



# The Daily Gleaner

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## Share the Road

'Share the Road' is not just a suggestion, it's the law. The New Brunswick Motor Vehicle Act Section 176 states: "Every person riding a bicycle upon a roadway has all of the rights and is subject to all of the duties applicable to the driver of a vehicle by this Act, except those provisions which by their very nature can have no application."

But as is human nature, laws get broken in little ways every moment of the day – we go too fast in a slow zone; we do a u-turn; we park in a no parking spot. However, many don't consider that honking and crowding a cyclist off the street is breaking the law. Well, it is. But more than that, it's dangerous and anti-social behaviour.

To be sure, cyclists must do their part in upholding Section 176, namely, if they have all the 'rights' applicable to a driver of a vehicle, then they too are subject to all the 'duties' and responsibilities. This means the rules of the road apply equally to cyclists as drivers, and because cyclists are not protected by metal, an airbag, and a seatbelt, they should be doubly cautious of the rules of the road. Cyclists need to ride defensively and be assertive, yet responsible.

Riding too close to the side of the road and snuggling up to the curb puts a cyclist at risk for the obvious hazards - sewer grates, debris, potholes, gravel and parked cars. In fact, it's safer to ride at least one metre from the curb. But most motorists likely don't know that cyclists have a right to be in the right-hand lane. When cyclists ride close to the curb, motorists are tempted to pass them, even if there's really not enough room to share the same lane. If the cyclist rides more into the centre of the lane, the motorist has to wait for oncoming traffic to clear, then pass using the other lane, giving the cyclist space just like they'd give another vehicle. The vehicle has to make a conscious effort to go out and around. Going downhill, a bike can easily reach 55 km/hr. The bike is actually traveling at traffic speed, so the only reason to pass would be out of impatience, putting the cyclist at risk.

With many urban centers become vehicle-commuting nightmares, that 120 year-old invention - the bike - is fast becoming a major component of urban community transportation plans. Cities that are succeeding in being bike-friendly generally follow the '5-E' philosophy: 1) Engineering (bike parking, designated lanes, etc.); 2) Encouragement (events and campaigns); 3) Evaluation and Planning (political bodies that make changes to existing laws and plan for the future); 4) Education (bike maps and awareness campaigns); and 5) Enforcement (ensuring that both motorists and cyclists obey the rules of the road).

Fredericton is beginning to move along the 5-E spectrum: bike racks and secure bike parking is being expanded, the trail system is expansive and well maintained for cyclists, bike lanes are continuously being installed on appropriate city streets. And running June 1 to September 1 is 'Freddy's Commuter Challenge', an awareness and education campaign (with prizes!), which promotes cycling as a safe and efficient transportation option this summer. The campaign was sparked by upcoming road and bridge closures that will make getting around the city problematic for motorized vehicles in coming months.

So this summer it is critical that drivers and cyclists travel in harmony in and around our city, and understand each other's rights and responsibilities on the streets and roadways. There will undoubtedly be far greater numbers of cyclists on the roads than ever before, and this is our community's chance to make great strides towards becoming a bike-friendly.

So remember in the coming months, don't let your impatience in your vehicle put you and a cyclist at risk. And cyclists, ride smart, it's true that we have every right to ride safely in the ride-hand lane, but no one wants to be dead right!

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