

Rhode Island has joined the ranks of at least 15 states who now have a "safe passing" law in effect. The new law states that a motorist must pass a rider and leave "a distance that is sufficient to prevent contact with the person operating the bicycle if the person were to fall over into the driver's lane of traffic." Thanks to the efforts of a number of people, including Lori DiBiasio, the Warwick City Council, Representative Gemma, Senator Connors, various members of the Rhode Island Bicycle Coalition (RIBIKE) and numerous others, and over two years of work, Governor Carcieri allowed the new law to go into effect without signature. The law has been named by the legislature "Frank's Law" to honor the memory of Frank Cabral, a cyclist killed in September 2007. I wish to extend a thank you to all of the people who have been involved in getting this law passed.

As many of you know, Frank Cabral was killed on Route 1 while riding his bicycle by being struck from behind in the shoulder of the road by a person driving a car. The Attorney General, for unknown reasons, did not pursue criminal charges, and Lori DiBiasio has made it her mission to honor Frank by crusading to increase cyclist safety, and to ensure no one else is forced to endure the thought that a person on bicycle can be killed by a car whose driver does not carry any penalty.

In March of 2009, a number of area cyclists came together to discuss this issue and decide how to best support Lori's efforts to improve our protection. The conclusion reached at that meeting was that a non-trivial, mandatory penalty should be in effect and as a result, the former Providence Bike Coalition, now RIBIKE, endeavored to work with Rep. Gemma to get the draft house bill altered to be a general "vulnerable road user" law with a \$1,200 fine. The decision was also reached by those at the meeting that a 3-foot law, as originally proposed, was not desired, as it wasn't felt it provided any real protection to bicyclists. While this effort has not yet borne results, RIBIKE has resolved that they will continue to work with the legislature to get a stronger mandatory fine as well as broader protections for everyone who isn't in a car.

Most of us who have been working on this issue for the last two years are disappointed with the final law that has gone into effect. The penalty remains paltry, at \$85 for striking a cyclist if the motor vehicle is traveling faster than 15 mph. The only way in which we consider this a victory, really, is that it is now law and can be quoted and used to educate drivers on how better to interact with bicyclists.

Enforcement of non-existent Laws

On a very tangentially related note, I'm curious to know if anyone reading this has ever received a ticket in Rhode Island for riding two-abreast, or while cycling in general? If so, please drop me a line, I'd like to hear about your experience. While riding in the MS150 the last weekend of June, I was supremely annoyed to see a sign saying that cyclists should ride single-file as the local police had been writing tickets. After a quick review of the law, I cannot find any requirement that cyclists ride single file, only that they ride within a single lane and no more than two abreast as long as they are not impeding other traffic (RIGL § 31-19-7). One of the challenges in keeping our right to the road is making sure that law enforcement is enforcing laws that actually exist.

As always, if you see an opportunity to improve conditions for cyclists, be it a planning meeting, street design, or neighborhood association, please let me know by sending an email to advocacy@nbwclub.org.



"On your left" **How to pass other riders**

Sadly, many riders on the 2010 TFCE did not appear to know the etiquette of group riding.

Alert other riders as you are about to pass them.
It's the safest way to pass.

If you startle riders by passing without alerting them
you run the risk of them swerving into you.

**Pass on the left—only on the left—
and alert by saying "On your left"
or "Passing on your left".**