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STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2020

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A N A C T

RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES - HIGHWAY SAFETY ACT

Introduced By: Senators Euer, Conley, Archambault, and Valverde

Date Introduced: February 25, 2020

Referred To: Senate Judiciary

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 31-19-14 of the General Laws in Chapter 31-19 entitled "Operation  
2 of Bicycles" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **31-19-14. Turn and stop signals.**

4 (a) Except as provided in this section, a person riding a bicycle shall comply with § 31-16-  
5 5.

6 (b) A signal of intention to turn right or left when required shall be given continuously  
7 during not less than the last one hundred feet (100') traveled by the bicycle before turning, and shall  
8 be given while the bicycle is stopped waiting to turn. A signal by hand and arm need not be given  
9 continuously if the hand is needed in control or operation of the bicycle.

10 (c) A person operating a bicycle approaching a stop sign shall slow down and, if required  
11 for safety, stop before entering the intersection. After slowing to a reasonable speed or stopping,  
12 the person shall yield the right-of-way to any vehicle in the intersection or approaching on another  
13 highway so closely as to constitute an immediate hazard during the time the person is moving across  
14 or within the intersection or junction of highways. After slowing to a reasonable speed and yielding  
15 the right-of-way, if required, the person on a bicycle may cautiously make a turn or proceed through  
16 the intersection without stopping.

17 (d) A person operating a bicycle approaching a steady red traffic control light shall stop  
18 before entering the intersection and shall yield to all other traffic. Once the person has yielded,  
19 he/she may proceed straight through the steady red light with caution. Provided however, that a

1 person, after slowing to a reasonable speed and yielding the right-of-way, if required, may  
2 cautiously make a right-hand turn. A left-hand turn onto a one-way highway may be made on a red  
3 light after stopping and yielding to other traffic.

4 (e) A person riding a bicycle shall comply with the following:

5 (1) Both the approach for a right turn and the right turn shall be made as close as practicable  
6 to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway.

7 (2) When intending to turn left, the person on a bicycle shall approach the turn in the  
8 extreme left-hand lane lawfully available to traffic moving in the direction of travel. Whenever  
9 practicable, the left turn shall be made to the left of the center of the intersection so as to leave the  
10 intersection or other location in the extreme left-hand lane lawfully available to traffic moving in  
11 the same direction on the highway being entered.

12 (3) Where a special lane for making left turns by drivers proceeding in opposite directions  
13 has been indicated by traffic-control devices:

14 (i) A left turn shall not be made from any other lane;

15 (ii) A person operating a bicycle shall not ride in the lane except when preparing for or  
16 making a left turn from or into the highway or when preparing for or making a U-turn when  
17 otherwise permitted by law.

18 (f) A signal of intention to turn right or left shall be given during not less than the last one  
19 hundred feet (100') traveled by the bicycle before turning; provided that, a signal by hand and arm  
20 need not be given if the hand is needed in the control or operation of the bicycle.

21 (g) Nothing in this section shall relieve a person on a bicycle from the responsibility to  
22 yield the right-of-way to a pedestrian.

23 SECTION 2. Chapter 31-17 of the General Laws entitled "Right-of-Way" is hereby  
24 amended by adding thereto the following section:

25 **31-17-10. Yielding to person on a bicycle at crossings and intersections.**

26 (a) No driver of a motor vehicle shall pass any other motor vehicle which has stopped at a  
27 bicycle crossing to permit a person on a bicycle to cross, nor shall any such operator enter a marked  
28 bicycle crossing while a person on a bicycle is crossing or until there is a sufficient space beyond  
29 the bicycle crossing to accommodate the motor vehicle the person is operating, notwithstanding  
30 that a traffic control signal may indicate that vehicles may proceed.

31 (b) When traffic control signals are not in place or not in operation, the driver of a motor  
32 vehicle shall yield the right-of-way, slowing down or stopping if need be, to yield to a person on a  
33 bicycle crossing a roadway or intersection at a bicycle crossing marked, signed, or otherwise  
34 designated in accordance with standards established by the department including, but not limited

1 to, road crossings of bicycle or shared-use paths and intersection crossings of bicycle lanes, if the  
2 person on a bicycle is on that half of the traveled part of the way on which the vehicle is traveling  
3 or if the person on a bicycle approaches from the opposite half of the traveled part of the way to  
4 within ten feet (10') of that half of the traveled part of the way on which said vehicle is traveling.

5 (c) Any driver of a vehicle convicted of violating the provisions of this section shall be  
6 subject to the fines enumerated in § 31-41.1-4.

7 SECTION 3. Chapter 31-23 of the General Laws entitled "Equipment and Accessories  
8 Generally" is hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

9 **31-23-8.1. Aggressive honking.**

10 (a) Except as otherwise provided, no motor vehicle shall be equipped with and no person  
11 shall use upon a motor vehicle any siren, exhaust, compression or spark plug whistle and no person  
12 at any time shall use a horn otherwise than as a reasonable warning or make any unnecessary or  
13 unreasonable loud or harsh sound by means of a horn or other warning device. The driver of a  
14 motor vehicle shall, when reasonably necessary to insure safe operation, give audible warning with  
15 the horn but shall not otherwise use the horn for any other purpose. No driver of any motor vehicle  
16 shall use a horn:

17 (1) To make an unreasonably loud or harsh sound;

18 (2) When stationary; or

19 (3) When passing an animal-drawn vehicle or bicycle under normal conditions where no  
20 imminent danger of a collision exists.

21 (b) Violations of this section are subject to fines enumerated in § 31-41.1-4.

22 SECTION 4. Chapter 31-14 of the General Laws entitled "Speed Restrictions" is hereby  
23 amended by adding thereto the following section:

24 **31-14-14. Speed limits in thickly settled areas and business districts.**

25 (a) On a state highway inside a thickly settled or business district located in a city or town,  
26 the department shall establish and post a speed limit of twenty-five (25) miles per hour or a speed  
27 limit based on an engineering speed study in compliance with the Manual on Uniform Traffic  
28 Control Devices pursuant to chapter 13 of title 31.

29 (b) On a parkway inside a thickly settled or business district located in a city or town, the  
30 department of conservation and recreation shall establish and post a speed limit of twenty-five (25)  
31 miles per hour or a speed limit based on an engineering speed study in compliance with the Manual  
32 on Uniform Traffic Control Devices pursuant to chapter 13 of title 31.

33 (c) For the purposes of this section, thickly settled shall be defined as any area where  
34 buildings are fewer than two hundred feet (200') apart for a distance of one-eighth (1/8) of a mile

1 or more.

2 (d) Violations of this section are subject to fines enumerated in § 31-41.1-4.

3 SECTION 5. Chapter 31-27.1 of the General Laws entitled "Aggressive Driving" is hereby  
4 amended by adding thereto the following section:

5 **31-27.1-5. Reckless driver accountability traffic safety program.**

6 (a) There is hereby established a reckless driver accountability traffic safety program.

7 (b) The program shall feature classes, based on a restorative justice model, to educate  
8 reckless drivers on the impacts of their actions. The program shall be open to the public. The state  
9 may charge reasonable fees to pay for the administration of the reckless driver accountability  
10 program.

11 (c) Motor vehicles with five (5) or more automated traffic enforcement (ATE) or speeding  
12 violations, or three (3) or more speeding violations for driving twenty-one (21) miles per hour or  
13 more over the speed limit, within a three hundred, sixty-five (365) day period shall be subject to  
14 impoundment, unless the vehicle's owner enrolls in the reckless driver accountability program  
15 within ten (10) days after notification of the last violation and completes the class within ninety  
16 (90) days after the notification of the last violation. Any vehicle impounded pursuant to this section  
17 shall not be released until the vehicle's owner completes the reckless driver accountability program  
18 and pays all applicable towing and storage fees.

19 (d) The state shall notify, through certified mail, owners of motor vehicles with four (4)  
20 violations, or two (2) speeding violations for driving twenty-one (21) miles per hour or more over  
21 the speed limit, that their vehicle will be subject to impoundment following another violation,  
22 unless the owner voluntarily enrolls in the reckless driver accountability program within thirty (30)  
23 days after receiving the notification of the last violation and completes the class within one hundred  
24 twenty (120) days after the notification of the last violation.

25 (e) Following completion of the reckless driver accountability program, motor vehicles  
26 shall again be subject to impoundment by the state after receiving another five (5) ATE or speeding  
27 tickets, or another three (3) speeding violations for driving twenty-one (21) miles per hour or more  
28 over the sixty-five (65) mile per hour speed limit.

29 SECTION 6. Chapter 16-21 of the General Laws entitled "Health and Safety of Pupils" is  
30 hereby amended by adding thereto the following section:

31 **16-21-17.1. Curriculum for highway safety.**

32 (a) The department of elementary and secondary education shall develop and make  
33 available to public schools and public charter schools in Rhode Island an educational curriculum  
34 for children in the first through fifth grades regarding the safe use of public streets and premises

1 open to the public by pedestrians and bicyclists.

2 (b) At a minimum, the curriculum shall address:

3 (1) The safe use of bicycles;

4 (2) Traffic laws, regulations and best practices including, but not limited to, the use of the  
5 far hand reach when exiting a motor vehicle known as Dutch Reach;

6 (3) The use of bicycle lanes and trails; and

7 (4) Safe pedestrian practices.

8 SECTION 7. Title 31 of the General Laws entitled "MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES"  
9 is hereby amended by adding thereto the following chapter:

10 CHAPTER 19.6

11 REGULATION OF E-BICYCLES (E-BIKES)

12 **31-19.6-1. Regulation.**

13 E-bikes are to be regulated like bicycles. The same rules of the road apply to both e-bikes  
14 and human-powered bicycles.

15 **31-19.6-2. Exemption from certain requirements.**

16 E-bikes are not subject to the registration, licensing, or insurance requirements that apply  
17 to motor vehicles.

18 **31-19.6-3. Classes.**

19 There shall be three classes of e-bikes:

20 (1) Class 1: Bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is  
21 pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the e-bike reaches twenty (20) mph.

22 (2) Class 2: Bicycle equipped with a throttle-actuated motor that ceases to provide  
23 assistance when the e-bike reaches twenty (20) mph.

24 (3) Class 3: Bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is  
25 pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the e-bike reaches twenty-eight (28) mph.

26 **31-19.6-4. Helmets required - Age of operators.**

27 (a) Helmets are required for riders under fifteen (15) years of age for all three (3) classes  
28 of e-bike and for all riders of Class 3 e-bikes.

29 (b) Persons under sixteen (16) years of age may not ride a Class 3 e-bike (unless as a  
30 passenger).

31 **31-19.6-5. Municipal regulation.**

32 Local governments shall not restrict the use of Class 1 e-bikes; however, they are  
33 authorized to restrict the use of Class 2 and 3 e-bikes on bike paths.

1 SECTION 8. This act shall take effect on January 1, 2021.

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EXPLANATION  
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL  
OF

A N A C T

RELATING TO MOTOR AND OTHER VEHICLES - HIGHWAY SAFETY ACT

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1           This act would amend several chapters of the general laws regarding the operation of  
2 bicycles on state highways and interaction with motor vehicles, aggressive honking, regulation of  
3 E-bicycles, reckless driver accountability program and speed limits in thickly settled areas and  
4 business districts.

5           This act would take effect on January 1, 2021.

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