

Share the Road With Motorcycles



The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), Public Law 109-59, directed the department to develop and provide to the States model language for use in traffic safety education courses, driver's manuals, and other driver's training materials instructing the drivers of motor vehicles on the importance of sharing the roads safely with motorcyclists.

To develop the model Share the Road language, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reviewed Share the Road language currently being used by 21 State licensing, highway safety, and motorcycle safety agencies and a variety of national organizations that have a vested interest in motorcycle safety. These materials included operator licensing manuals, public service announcements, brochures, pamphlets, posters, and Internet Web sites. The agency identified the common themes and language from these materials that serve to effectively convey the importance of sharing the road safely with motorcyclists.

The model Share the Road language we will encourage local, State, and national organizations to use in their motorists awareness programs consists of the following:

- ▶ Motorcycles are vehicles with the same rights and privileges as any vehicle on the roadway.
- ▶ Allow the motorcyclist a full lane width. Although it may seem as though there is enough room in the traffic lane for an automobile and a motorcycle, remember the motorcycle needs the room to maneuver safely. Do not share the lane.
- ▶ Approximately one-half of all motorcycle crashes involve another motor vehicle. Nearly 40 percent were caused by the other vehicle turning left in front of the motorcyclist.
- ▶ Motorcycles are small and may be difficult to see. Motorcycles have a much smaller profile than vehicles, which can make it more difficult to

judge the speed and distance of an approaching motorcycle.

- ▶ Always signal your intentions before changing lanes or merging with traffic. This allows the motorcyclist to anticipate traffic flow and find a safe lane position.
- ▶ Remember that motorcyclists are often hidden in a vehicle's blind spot or missed in a quick look due to their smaller size. Always make a visual check for motorcycles by checking mirrors and blind spots before entering or leaving a lane of traffic and at intersections.
- ▶ Don't be fooled by a flashing turn signal on a motorcycle – motorcycle signals usually are not self-cancelling and riders sometimes forget to turn them off. Wait to be sure the motorcycle is going to turn before you proceed.
- ▶ Remember that road conditions which are minor annoyances to you pose major hazards to motorcyclists. Motorcyclists may change speed or adjust their position within a lane suddenly in reaction to road and traffic conditions such as potholes, gravel, wet or slippery surfaces, pavement seams, railroad crossings, and grooved pavement.
- ▶ Allow more following distance, three or four seconds, following a motorcycle so the motorcyclist has enough time to maneuver or stop in an emergency. In dry conditions motorcycles can stop more quickly than cars.

To disseminate the model Share the Road language to governmental agencies and safety organizations, NHTSA sent a letter containing the model language to all Governor's Highway Safety Representatives, State Motorcycle Safety Administrators, and Motor Vehicle Administrators. As directed in SAFETEA-LU, the letter conveyed to State motorcycle, safety, and licensing officials the importance of including these messages in their education courses, licensing materials, driver's manuals, and educational campaigns aimed at drivers.