

Share the Road – Motorists are Partners Too

Share the Road partners are gearing up for Road Safety Week May 17th – 23rd, when they plan on getting out in the community to begin sharing their message of safety first on our roadways. The goal is to raise awareness amongst residents and visitors about the responsible and harmonious use of local roads and highways by all users, including motorists and cyclists.

When we speak about sharing the road with a variety of users we often hear that motorists are the bad guys. We tend to hear the horror stories about motorists driving too close to other road users and causing accidents; unnecessarily honking their horns causing cyclists to swerve into traffic and berating cyclists with abusive language. Truth is, these motorists are in the minority. Most motorists respect the rights of other road users, understand the rules of the road and acknowledge that there are other groups and individuals which have as much right to be out there on the road as they do. Unfortunately that message gets lost in the rhetoric which understandably follows the publicity about the incidents involving motorists and cyclists which all too often result in serious injury and sometimes death. These incidents often tend to reinforce the negative image that some may have about the conflicts which sometimes exist between motorists and cyclists and can dissuade many potential cyclists from participating in an activity which is both healthy and fun. So what can motorists do to dispel this negative image and promote harmonious use of our roads by all users?

Perhaps the buzz word in any share the road program is “**courtesy**”; courtesy on the part of all users including motorists. The old adage that “courtesy doesn’t cost anything” may be true but lack of courtesy on the road can cost plenty, even lives. Here are a few tips for motorists who can promote a harmonious relationship between motorists, cyclists and other road users.

Pass With Care

- Treat a bicycle as you would any slow moving vehicle. Pass only when the road ahead is clear.
- Slow down when passing especially if the road is narrow.
- Give at least one metre of space between you and a bicyclist when passing.
- Check over your shoulder before moving back into your travel lane to make sure you have left enough space.

Yield to Bicyclists

- When turning left yield to oncoming bicyclists. Experienced bicyclists can travel 30 to 40 km/hr and can be moving faster than you think.
- Do not make a right hand turn in front of bicyclists. Assume they are travelling through unless they signal otherwise.

Watch for Bicyclists

- Expect to see bicyclists on roads. Bicyclists may ride one metre from the road edge, but can occupy any part of the lane if safe to do so e.g. to turn left or to avoid obstacles. You may also see some cyclists riding 2 abreast or in groups.
- Check for bicyclists before opening your car door.
- Children on bicycles are often unpredictable.
- Expect the unexpected and drive with caution.

We all need to keep in mind that bicyclists are more vulnerable road users than motorists. They are smaller, quieter and have no “crumple zone”. A small mistake by a motorist can result in serious injury or death to a cyclist. As motorists let’s spread the message about share the road and ensure that all road users can enjoy a ride on the roads and highways of Simcoe County.

Remember. Same Roads – Same Rules – Same Rights.