

In accordance with An Act to Reduce Traffic Fatalities, MassDOT has developed a standard regulatory sign to remind drivers about the 4-foot minimum safe passing distance. While this distance applies to passing all vulnerable road users, the sign was created to emphasize passing bicyclists, who are likely to be the most common vulnerable road user that a motor vehicle operator will encounter.

The Safe Bicycle Passing sign has been designed in two different sizes. The standard sign is 24" x 30" and is suitable for roads with speed limits of 30 mph or less. A larger sign, 30" x 36", may be used on roads with speed limits of 35+ mph.

Safe Bicycle Passing signs of either size are designed to be installed on a single u-channel or square tube post. They should not be co-located on signposts with other regulatory, warning, or directional signs.

The use and placement of the Safe Bicycle Passing sign should be based upon an order of precedence. Existing regulatory signs that are site-specific such as Stop, Speed Limit, or a turn prohibition should have the highest priority. Warning signs such as those used for pedestrian crossings, curves, or school zones should have the next highest priority. Directional signs providing information on destinations or point of turn instructions should have the third highest priority. The Safe Bicycle Passing sign should be next in order. In most urban or lower speed roads, a minimum of 100' between any two signs is needed, regardless of priority. As posted roadway speed limits increase, sign spacing should increase accordingly. In the absence of official regulatory speed limits, the statutory (default) speed limit should be used to gauge the sign spacing.

The Safe Bicycle Passing sign will be most effective if used judiciously and in areas that will attract the most attention from drivers. As with all signs, if it is used excessively, it will lose its effectiveness. MassDOT recommends prioritizing higher volume or classification roads and other roads that are expected to attract bicyclists. When examining where on those roads to place the signs, the following locations should be considered:

- Areas of roads that have limited shoulder or bike lane width where a motor vehicle may have to cross the yellow center lines to safely pass a bicyclist.
- Roads that lack marked bicycle facilities, especially if marked bicycle facilities exist upstream.
- Business or commercial districts that have curbside parking.
- Downstream of traffic signals or other major intersections.
- Areas close to state borders where out-of-state drivers are typically found.

If the Safe Bicycle Passing sign is installed on or overhangs a sidewalk, the minimum height from the sidewalk to the bottom of the sign shall be 7'. If installed where no sidewalk is present, the height may be reduced to 5'.

Please note that this new law applies to all roadways, regardless of whether the Safe Bicycle Passing is posted. The sign is only a reminder to drivers of the rules of the road.