WHAT LAWS APPLY TO BICYCLISTS?

Bicycles are legally classified as vehicles in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. Therefore, bicyclists have rights and responsibilities similar to motorists. Bicyclists also must follow specific laws written in recognition of the bicycle's vulnerability and limited speed. Some of the vehicle laws that apply to bicycling are listed below. The table inside this brochure specifies significant additional laws by region.

Please learn and observe the law to ensure your own safety and to instill respect for the bicycling community.

APPLICABLE VEHICLE LAWS

Follow traffic lights and signs, including:

- ✓*Stop and yield right-of-way at stop signs*
- ✓*Slow and yield right-of-way at yield signs*
- ✓*Stop at red lights*

Yield right of way to pedestrians in crosswalks and on sidewalks.

Yield right of way to traffic traveling straight when turning left.

Signal before turning, stopping, or slowing.

MOTORISTS' DUTIES TO BICYCLISTS

Motorists must drive at a reasonable speed.

Specific prohibitions exist in Maryland against throwing objects at bicyclists and in D.C. against a motorist's opening a car door in traffic, including bicycle traffic.

Drivers must pass a bicycle at a safe distance and speed. D.C. code also requires safe clearance before returning to the right lane.

BICYCLE EQUIPMENT

The following are required by law in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia:

Brakes that will skid the wheels on dry, level, clean pavement.

Front white light visible from at least 500 feet to the front.*

Rear red reflector visible in light shone from 50 feet to 300 feet to the rear. A rear red light visible to 500 feet to the rear can be used *in place of* the reflector in D.C. and Virginia; only *in addition to* the reflector in Maryland, Arlington County, and Falls Church.*

Bell audible from 100 feet.+

* *Required at night in D.C. and Virginia, and in bad weather or insufficient light in Maryland.*
\+ *Bell not required in Virginia.*

REGISTRATION

Bicycle registration is optional statewide in Maryland and Virginia; it is required in D.C., Alexandria, and Montgomery County. District residents must register in D.C.; non-residents operating their bicycles in D.C. may register in D.C. or in their own locality. To register, take bicycle and proof of ownership (if available), identification, and nominal fee to a local police or fire station during business hours.

BICYCLES ON METRORAIL

Anyone ages 12 and over can obtain a Metro Bike-on-Rail permit allowing transport of his/her bike on the trains after 7 p.m. weekdays and all day on weekends and holidays. Call WMATA, 202-962-1116.

CYCLING IN NATIONAL PARKS

The laws of the state in which the park is located generally apply. Some exceptions are: 15 mph speed limit in picnic areas, campgrounds, and parking areas; cycling permitted only on park roads and bike routes; and no bicycling two-abreast.