



Massachusetts Vulnerable Road Users Laws 2023

On April 1, 2023, new vulnerable road users laws will go into effect in Massachusetts. These laws were all passed as part of “An Act to Reduce Traffic Fatalities” in an effort to increase roadway safety across the commonwealth.

What is a Vulnerable Road User?

Massachusetts now defines “vulnerable user” on our roads to include:

- People walking and biking
- Roadside workers
- People using wheelchairs
- Scooters, skateboards, roller skates, and other micromobility devices
- Horse-drawn carriages
- Farm equipment

Future policies and guidelines can be created with vulnerable road users in mind.

Safe Passing | Who is this for: Motorists

Drivers will need to provide a “safe passing distance” of at least 4 feet when passing vulnerable road users. Massachusetts is the 36th state to define safe passing as at least 3 feet.

Motorists are explicitly allowed to cross a double-yellow line in order to pass “when it is safe to do so and adhering to the roadway speed limit.”

MassDOT is required to put up signage to this effect across the commonwealth and will work in collaboration with municipalities to do so on public roadways.

Rear Red Light Requirement | Who is this for: Bicyclists

A new requirement for use of rear red lights at night will go into effect to ensure cyclists are visible on our roadways.

Bicyclists will now be required to use a front white light **and** rear red light and rear reflector when riding at night.

Police officers cannot use a light violation as a reason to stop a bicyclist. The lack of lights cannot be used as “conclusive evidence of contributory negligence” in a civil action, for instance when making an insurance claim.



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Safer Speed Limits | Who is this for: Municipalities

Clarifies the process for municipalities to alter speed limits in thickly settled areas from 30 mph to 25 mph both on state-controlled roads and on the roads they control.

This is an update on the previously implemented [Chapter 90, Section 18](#), giving authority to local jurisdictions to create safer roadways in their communities.

Crash Reporting | Who is this for: Police Departments

To improve statewide data collection surrounding vulnerable road user crashes, a standardized analysis tool will now be used to report crashes and incidents involving a person biking or walking. Standardized crash reporting will allow us to systematically measure, report, and track crashes which allow us to make data-informed changes that increase roadway safety.

Truck Safety Devices | Who is this for: Municipality/State Agency Contracting Trucks

State-contracted trucks that are class 3 or 10,000+ lb will be required to be equipped with “lateral protection devices” (safety side guards), convex and cross-over mirrors, and backup cameras to reduce fatalities of people walking and biking.

This requirement will reduce some of the tragic right-hook fatalities that we’ve seen in recent years.

The registrar shall also prohibit aftermarket accessories that obstruct visibility or endanger vulnerable users.

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These new laws are just one step towards safer roadways and part of the ongoing work with MassBike and our coalition partners. We know that these laws are data-driven and reduce preventable crashes across Massachusetts. For more resources to help make the roadways safer in your community, you can plug in with MassBike and our partners at the Massachusetts Vision Zero Coalition: <https://www.visionzerocoalition.org/>

How you can Help

- Request that your city/town installs 4-foot passing signage on their roadways
- Share these new laws with your local City Council or Select Board and request they utilize Chapter 90, Section 18 to reduce speed limits in your community

If you have questions about these new laws, MassBike is here to help! You can reach us at bikeinfo@massbike.org.