

Digest of Ohio Bicycle Traffic Laws

By the Ohio Bicycle Federation

[Note: The laws quoted here are verbatim from Ohio Revised Code as they pertain to bicycle operation. The laws are printed in this style of print. Where the Ohio Bicycle Federation offers **Comments** or interpretations, the letter style appears in this form to help you distinguish between the two.]

Title 45 of the Ohio Revised Code contains the laws that govern operation of vehicles on Ohio roads. The laws describe what a driver is required to do or prohibited from doing. But laws do not tell people how to drive. That is the function of a driver's manual.

There are a few books that make excellent driver's manuals for cyclists. Street Smarts by John Allen is a concise booklet that summarizes what all cyclists should know. The booklet was issued by the Ohio Department of Public Safety as Ohio Bicycling Street Smarts. It is also used for the Bicycle Driver's Manual in Pennsylvania, Florida, Arizona and Idaho as well as Ohio.

We also recommend the North American edition of John Franklin's excellent book Cyclecraft. Cyclecraft offers practical advice on how to ride a bike confidently and safely in modern traffic conditions. The books Effective Cycling, MIT Press, 1993 and Bicycle Transportation, MIT Press, Seventh Edition, 2012 by John Forester give a more complete treatment but are difficult reading for beginners.

People who follow the techniques in these books will reduce their accident risk by 80% compared to the average bicycle rider. Cycling in this way is also more effective, more enjoyable and it allows riding confidently in many more places than would otherwise be possible.

Below are annotated excerpts of concern to cyclists from Ohio traffic the entire Ohio Revised Code online, <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc>. The traffic laws are in Title 45. You can also go directly to Chapter 4511 (the rules of the road) and Chapter 4513 (equipment rules).

Information given here includes revisions to the Ohio Revised Code effective through December, 2018.

§ 4511.01 Definitions.

(A) "Vehicle" means every device, including a motorized bicycle, in, upon, or by which any person or property may be transported or drawn upon a highway, except that "vehicle" does not include any motorized wheelchair, any electric personal assistive mobility device, any device that is moved by power collected from overhead electric trolley wires or that is used exclusively upon stationary rails or tracks, or any device, other than a bicycle, that is moved by human power.

(G) "Bicycle" means every device, other than a device that is designed solely for use as a play vehicle by a child, that is propelled solely by human power upon which a person may ride, and that has two or more wheels, any of which is more than fourteen inches in diameter.

(RRR) "Electric bicycle" means a "class 1 electric bicycle," a "class 2 electric bicycle," or a "class 3 electric bicycle" as defined in this section.

(SSS) “Class 1 electric bicycle” means a bicycle that is equipped with fully operable pedals and an electric motor of less than seven hundred fifty watts that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of twenty miles per hour.

(TTT) “Class 2 electric bicycle” means a bicycle that is equipped with fully operable pedals and an electric motor of less than seven hundred fifty watts that may provide assistance regardless of whether the rider is pedaling and is not capable of providing assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of twenty miles per hour.

(UUU) “Class 3 electric bicycle” means a bicycle that is equipped with fully operable pedals and an electric motor of less than seven hundred fifty watts that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling and ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of twenty-eight miles per hour.

Comment: A bicycle is defined as a vehicle and thus is governed by a uniform set of rules common to all vehicles and a small set of specific rules for bicycles. (There are other specific rules for other vehicle types, such as trucks or busses.) The annotated list here summarizes the most important parts of the traffic rules and equipment rules that govern bicycle driving. People who try to make up their own rules have an accident rate five times higher than knowledgeable cyclists who follow the rules of the road.

§ 4511.051 Freeways - prohibited acts.

(A) No person, unless otherwise directed by a police officer, shall:

(2) Occupy any space within the limits of the right-of-way of a freeway, with: an animal-drawn vehicle; a ridden or led animal; herded animals; a pushcart; a bicycle, except on a facility that is separated from the roadway and shoulders of the freeway and is designed and appropriately marked for bicycle use; an electric bicycle; a bicycle with motor attached; a motor driven cycle with a motor which produces not to exceed five brake horsepower; an agricultural tractor; farm machinery; except in the performance of public works or official duties.

§ 4511.07. Local traffic regulations.

(A) Sections 4511 of the Revised Code do not prevent local authorities from carrying out the following activities with respect to streets and highways under their jurisdiction and within the reasonable exercise of the police power:

(8) Regulating the operation of bicycles: provided that no such regulation shall be fundamentally inconsistent with the uniform rules of the road prescribed by this chapter and that no such regulation shall prohibit the use of bicycles on any public street or highway except as provided in section 4511.051 of the Revised Code;

(9) Requiring the registration and licensing of bicycles, including the requirement of a registration fee for residents of the local authority;

(B) No ordinance or regulation enacted under division (A) (8) of this section shall be effective until signs giving notice of the local traffic regulations are posted upon or at the entrance to the highway or part of the highway affected, as may be most appropriate.

Local regulations must be consistent with the uniform rules of the road. In addition, signs are required to tell of any permitted local regulations. Unfortunately, some communities have been very slow to remove non-conforming ordinances that mandate unsafe practices.

§ 4511.132 Operation at intersections with malfunctioning traffic control signal lights.

(A) The driver of a vehicle, streetcar, or trackless trolley who approaches an intersection where traffic is

controlled by traffic control signals shall do all of the following if the signal facing the driver exhibits no colored lights or colored lighted arrows, exhibits a combination of such lights or arrows that fails to clearly indicate the assignment of right-of-way, or, if the vehicle is a bicycle or an electric bicycle, the signals are otherwise malfunctioning due to the failure of a vehicle detector to detect the presence of the bicycle or electric bicycle:

- (1) Stop at a clearly marked stop line, but if none, stop before entering the crosswalk on the near side of the intersection, or, if none, stop before entering the intersection;
- (2) Yield the right-of-way to all vehicles, streetcars, or trackless trolleys in the intersection or approaching on an intersecting road, if the vehicles, streetcars, or trackless trolleys will constitute an immediate hazard during the time the driver is moving across or within the intersection or junction of roadways;
- (3) Exercise ordinary care while proceeding through the intersection.

Comment: Many traffic lights are controlled by vehicle detectors. Most can be made to work if you stop in exactly the right place but few are marked to show where to stop. (See Chapter 9 of *Bicycling Street Smarts*).

§ 4511.21 Speed limits - assured clear distance.

(A) No person shall operate a motor vehicle, trackless trolley, or streetcar at a speed greater or less than is reasonable or proper, having due regard to the traffic, surface, and width of the street or highway and any other conditions, and no person shall drive any motor vehicle, trackless trolley, or streetcar in and upon any street or highway at a greater speed than will permit the person to bring it to a stop within the assured clear distance ahead.

Comment: Some people claim that a slow vehicle or bicycle “creates a hazard”. That is an admission of guilt for driving too fast. The law requires drivers to stop within their assured clear distance.

§ 4511.22 Slow speed

(A) No person shall stop or operate a vehicle, trackless trolley, or street car at such an unreasonably slow speed as to impede or block the normal and reasonable movement of traffic, except when stopping or reduced speed is necessary for safe operation or to comply with law.

(C) In a case involving a violation of this section, the trier of fact, in determining whether the vehicle was being operated at an unreasonably slow speed, shall consider the capabilities of the vehicle and its operator.

Comment: The “impeding traffic” law makes it clear that a cyclist cannot impede traffic if traveling at a reasonable speed for a cyclist, even if the speed limit on the road is much higher. Safe operation may require controlling the traffic lane. If the lane is too narrow or it is unsafe to otherwise pass. Also see 4511.31 for passing in “hazardous zones”.

§ 4511.25 Lanes of travel upon roadways of sufficient width.

(A) Upon all roadways of sufficient width, a vehicle or trackless trolley shall be driven upon the right half of the roadway except as follows:

- (1) When overtaking and passing another vehicle proceeding in the same direction, or when making a left turn under the rules governing such movements;
- (2) When an obstruction exists making it necessary to drive to the left of the center of the highway; provided, any person so doing shall yield the right of way to all vehicles traveling in the proper direction upon the unobstructed portion of the highway within such distance as to constitute an immediate hazard;

- (3) When driving upon a roadway divided into three or more marked lanes for traffic under the rules applicable thereon;
- (4) When driving upon a roadway designated and posted with signs for one-way traffic;
- (5) When otherwise directed by a police officer or traffic control device.

(B)(1) Upon all roadways any vehicle or trackless trolley proceeding at less than the prevailing and lawful speed of traffic at the time and place and under the conditions then existing shall be driven in the right-hand lane then available for traffic, and far enough to the right to allow passing by faster vehicles if such passing is safe and reasonable, except under any of the following circumstances:

- (a) When overtaking and passing another vehicle or trackless trolley proceeding in the same direction:
- (b) When preparing for a left turn;
- (c) When the driver must necessarily drive in a lane other than the right-hand lane to continue on the driver's intended route.

(2) Nothing in division (B)(1) of this section requires a driver of a slower vehicle to compromise the driver's safety to allow overtaking by a faster vehicle.

Comment: Section 4511.25(A) is a general rule that applies to all vehicles, including bicycles. Some people think it is safer to ride on the left to "see traffic coming". This is illegal and wrong! Pedestrians walk facing traffic so they can sidestep off the road if necessary. But you cannot sidestep a bike. Riding on the left is both illegal and dangerous. Crash statistics show that wrong way riding has more than 3 times the risk as riding on the right.

Section 4511.25(B) simply means that slower vehicles should not unnecessarily delay faster traffic. (See also § 4511.55 below.)

§ 4511.27. Overtaking and passing of vehicles proceeding in the same direction.

The following rules govern the overtaking and passing of vehicles or trackless trolleys proceeding in the same direction:

(A) The operator of a vehicle or trackless trolley overtaking another vehicle or trackless trolley proceeding in the same direction shall signal to the vehicle being overtaken, shall pass to the left thereof at a safe distance, and shall not again drive to the right side of the roadway until safely clear of the overtaken vehicle or trackless trolley. When a vehicle overtakes and passes a bicycle or electric bicycle, three feet or greater is considered a safe passing distance.

(B) Except when overtaking and passing on the right is permitted, the operator of an overtaken vehicle shall give way to the right in favor of the overtaking vehicle at the latter's audible signal, and he shall not increase the speed of his vehicle until completely passed by the overtaking vehicle.

Comment: Since cyclists usually ride near the right side of the road, novice cyclists are tempted to pass slow or stopped traffic on the right, especially in a "bicycle lane" with a painted line. Passing on the right is often dangerous and, in many cases, illegal.

§ 4511.31. Hazardous zones

(A) The department of transportation may determine those portions of any state highway where overtaking and passing other traffic or driving to the left of the center or center line of the roadway would be especially

hazardous and may, by appropriate signs or markings on the highway, indicate the beginning and end of such zones. ...

(B) Division (A) of this section does not apply when all of the following apply:

- (1) The slower vehicle is proceeding at less than half the speed of the speed limit applicable to that location.
- (2) The faster vehicle is capable of overtaking and passing the slower vehicle without exceeding the speed limit.
- (3) There is sufficient clear sight distance to the left of the center or center line of the roadway to meet the overtaking and passing provisions of section 4511.29 (passing to the left of centerline) of the Revised Code, considering the speed of the slower vehicle.

Comment: Section 4511.31(B helps reduce unsafe (close) passing of cyclists because faster drivers can pass in "no passing" zones IF passing is safe.

§ 4511.36. Rules for turns at intersections.

The driver of a vehicle intending to turn at an intersection shall be governed by the following rules:

(A) Approach for a right turn and a right turn shall be made as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway.

(B) At any intersection where traffic is permitted to move in both directions on each roadway entering the intersection, an approach for a left turn shall be made in that portion of the right half of the roadway nearest the center line thereof and by passing to the right of such center line where it enters the intersection and after entering the intersection the left turn shall be made so as to leave the intersection to the right of the center line of the roadway being entered. Whenever practicable the left turn shall be made in that portion of the intersection to the left of the center of the intersection.

Comment: The rules for turns are exactly the same for bicycles as for other vehicles – merge to the appropriate position (right for right turns, left for left turns), yield to any traffic that has the right of way and then turn into the appropriate lane for their destination. A cyclist also has the option to make turns as a pedestrian by dismounting and walking the bicycle through the intersection.

Getting into position for a left turn may involve merging across lanes of traffic. If traffic is heavy, you should start doing this early to take advantage of gaps in traffic. Otherwise, there may not be a gap when you need it. Beginners, who have not yet developed the skill to merge in traffic, may make pedestrian-style turns instead.

§ 4511.39. Turn and stop signals.

No person shall turn a vehicle or trackless trolley or move right or left upon a highway unless and until such person has exercised due care to ascertain that the movement can be made with reasonable safety nor without giving an appropriate signal in the manner hereinafter provided.

When required, a signal of intention to turn or move right or left shall be given continuously during not less than the last one hundred feet traveled by the vehicle or trackless trolley before turning, except that in the case of a person operating a bicycle or electric bicycle, the signal shall be made not less than one time but is not required to be continuous. A bicycle or electric bicycle operator is not required to make a signal if the bicycle or electric bicycle is in a designated turn lane, and a signal shall not be given when the operator's hands are needed for the safe operation of the bicycle or electric bicycle. ...

Comment: Never turn or change lanes without first yielding to any traffic that has the right of way, and give a signal if possible. However, skip the signal if your hand is needed for control or brakes.

§ 4511.40. Hand and arm signals.

(A) Except as provided in division (B) of this section, all signals required by sections 4511.01 to 4511.78 of the Revised Code, when given by hand and arm, shall be given from the left side of the vehicle in the following manner, and such signals shall indicate as follows:

- (1) Left turn, hand and arm extended horizontally;
- (2) Right turn, hand and arm extended upward;
- (3) Stop or decrease speed, hand and arm extended downward.

(B) As an alternative to division (A)(2) of this section, a person operating a bicycle or electric bicycle may give a right turn signal by extending the right hand and arm horizontally and to the right side of the bicycle or electric bicycle.

Comment: The right-arm turn signal described in (B) above is more easily understood.

§ 4511.52. Bicycles - issuance of ticket - points not assessed.

(A) Sections 4511 of the Revised Code that are applicable to bicycles and electric bicycles apply whenever a bicycle or electric bicycle is operated upon any highway or upon any path set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles.

(B) Except as provided in division (D) of this section, a bicycle operator or electric bicycle operator who violates any section of the Revised Code described in division (A) of this section that is applicable to bicycles or electric bicycles may be issued a ticket, citation, or summons by a law enforcement officer for the violation in the same manner as the operator of a motor vehicle would be cited for the same violation. A person who commits any such violation while operating a bicycle or electric bicycle shall not have any points assessed against the person's driver's license, commercial driver's license, temporary instruction permit, or probationary license under section 4510.036 of the Revised Code.

(C) Except as provided in division (D) of this section, in the case of a violation of any section of the Revised Code described in division (A) of this section by a bicycle operator or bicycle operator or by a motor vehicle operator when the trier of fact finds that the violation by the motor vehicle operator endangered the lives of bicycle riders or electric bicycle riders at the time of the violation, the court, notwithstanding any provision of the Revised Code to the contrary, may require the bicycle operator, or electric bicycle operator, or motor vehicle operator to take and successfully complete a bicycling skills course approved by the court in addition to or in lieu of any penalty otherwise prescribed by the Revised Code for that violation.

Comment: 4511.52(A) Means that the standard traffic rules apply to bicycle drivers. These driving laws allow safe, fast and efficient travel. Riding on sidewalks or multi-use trails is moderately safe only if done at slow speeds and extremely carefully. Path riding is not covered in this digest. (B) Means that bicycle violators may be ticketed but will not have "points" assessed against any driver's license, except for a DWI offense. (C) allows judges to offer a cycling skills course to violators.

§ 4511.522. Electric bicycles.

(A)(1) On and after January 1, 2020, manufacturers and distributors of electric bicycles shall permanently affix

a label, in a prominent location, to each electric bicycle. The label shall specify whether the electric bicycle is a class 1, class 2, or class 3 electric bicycle, the top assisted speed that the electric bicycle is capable of reaching, and the motor wattage of the electric bicycle.

(2) No person shall modify an electric bicycle in a manner that changes the top assisted speed that the electric bicycle is capable of reaching unless the person also modifies the label required under division (A)(1) of this section to reflect the modification.

(B)(1) The manufacturer of an electric bicycle shall ensure that the electric bicycle complies with the equipment and manufacturing requirements for bicycles established by the consumer product safety commission under 16 C.F.R. 1512 et seq.

(2) The manufacturer shall manufacture all class 1 electric bicycles and class 3 electric bicycles so that when the rider ceases pedaling the electric motor ceases to provide assistance. The manufacturer shall manufacture all class 2 electric bicycles so that when the rider applies the brakes or releases or activates a switch or similar mechanism the electric motor ceases to provide assistance.

(3) All class 3 electric bicycles shall be equipped with a speedometer that displays the speed of the electric bicycle in miles per hour.

(C)(1) The operation of a class 1 electric bicycle and a class 2 electric bicycle is permitted on a path set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles or on a shared-use path, unless the county, township, municipal corporation, other local authority, or state agency as defined in section 1.60 of the Revised Code with control over the path by resolution, ordinance, or rule prohibits the use of a class 1 electric bicycle or class 2 electric bicycle on such a path.

(2) No person shall operate a class 3 electric bicycle on a path set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles or a shared-use path unless that path is within or adjacent to a highway or the county, township, municipal corporation, or local authority, or state agency as defined in section 1.60 of the Revised Code with control over the path by resolution, ordinance, or rule authorizes the use of a class 3 electric bicycle on such a path

(3) No person shall operate a class 1 electric bicycle, a class 2 electric bicycle, or a class 3 electric bicycle on a path that is intended to be used primarily for mountain biking, hiking, equestrian use, or other similar uses, or any other single track or natural surface trail that has historically been reserved for nonmotorized use, unless the county, township, municipal corporation, other local authority, or state agency as defined in section 1.60 of the Revised Code with control over the path by resolution, ordinance, or rule authorizes the use of a class 1 electric bicycle, a class 2 electric bicycle, or a class 3 electric bicycle on such a path.

(D)(1) No person under sixteen years of age shall operate a class 3 electric bicycle; however, a person under sixteen years of age may ride as a passenger on a class 3 electric bicycle that is designed to accommodate passengers.

(2) No person shall operate or be a passenger on a class 3 electric bicycle unless the person is wearing a protective helmet that meets the standards established by the consumer product safety commission or the American society for testing and materials.

Comment: Special rules apply to electric bicycles, including that only class 1 and 2 electric bicycles (which can attain speeds of 20 miles per hour), are permitted on shared-use paths; electric bicycles are not permitted on natural surface trails; no person under 16 years of age may operate a class 3 electric bicycle (which can attain speeds of 28 miles per hour); and persons of all ages must wear a helmet when operating or riding as a passenger on a class 3 electric bicycle.

§ 4511.53. Operation of bicycles, motorcycles and snowmobiles.

(A) For purposes of this section, “snowmobile” has the same meaning as given that term in section 4519.01 of the Revised Code.

(B) No person operating a bicycle or electric bicycle shall ride other than upon or astride the permanent and regular seat attached thereto or carry any other person upon such bicycle or electric bicycle other than upon a firmly attached and regular seat thereon, and no person shall ride upon a bicycle or electric bicycle other than upon such a firmly attached and regular seat.

No person operating a bicycle or electric bicycle shall carry any package, bundle, or article that prevents the driver from keeping at least one hand upon the handlebars.

No bicycle, electric bicycle, or motorcycle shall be used to carry more persons at one time than the number for which it is designed and equipped. No motorcycle shall be operated on a highway when the handlebars rise higher than the shoulders of the operator when the operator is seated in the operator's seat or saddle.

(D) Nothing in this section shall be construed as prohibiting the carrying of a child in a seat or trailer that is designed for carrying children and is firmly attached to the bicycle or electric bicycle.

§ 4511.54. Prohibition against attaching bicycles and sleds to vehicles.

No person riding upon any bicycle, electric bicycle coaster, roller skates, sled, or toy vehicle shall attach the same or self to any streetcar, trackless trolley, or vehicle upon a roadway.

§ 4511.55. Operating bicycles and motorcycles on roadway.

(A) Every person operating a bicycle or electric bicycle upon a roadway shall ride as near to the right side of the roadway as practicable obeying all traffic rules applicable to vehicles and exercising due care when passing a standing vehicle or one proceeding in the same direction.

(B) Persons riding bicycles or electric bicycles or motorcycles upon a roadway shall ride not more than two abreast in a single lane, except on paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles, electric bicycles, or motorcycles.

(C) This section does not require a person operating a bicycle or electric bicycle to ride at the edge of the roadway when it is unreasonable or unsafe to do so. Conditions that may require riding away from the edge of the roadway include when necessary to avoid fixed or moving objects, parked or moving vehicles, surface hazards, or if it otherwise is unsafe or impracticable to do so, including if the lane is too narrow for the bicycle or electric bicycle and an overtaking vehicle to travel safely side by side within the lane.

Comment: Section 4511.55(A) is very often misquoted to say that cyclists are required to ride as near as possible to the curb. Paragraph (C) helps reduce this confusion. There are many conditions where it is much safer to ride near the middle of the lane. It is not practicable (reasonably able to be done) to ride on the far right when passing or turning left; or when avoiding objects, parked cars, moving vehicles, pedestrians, animals, surface or other hazards; or when the travel lane is too narrow for a bicycle and another vehicle to pass safely side by side within the lane.

Many motorists are reluctant to cross a lane line when passing a bicycle. A cyclist who "hugs the curb" unintentionally invites motorists to pass with unsafe clearance. Riding near the middle of a narrow lane helps overtaking motorists realize that they must use the next lane to pass.

The real purpose of this law is to prevent unnecessary delay to faster traffic. Since the law cannot require unsafe operation, the phrase as close as practicable is highly flexible, varying widely according to conditions. Positions well away from the edge of the road can be in compliance.

Section 4511.55(B) allows riding two abreast. However, cyclists should avoid unnecessary delay to other traffic. Please be courteous and "single up" when other drivers wish to pass if such passing is

safe and reasonable. There is no violation if any of the following apply: (1) If there is no traffic being delayed; (2) If the cyclists are traveling as fast as other traffic; (3) If traffic can reasonably pass by using another lane; (4) If the lane is too narrow or it is otherwise unsafe for passing.

§ 4511.56. Bicycle signal devices.

(A) Every bicycle or electric bicycle when in use at the times specified in section 4513.03 of the Revised Code (between sunset and sunrise or when visibility is less than 1000 feet), shall be equipped with the following:

(1) A lamp mounted on the front of either the bicycle or electric bicycle or the operator that shall emit a white light visible from a distance of at least five hundred feet to the front and three hundred feet to the sides. A generator-powered lamp that emits light only when the bicycle is moving may be used to meet this requirement.

(2) A red reflector on the rear that shall be visible from all distances from one hundred feet to six hundred feet to the rear when directly in front of lawful lower beams of head lamps on a motor vehicle;

(3) A lamp emitting either flashing or steady red light visible from a distance of five hundred feet to the rear shall be used in addition to the red reflector. If the red lamp performs as a reflector in that it is visible as specified in division (A)(2) of this section, the red lamp may serve as the reflector and a separate reflector is not required.

(B) Additional lamps and reflectors may be used in addition to those required under division (A) of this section, except that red lamps and red reflectors shall not be used on the front of the bicycle or electric bicycle and white lamps and white reflectors shall not be used on the rear of the bicycle or electric bicycle.

(C) A bicycle or electric bicycle may be equipped with a device capable of giving an audible signal, except that a bicycle or electric bicycle shall not be equipped with nor shall any person use upon a bicycle or electric bicycle any siren or whistle.

(D) Every bicycle or electric bicycle shall be equipped with an adequate brake when used on a street or highway.

Comment: An unseen cyclist is in great danger. According to the Ohio Dept. of Public Safety data for 2017, about 58 percent of fatal bicycle crashes in Ohio occur during non-daylight hours (even though few cyclists ride then). The reflectors that come with new bikes are grossly inadequate for nighttime visibility. Always use both a headlight and taillight when you ride in the dark.

§ 4511.711. Driving upon sidewalk area.

No person shall drive any vehicle, other than a bicycle or an electric bicycle when the motor is not engaged, upon a sidewalk or sidewalk area except upon a permanent or duly authorized temporary driveway.

Nothing in this section shall be construed as prohibiting local authorities from regulating the operation of bicycles or electric bicycles within their respective jurisdictions, except that no local authority may require that bicycles or electric bicycles be operated on sidewalks.

Comment: Although this section allows riding on sidewalks, don't do it. Accident studies show that even low-speed sidewalk riding has about double the accident rate as riding on the road. The danger increases with speed. If you ride on the sidewalk, every intersection and even every driveway is a potential collision site. Motorists crossing your path do not look for conflicting traffic on the sidewalk, especially if you are coming from the "wrong way".

§ 4511.991. "Distracted" defined; violations committed while distracted.

(A) As used in this section and each section referenced in division (B) of this section, all of the following apply:

(1) “Distracted” means doing either of the following while operating a vehicle:

(a) Using a handheld electronic wireless communications device, as defined in section 4511.204 of the Revised Code, except when utilizing any of the following:

(i) The device’s speakerphone function;

(ii) A wireless technology standard for exchanging data over short distances;

(iii) A “voice-operated or hands-free” device that allows the person to use the electronic wireless communications device without the use of either hand except to activate, deactivate, or initiate a feature or function;

(iv) Any device that is physically or electronically integrated into the motor vehicle.

(b) Engaging in any activity that is not necessary to the operation of a vehicle and impairs, or reasonably would be expected to impair, the ability of the operator to drive the vehicle safely.

Comment: All of the traffic laws include the following section:

If the offender commits the offense while distracted and the distracting activity is a contributing factor to the commission of the offense, the offender is subject to the additional fine (\$100) established under section 4511.991 of the Revised Code.

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See the Ohio Bicycle Federation Web Pages, www.ohiobike.org for more information about bicycle operation, safety, traffic law and measures communities can take to improve cycling.

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