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H.540

Introduced by Representatives Burke of Brattleboro, Aswad of Burlington,
Courcelle of Rutland City, Edwards of Brattleboro, Krawczyk
of Bennington, Lanpher of Vergennes, McFaun of Barre Town,
Milkey of Brattleboro, Mrowicki of Putney, Potter of
Clarendon, Ram of Burlington, Shand of Weathersfield, Smith
of Mendon, Spengler of Colchester, Stevens of Shoreham,
Wizowaty of Burlington and Zuckerman of Burlington

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Motor vehicles; vulnerable users; passing; crowding; bicycles; lane
usage; hand signals; nighttime equipment

Statement of purpose: This bill proposes to:

- (1) set forth the standard of care for motor vehicles on a highway to pass
and share the road with “vulnerable users”;
- (2) specify hand signals used by bicyclists when turning right or left;
- (3) specify bicyclists’ use of left lanes under certain circumstances; and
- (4) specify use of equipment by bicyclists at nighttime.

An act relating to motor vehicles passing vulnerable users on the highway
and to bicycle operation

1 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

2 Sec. 1. 23 V.S.A. § 1033 is amended to read:

3 § 1033. PASSING ON THE LEFT MOTOR VEHICLES AND

4 VULNERABLE USERS

5 (a) ~~Vehicles~~ Passing motor vehicles. Motor vehicles proceeding in the
6 same direction may be overtaken and passed only as follows:

7 (1) The driver of a motor vehicle overtaking another motor vehicle
8 proceeding in the same direction may pass to its left at a safe distance, and
9 when so doing shall exercise due care, ~~may~~ shall not pass to the left of the
10 center of the highway unless the way ahead is clear of approaching traffic, and
11 shall not again drive to the right side of the roadway until safely clear of the
12 overtaken vehicle.

13 (2) Except when overtaking and passing on the right is permitted, the
14 driver of an overtaken motor vehicle shall give way to the right in favor of the
15 overtaking motor vehicle on audible signal and shall not increase the speed of
16 his or her vehicle until completely passed by the overtaking vehicle.

17 (b) Definition of vulnerable users. As used in this chapter, “vulnerable
18 user” means a pedestrian; a person operating a wheelchair; a person operating
19 a bicycle or other vehicle that is not a motor vehicle; a person on roller skates,
20 rollerblades, or roller skis; a highway worker; a person riding or herding an
21 animal; and a person operating a farm tractor or implement of husbandry.

1 (c) Passing vulnerable users. The operator of a motor vehicle approaching
2 or passing a vulnerable user shall exercise due care, which includes using
3 every reasonable precaution and increasing clearance from the vulnerable user,
4 to safely clear the vulnerable user.

5 Sec. 2. 23 V.S.A. § 1039 is amended to read:

6 § 1039. FOLLOWING TOO CLOSELY, CROWDING, AND
7 HARASSMENT

8 (a) The driver of a vehicle shall not follow another vehicle more closely
9 than is reasonable and prudent, having due regard for the speed of the vehicles
10 and the traffic upon, and the conditions of, the highway. The operator of a
11 vehicle shall not, in a careless or imprudent manner, approach, pass, or
12 maintain speed unnecessarily close to a vulnerable user, and an occupant of a
13 vehicle shall not throw any object or substance at a vulnerable user.

14 * * *

15 Sec. 3. 23 V.S.A. § 1065 is amended to read:

16 § 1065. HAND SIGNALS

17 (a) ~~All~~ A right or left turn shall not be made without first giving a signal of
18 intention either by hand or by signal in accordance with section 1064 of this
19 title. Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, all signals to indicate
20 change of speed or direction, when given by hand, shall be given from the left
21 side of the vehicle and in the following manner:

1 (1) Left turn. – Hand and arm extended horizontally.

2 (2) Right turn. – Hand and arm extended upward.

3 (3) Stop or decrease speed. – Hand and arm extended downward.

4 (b) ~~No turn to right or left may be made without first giving a signal of an~~
5 ~~intention to do so either by hand or by signal in accordance with section 1064~~
6 ~~of this title~~ A person operating a bicycle may give a right-turn signal by
7 extending the right hand and arm horizontally and to the right side of the
8 bicycle.

9 Sec. 4. 23 V.S.A. § 1127 is amended to read:

10 § 1127. CONTROL IN PRESENCE OF HORSES ~~AND~~ CATTLE, SHEEP,
11 AND GOATS

12 (a) ~~Whenever upon a public highway and approaching a vehicle drawn by a~~
13 ~~horse or other draft animal, or approaching a horse or other animal upon which~~
14 ~~a person is riding, the operator of a motor vehicle shall operate the vehicle in~~
15 ~~such a manner as to exercise every reasonable precaution to prevent the~~
16 ~~frightening of such horse or animal and to insure the safety and protection of~~
17 ~~the person riding or driving.~~

18 (b) The operator of a motor vehicle shall yield to any cattle, sheep, or goats
19 which are being herded or horses being ridden on or across a highway.

1 Sec. 5. 23 V.S.A. § 1139(a) is amended to read:

2 (a) A person operating a bicycle upon a roadway shall exercise due care
3 when passing a standing vehicle or one proceeding in the same direction and
4 generally shall ride as near to the right side of the roadway as practicable
5 ~~exercising due care when passing a standing vehicle or one proceeding in the~~
6 ~~same direction,~~ but shall ride to the left or in a left lane when:

7 (1) preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private roadway
8 or driveway;

9 (2) approaching an intersection with a right turn lane if not turning right
10 at the intersection;

11 (3) overtaking a slower vehicle; or

12 (4) taking reasonably necessary precautions to avoid hazards or road
13 conditions.

14 Sec. 6. 23 V.S.A. § 1141(a) is amended to read:

15 (a) ~~No~~ A person may shall not operate a bicycle at nighttime from one-half
16 hour after sunset until one-half hour before sunrise unless it is equipped with a
17 lamp on the front, which emits a white light visible from a distance of at least
18 500 feet to the front, and with a red reflector on the rear, which shall be visible
19 at least 300 feet to the rear when directly in front of lawful upper beams of
20 head lamps on a motor vehicle. Lamps emitting flashing or steady red lights
21 visible to the rear may be used in addition to the red reflector. In addition,

1 bicycles operated during these hours shall be equipped with either reflective,
2 rear-facing material on pedals or reflective, rear-facing ankle bands on the
3 bicyclist.

4 Sec. 7. REPEAL

5 23 V.S.A. § 1053 (passing pedestrians on a highway) is repealed.