bicycle Lane 14.2-65 (F)**

Where the County Board has by ordinance designated a bicycle lane for the exclusive use of bicycles, a motor vehicle may cross a bicycle lane for the purpose of entering or exiting adjacent property, for making a turn, or for the purpose of parking, but no person shall stop, stand, park, or drive a motor vehicle in a bicycle lane for a distance more than one hundred (100) feet.



Taylor Jones @taykajones Jan 25  
Cars regularly parked in Crystal Dr bike lanes. @ArlingtonVaPD suggests S Eads cycletrack. Here's that alternative



## **REFERENCES**

- Virginia Code, [www.lexis.com](http://www.lexis.com) (most citations in this document are from the Code of Virginia.)
- Arlington County Code, <http://countyboard.arlingtonva.us/county-code/> (some citations are from the ACC)
- Virginia Department of Transportation Cycling Laws - <http://www.vdot.virginia.gov/programs/bk-laws.asp>
- Lindsay Brooker, Arlington County Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney, 2015 – Legal Research