

Motorists and Cyclists: Sharing Georgia's Roads

In Georgia, motorists and cyclists share the road. Both have equal rights and responsibilities to obey all traffic laws. All road users should show respect and consideration to each other.

Bicycles & Traffic Violations

A cyclist has all the rights and responsibilities applicable to the driver of any other vehicle except when specifically regulated by law or when certain regulations, by their nature, cannot apply to bicycles.

Cyclists who violate traffic laws will be subject to the same penalties as drivers of motor vehicles, except that no penalty points shall be assessed against the cyclist's driver's license.

Tips for motorists

Motorists also have a responsibility to act in ways to make the roads safer for all users. Please consider the following

Aggressive driving and harassment of cyclists



40-6-397 (a) A person commits the offense of aggressive driving when he or she operates any motor vehicle with the intent to annoy, harass, molest, intimidate, injure, or obstruct another person, including without limitation violating Code Section 40-6-42, 40-6-48, 40-6-49, 40-6-123, 40-6-184, 40-6-312, or 40-6-390 with such intent.

(b) Any person convicted of aggressive driving shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature.

points as you share the road with pedestrians and bicyclists. Scanning for pedestrians and bicyclists should be a normal part of your driving routine as is scanning for other cars and trucks. Extra care should be taken when exiting alleys and driveways since pedestrians and bicyclists may be approaching from your left and right.

At intersections: Bicycles using the road should function much in the same way as traffic. Being slower moving vehicles, bicycles stay to the right most of the time, but there are exceptions. For example, a cyclist can legally move to the left of a lane or into a left turn lane when preparing to make a left turn. They may take part or all of the lane. Be patient and allow them to make the turn. When completed, they'll be able to move back to the right side of the road giving the motorist room to pass.

When passing a cyclist:

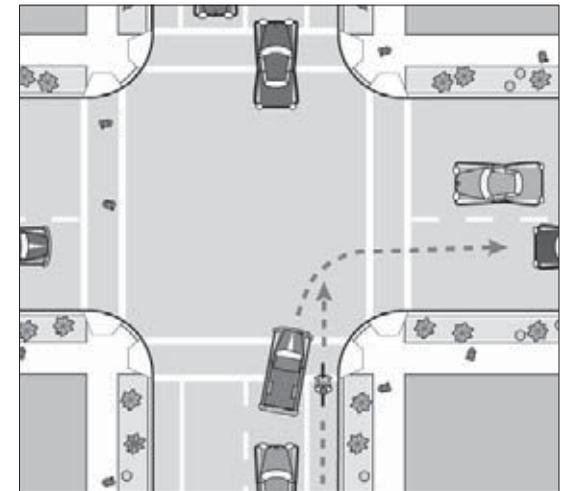
- **Allow at least three feet between your vehicle and the bicycle.** Just as the wind produced by a passing tractor-trailer can pull a car off course, so too can a passing car cause a cyclist to swerve out of control.
- **Be patient and wait until it is safe to pass,** as you would with any other slow-moving vehicle. Be aware that when a road is too narrow for cars and bikes to

ride safely side by side, bicyclists should ride in or near the center of the lane to discourage motorists from trying to pass them without enough clearance.

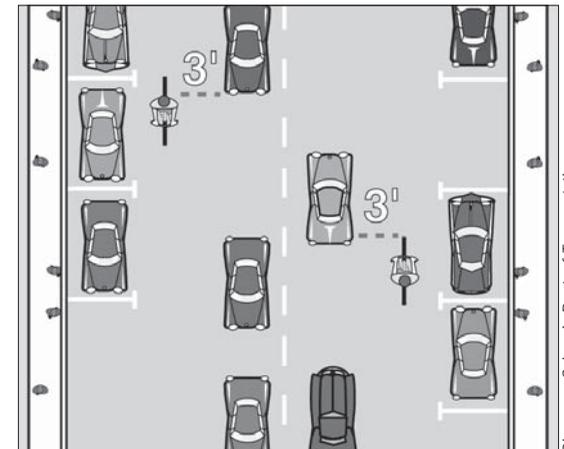
- **Tooting your horn is not recommended when passing cyclists.** If you feel that you must, do so in advance of passing, and from a friendly distance (several hundred feet), not from directly behind. You could startle cyclists and they might veer into your path, causing a crash.
- **Do not speed ahead and cut a cyclist off as you are turning right** when a cyclist is proceeding straight through an intersection. They may not be able to avoid a collision with the passenger side of your vehicle.
- **Do not harass or endanger a cyclist or pedestrian.** Harassment, which may include threats, taunting, or intimidation, is a misdemeanor offense (Georgia Code section 40-6-397 a). Reckless endangerment is also a misdemeanor offense and involves conduct which places another person at risk of personal injury. (Georgia Code section 40-6-397 b)

Other points to remember

Contrary to popular belief, riding on sidewalks is not recommended for cyclists and in many areas it is illegal. In most cases, cyclists are not required to use multi-use paths even



A motorist making a right turn should yield to cyclists traveling straight through the intersection.



As a motorist, give cyclists some space as you pass. Try to leave at least three feet of clearance.

Diagrams: Colorado Dept. of Transportation

if they run alongside the roadway. Be prepared to encounter cyclists using the road. They are considered vehicles under Georgia traffic law.

Give cyclists extra space as you pass. Consider three feet a minimum. Unless traffic is heavy, it is usually possible for the cyclist to move a bit more to the right and the motorist to move out slightly to the left. This type of cooperation allows the motorist and the cyclist to safely share the road.

Riding in Traffic

A cyclist waits for a traffic light to turn green

Photo: Mark Dodson

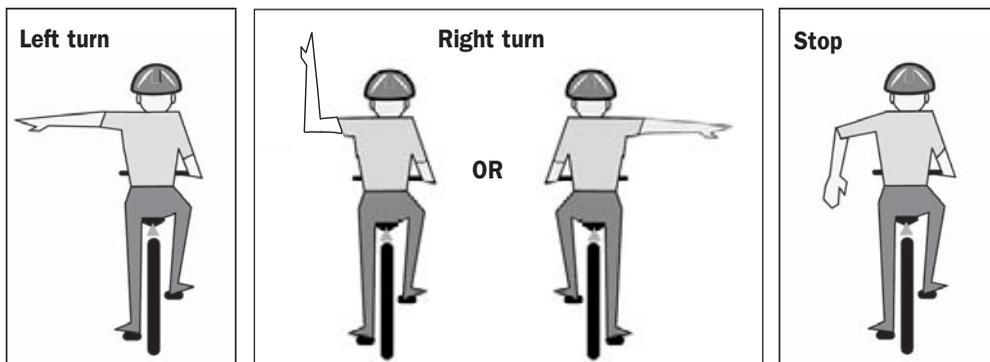
Bikes are vehicles on Georgia roads

Bicycles and automobiles both belong on Georgia's roads. In fact, bicycles are subject to the same traffic laws and have the same rights and responsibilities to the road, as do motor vehicles. When riding a bicycle in traffic, think of yourself as operating a vehicle. You'll need to make some adjustments since you're traveling slower, but the principles of riding

and driving in traffic are very similar.

Cyclists are expected to obey all traffic laws, including traffic lights and stop signs. Not doing so reinforces motorists' beliefs that bicycles either are not subject to traffic laws or choose not to follow them.

Extend the same courtesies to other road users that you'd expect from motorists. Signal your intentions to turn left or right using hand signals.



Use hand signals to indicate turns and stops.

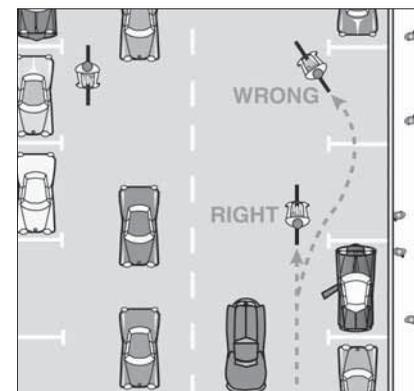
Above all, be respectful of other road users. It is in your best interest as a cyclist to extend common courtesy to drivers and others with whom you share the road.

Where to ride on the road

Ride to the right with the flow of traffic. If sharing a lane with automobiles, you should be 18 to 24 inches out from the curb or edge of pavement. This distance will make it less likely that you'll hit the curb or accidentally run off the side of the road, both of which could cause a crash. Cars sharing the lane will pass on your left.

Always ride in the same direction as traffic, never against it. Motorists and other road users are not expecting bicycles coming toward them in their traffic lane. If the road has bike lanes, always use the lane on the right side of the road.

There are several situations where you'll need to move to the left or



Ride in a straight line – don't weave in and out of the traffic lane



40-6-294 (a) Every person operating a bicycle upon a roadway shall ride as near to the right side of the roadway as practicable, except when turning left or avoiding hazards to safe cycling, when the lane is too narrow to share safely with a motor vehicle, when traveling at the same speed as traffic, or while exercising due care when passing a standing vehicle or one proceeding in the same direction; provided, however, that every person operating a bicycle away from the right side of the roadway shall exercise reasonable care and shall give due consideration to the other applicable rules of the road. As used in this subsection, the term 'hazards to safe cycling' includes, but is not limited to, surface debris, rough pavement, drain grates which are parallel to the side of the roadway, parked or stopped vehicles, potentially opening car doors, or any other objects which threaten the safety of a person operating a bicycle.

(b) Persons riding bicycles upon a roadway shall not ride more than two abreast except on paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles.

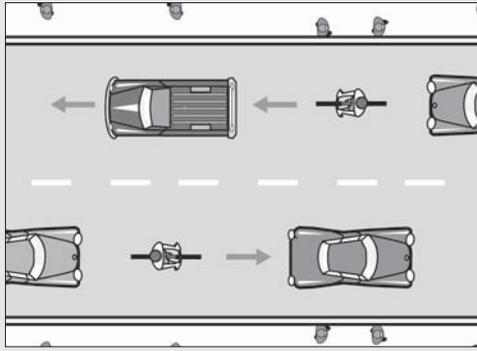
even take the center of the lane. These include:

- Left turns
- Avoiding hazards or debris
- The lane is too narrow to share safely with other vehicles
- Passing standing vehicles

Moving to the left in these circumstances is legal, so keep in mind that staying to the right is not always required and not always the safest place to be.

Ride in a predictable manner.

Ride in a straight line and try to avoid weaving left and right. This will help to visibly establish your place on the road and drivers will be able to adjust accordingly as they approach. Weaving or riding in an unpredictable manner can confuse motorists and make it difficult to



Take the lane when traffic cannot pass safely

In cases where the traffic lane is too narrow to safely share the road with a motor vehicle, it is safer to move to the left and take the center of the lane, even if riding slower than the flow of traffic. When the lane becomes wide enough or traffic eases up, the cyclist can move back to the right to allow motor vehicles to pass. In the illustration above, the cyclist is in a safer position with cars to the front and rear than risking having a vehicle pass dangerously close while trying to get by the cyclist.

Since a bicycle is defined as a vehicle under Georgia traffic law, this is a legal and acceptable maneuver. Drivers should be patient and wait until there is enough lane width to pass comfortably, at which time the cyclist should move to the right and let faster traffic pass.

tell where you'll be on the road as they get closer.

Unless a bike lane, wide curb lane, or shoulder exists, do not pass traffic on the right. Unless you're in a designated bike lane, do not pass cars stacked up at a traffic light in order to position yourself at the front of the line. It is safer and more courteous to pull up behind the last car in the line and wait your turn.

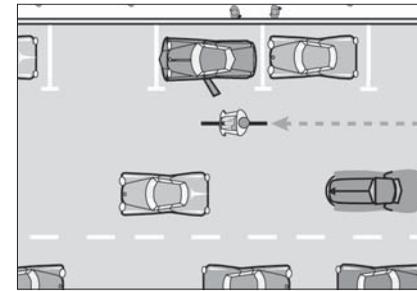
If the lane is narrow, take the entire lane while you wait.

At intersections, stay on the road to make turns or ride straight through. This is safer and more predictable than swerving over into a cross walk. Nor is it necessary to dismount and cross as a pedestrian.

Narrow and multiple traffic lanes. Busier thoroughfares and multi-lane roads require more caution. Two-lane roads are often too narrow for two cars and a bicycle to pass safely. If you anticipate this happening, it's safer to move further to the left and "take the lane," to prevent the vehicle approaching from behind from passing you. You may encounter an occasional driver who is not aware that this is acceptable for bicycles. When it appears there's room for them to move left and give you more space, move back toward the right shoulder.

The same principal applies when riding in heavy traffic on roads with more than one traffic lane in each direction. By taking the entire lane, you'll discourage motorists from passing until they can move at least partially into the other lane and pass safely.

Parked cars. When passing cars that are parallel parked, ride far enough from the cars that you'll avoid being hit by a car door if it opens. Never assume that the car is unoccupied. Avoid weaving in and out of areas where cars are parallel parked. Staying in the traffic lane will make you more visible and



Don't get "doored" – keep enough distance from parked cars to avoid getting hit by an opening door.

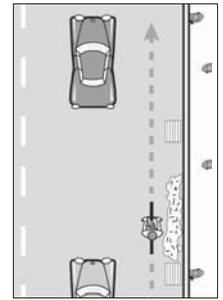
prevent you from surprising passing motorists.

Bike lanes and wide curb lanes. Bike lanes or areas are being added to streets in many cities and counties around Georgia. These vary in width, but typically span 3 to 5 feet. Most cyclists find these helpful as they create a visual separation for motorists that helps distinguish where to expect bicycle traffic. There are also roads built with wider than usual traffic lanes, called wide curb lanes, which help to separate bicycle and automobile traffic and allow more room to pass.

Be prepared to merge into traffic if the bike lane or wide curb lane comes to an end. It is not uncommon for this to occur at intersections. Be ready to move into the appropriate lane for turning or to continue straight through the intersection.

Watch for debris and grates. Cyclists need to be on the lookout for these everywhere. However, dirt, rocks, glass and other debris tend to accumulate more heavily near the curb and in paved shoulders. Since automobile traffic

doesn't usually pass close enough to sweep the debris away, be ready to slow down or move to the left if you encounter this. Drainage grates on city streets are another hazard you may encounter. Be especially wary of horizontal grates that run parallel to the direction of traffic, as these could easily catch your wheel. Report any grates that are hazardous to cyclists to the local transportation and public works department or local bicycle advocacy group.

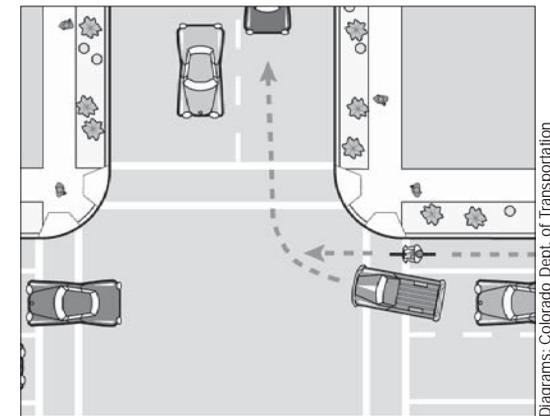


Beware of trash and debris in bike lanes.

Intersections and turns

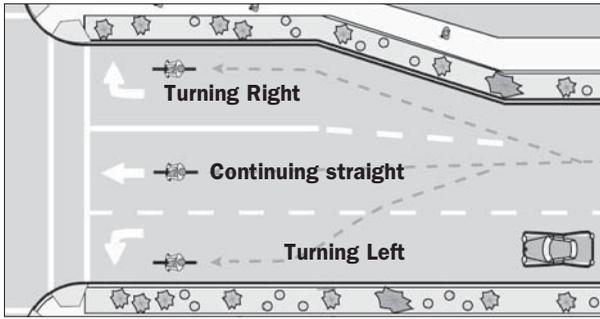
Approach an intersection much in the same manner as you would in a motor vehicle. Prepare to stop at traffic lights and stop signs and yield to any other traffic and pedestrians that have the right of way. As you approach the intersection, begin to position yourself in the best part of the lane to proceed through.

If you are going straight or turn-

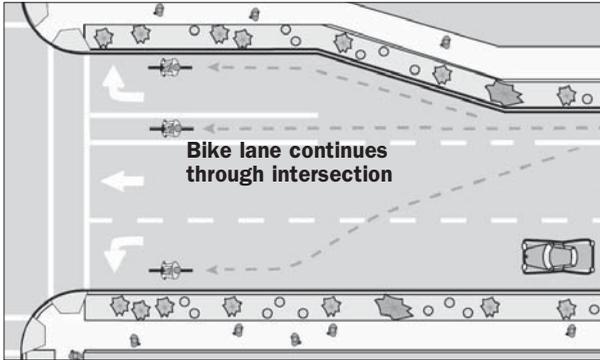


Watch for cars turning right when approaching intersections.

Diagrams: Colorado Dept. of Transportation



Prepare to move into the appropriate position in the lane as you enter multi-lane intersections.

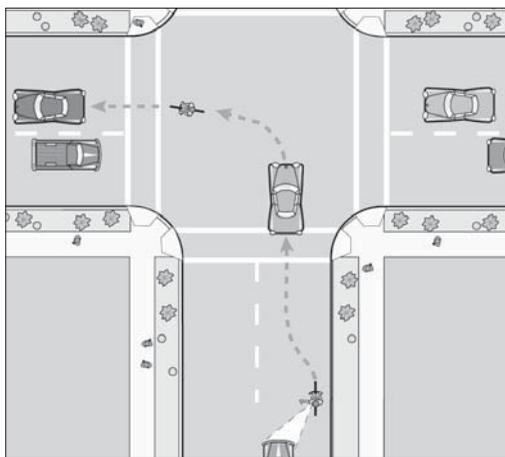


ing right, stay to the right unless it is a right turn only lane. The only exception to this rule is if you are approaching a right-turn-only lane and you intend to continue straight. In this case you would

if they turn, they do not cut you off or turn right in front of you.

Intersections with multiple turn lanes. Some intersections may have several turn lane options. As a cyclist, choose the lane that's marked for the direction you want to go. It's generally safer to "take the lane" so that you're not passed or overtaken until after you are through the intersection.

Making a left turn. Check traffic behind you and then be prepared to move to "take the lane" and move to the left center area of the appropriate traffic lane. When traffic is clear, you'll proceed through the intersection and onto the next road, then move quickly over to the right so faster vehicles can pass. This maneuver may seem difficult



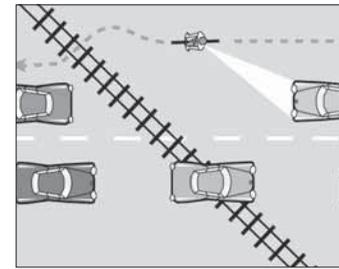
For a left turn, move to the left center of the traffic lane and move through the intersection with the flow of traffic.

position yourself to the left of the right-turn-only lane. If you are turning left, check for traffic coming up from behind, then signal your intent to move to the left side of the traffic lane. Once traffic is clear, you'll make the left turn into the right side of the traffic lane you are turning into. Never proceed through an intersection side-by-side with a motor vehicle.

Beware of cars turning right. Be aware that cars may be intending to turn right at an intersection or driveway, but may not signal their intention to do so. Keep your distance so that

at first for inexperienced cyclists, but you'll develop confidence as you gain experience.

Railroad tracks. Try to cross railroad tracks at as close to a 90-degree angle as possible. If the tracks cross the road at an angle, check for traffic behind you and turn "in" to the tracks as perpendicular as possible. Tracks are likely to catch your tires and cause a crash if you approach from a



parallel position. Always be on the lookout for gravel or other debris in the vicinity of the tracks.

Shoulder Rumble strips

Some roads built to accommodate traffic over 50 mph in Georgia are equipped with paved shoulders and rumble strips. Paved shoulders are areas of pavement to the right of the white edge line. Shoulder rumble strips are a series of indentations pressed or ground into the pavement that cause vibration and noise in a motor vehicle if a driver veers to the right over the white edge line. The vibration and noise are meant to alert a driver leaving the roadway, possibly averting a run-off-the-road crash.

The strong vibration caused by riding a bicycle over shoulder

Photo: David Crites



More recent installations of shoulder rumble strips feature a gap to allow cyclists to enter or exit the paved shoulder.

rumble strips adversely affects handling and control. As cyclist speed increases, the effect of rumble strips becomes more noticeable, and the rumbles become more



Photo: David Crites

Older installations of shoulder rumble strips take up most of this 4' paved shoulder.

difficult to avoid. Unless it is really necessary to move out of the travel lane, riding on the rumble strips is not recommended.

Older rumble strip installations sometimes take up the entire paved shoulder. More recent installations provide for narrower strips with 12' long breaks of clear space every 28'. If there is sufficient shoulder width and no shoulder debris, a cyclist can ride separated from traffic by crossing at a break and riding to the right of the rumble strips.

City of Atlanta Sidewalk Ordinance

Sec. 150-210. Riding on sidewalks.

(a) **Business district.** No person shall ride a bicycle upon a sidewalk within a business district or the central traffic district.

(b) **Age restriction.** No person 13 or more years of age shall ride a bicycle upon any sidewalk in any district.

(c) **Duties to pedestrians.** Any person who is riding a bicycle upon a sidewalk shall yield the right-of-way to any pedestrian.

The driver of a vehicle emerging from an alley, building, private road, or driveway within a business or residential district shall stop such vehicle immediately prior to driving onto a sidewalk or onto the sidewalk area extending across such alley, building entrance, road, or driveway or, in the event there is no sidewalk area, shall stop at the point nearest the street to be entered where the driver has a view of approaching traffic thereon. The driver of a vehicle shall yield the right of way to any pedestrian on a sidewalk. Except as provided by resolution or ordinance of a local government for sidewalks within the jurisdiction of such local government authorizing the operation of bicycles on sidewalks by persons 12 years of age or younger, no person shall drive any vehicle upon a sidewalk or sidewalk area except upon a permanent or duly authorized driveway.

Riding on sidewalks

Riding on the sidewalk is not recommended except for children. Many Georgia cities and counties have regulations regarding where sidewalk riding is legal. Sidewalks were designed to accommodate pedestrians, not bicycles. Motorists are not looking for or expecting bicycles on sidewalks, which is potentially dangerous if you cross a driveway or pull back out onto the road from a sidewalk.

A moving bicycle poses a danger to pedestrians. Slow down or get off and walk if pedestrians are present, and call out or signal a warning if approaching from behind. When in doubt, always yield to pedestrians.

Try to avoid sidewalk riding if at all possible. If you choose to do so, be sure it is not prohibited by local ordinances. Ride at a slower pace and always yield to pedestrians. Use extra caution at driveways and when pulling back out onto the roadway.

Sharing the road with large trucks and buses

Most truck drivers know to allow extra space between themselves and other trucks and buses. Since these large vehicles need more room to move and stop, it's wise to use extra caution and give them a wide berth. Too often, bicyclists put themselves at risk when they cross inattentively in front of or beside trucks or buses.

Trouble can be avoided when cycling near large vehicles by keeping in mind that the driver of a truck or bus has several "blind

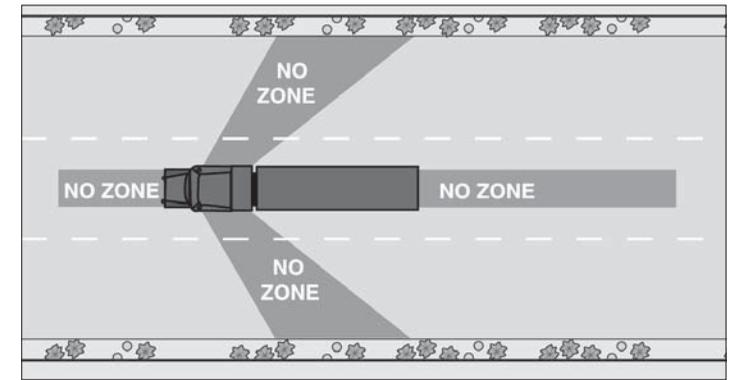
spots" – certain areas around the vehicle that the driver simply cannot see, even with the specialized side view and fish mirrors that modern large vehicles are equipped with for safety. Risks can be substantially reduced by staying out of these blind spots when near large vehicles.

As noted on the graphic on the following page, be aware of the "No-Zone" when cycling or walking around large vehicles.

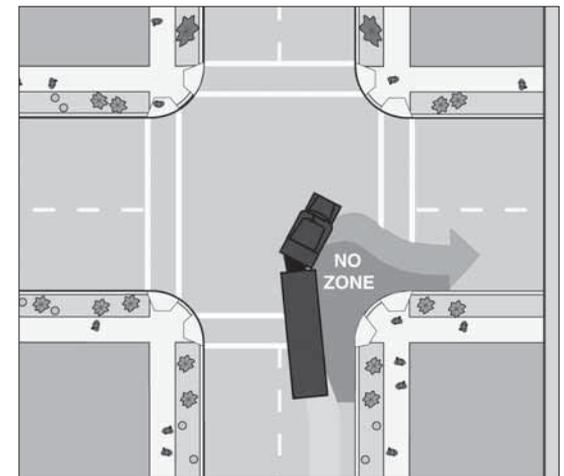
Side Blind Spots. When a large vehicle makes a turn at a street corner, that long distance between front and rear wheels means that the rear wheels may "off-track" and run across a shoulder or bike lane, or even a pedestrian area at the curb. A skilled driver knows just how the wheels must track in order to make a safe turn. Cyclists need to use extra caution here. Avoid being positioned at a street corner or intersection when a large vehicle approaches for a turn.

Cyclists should not pass trucks or buses on the right and should always stay out of "No Zone" areas. Keep your place in traffic behind these vehicles staying alert for lane changes or turns at intersections or driveways.

Behind the Vehicle. When it becomes necessary for a truck



Be aware of the NO-ZONES around large vehicles, where the driver cannot see other vehicles or fixed objects.



Diagrams: Colorado Dept. of Transportation

to back up, perhaps to make a delivery, the vehicle may block the roadway for a short time. Stay clear as the truck backs up. Remember that a truck or bus that appears to be standing still may move suddenly, particularly in crowded city traffic. Stay safe by staying clear of backing trucks and buses.

Buses and large trucks take longer to stop. It's important to realize that once a large vehicle gets rolling, it's going to take a longer distance to come to a safe stop – much farther than for a passenger car! Don't be in a hurry

to cross in front of an approaching bus or truck. Even a well trained professional driver might have difficulty stopping quickly, resulting in a crash. Let the vehicle pass before pulling out into traffic.

Dealing with hostile or aggressive motorists. If you ride regularly, you may encounter hostile or aggressive motorists. Sometimes they do not realize that bicycles are vehicles under Georgia traffic law, and may think you belong on the sidewalk or should not be riding

in traffic. They may honk, yell, or even throw something at you. You may be tempted to respond, but generally it is best not to. Yelling back or displaying an obscene gesture is only likely to escalate the situation.

If you are threatened or are harassed or assaulted, try to get the vehicle's tag number and a description of the driver. Notify law enforcement in that area as soon as possible and be prepared to provide location information and a clear account of what happened.

Basic on-road traffic safety strategies

Never ride against traffic. Ride in the right hand traffic lane with the flow of traffic.

Signal to other road users. Use hand signals to indicate your intentions to turn and stop. Try to make eye contact with drivers, especially at intersections.

Pull entirely off the road if you need to stop for any reason other than a traffic signal, stopped traffic, or a traffic light. This frees up the traffic lane for other road users, cyclists and motorists alike.

Be visible. Bright colors, like orange, yellow, and fluorescent green, are highly recommended in traffic.

Use lights in low visibility conditions. A white headlight and a flashing red tail light will make you much more visible, especially at dawn or dusk.

Use a mirror. A rear-view mirror is extremely helpful if you frequently ride in traffic. It will allow you to easily monitor traffic approaching from behind without turning your head.

Plan to stop if you're approaching a yellow light. Bicycles usually move slower

than cars, so you probably won't have time to clear the light on your bike. Beware of any cars approaching from behind who may not intend to stop at the yellow light.

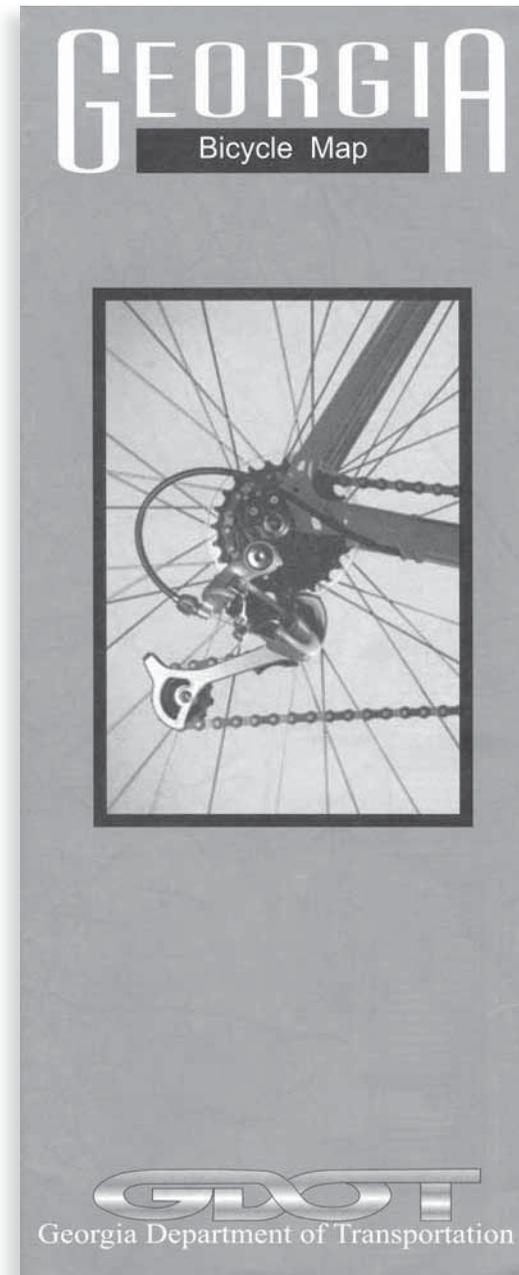
Pass others on the left, not on the right. Other road users are not expecting vehicles to pass on the right. Exceptions are passing automobiles while riding in a bike lane or a wide curb lane. Be sure to pass other cyclists on the left if sharing a lane.

Use caution at driveways and curb cuts. Cars entering and leaving the road from parking lots and driveways pose a major hazard for cyclists. Be wary of any cars in your vicinity as you approach these. The motorist may not be expecting bicycles and may not see you. Try to make eye contact with the driver.

Use extra caution around large vehicles like trucks and buses. Drivers of these vehicles have "blind spots" where they cannot see you, and take longer to stop.

Ride in a predictable manner. Avoid sudden, unexpected movements and do not weave in and out of traffic.

GDOT Georgia Bicycle Maps Available



Copies of the **Georgia Bicycle Map** are still available. In addition to showing the designated state bicycle routes, the map also features information on cycling in Georgia and has insets of major cities.

To request copies, contact the State Bicycle & Pedestrian Coordinator at:

404-631-1778
or email
bikeped@dot.ga.gov

Additional resources:

Google Maps bicycling information
<http://maps.google.com/biking>

A-Train Trip Planner for the metro Atlanta area
<http://trip.atltransit.com>

Refer to the regional cycling organizations listed on page 60 of this manual for additional information and resources for maps and rides