



Bicycles are Vehicles

Keep this article with you, ideally in your bicycle's patch kit. If you get hassled by a police officer, this article can be of great help in their understanding the rules of the road for bicyclists.

Texas Bicycle Law Summary

Texas Law has defined a bicycle as a vehicle since September 1, 1983. Senate Bill 843 amended Texas Law regarding the legal status of bicyclists to conform with the national Uniform Vehicle Code.

The law makes clear that a bicycle is a vehicle. It also clarifies the circumstances under which a bicyclist is permitted to ride away from the right edge of the road.

Important Points of Senate Bill 843:

- A bicycle is defined as a vehicle in Texas.
- A bicyclist has the same rights and responsibilities as the drivers of all other vehicles.
- A bicyclist may ride on a street.
- A bicyclist may ride on a sidewalk if not prohibited by local ordinance (e.g., sidewalk riding is not allowed in the downtown Dallas central business district).
- A person may stop, stand, or park a bicycle on a sidewalk as long as it does not impede the normal and reasonable use of the sidewalk (S.B.843, p. 4)
- A bicyclist should ride to the far right of the road except when passing, when turning left, when the right curb or edge of the road is unsafe, or when the right lane is too narrow for a bicycle and a motor vehicle to travel safely in the lane side by side. In the latter two cases, the bicyclist can take the entire right lane by riding in the center of the lane.
- A bicyclist may ride to the left curb or edge of the roadway on a one-way street having two or more marked traffic lanes. Even though legal in some cases, riding to the left is not a good riding practice. In general, it is best to ride to the right (and take the ENTIRE right lane when appropriate) because two motorists do not expect to encounter a bicyclist riding to the left side of the road.
- Bicyclists may ride two abreast in a single lane as long as they do not impede normal and reasonable traffic flow.

Texas Bicycle Law Excerpts

These are important excerpts from Senate Bill 843, which is now part of Vernon's Texas Civil Statutes, Art. 6701d.

Definitions:

Sec. 2(a). **VEHICLE**. Every device, upon, or by which any person or property may be transported or drawn upon a highway, except devices used exclusively upon stationary rails or trucks.

Sec. 2(f). **BICYCLE**. Every device propelled by human power upon which any person may ride, having two tandem wheels either of which is more than fourteen inches in diameter.

Sec. 12. **LOCAL AUTHORITIES**. Every county, municipal, and other local board or body having authority to enact laws relating to traffic under the constitution and laws of this state. Additionally, any school district created under the laws of this state shall constitute a local authority for the limited purpose of designating school crossing guards for schools operated by the school districts.

Sec. 12(a). **STREET OR HIGHWAY**. The entire width between the boundary lines or every way for vehicular travel, exclusive of the berm or shoulder. In the event a highway includes two or more separate roadways, the term "roadway" as used herein shall refer to any such roadway separately but not to all such roadways collectively.

Sec. 13(d). **SIDEWALK**. That portion of a street between the curb lines, or the lateral lines of a roadway, and the adjacent property lines intended for the use of pedestrians.

Sec. 13(l). **SHOULDER**. The portion of the highway that is 1) contiguous to the roadway; 2) designed or ordinarily used for parking; 3) set off from the roadway by different design, construction, or marking; and 4) not intended for normal vehicular travel. "Improved shoulder" means a paved shoulder.

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