FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Where should bicyclists ride on the road?
California Vehicle Code 21202 states: Any person operating a bicycle upon a roadway at a speed less than the normal speed of traffic moving in the same direction at that time shall ride as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway except under any of the following situations:

- When overtaking and passing another bicycle or vehicle proceeding in the same direction.
- When preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway.
- When reasonably necessary to avoid conditions (including, but not limited to, fixed or moving objects, vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, animals, surface hazards, or substandard width lanes) that make it unsafe to continue along the right-hand curb or edge, subject to the provisions of Section 21656. For purposes of this section, a “substandard width lane” is a lane that is too narrow for a bicycle and a vehicle to travel safely side by side within the lane.
- When approaching a place where a right turn is authorized.
- Any person operating a bicycle upon a roadway of a highway, which highway carries traffic in one direction only and has two or more marked traffic lanes, may ride as near the left-hand curb or edge of that roadway as practicable.
- The phrase “ride as close as practicable to the right hand curb” does not mean ride as close as possible. In essence, it means to ride as close as deemed safe. Shoulder conditions vary and are not constructed to the same engineering specifications as the roadway.

What safety equipment must one have for riding a bicycle?
Children under the age of 18 are required by California law to wear a helmet when riding on public streets or public paths (California Vehicle Code 21212) and it is optional (but recommended) for adults.

California Vehicle Code 21201 has a list of safety equipment that are required on bicycles, including:

- A brake that will enable the operator to make one braked wheel skid on dry, level, clean pavement
- No person shall operate on the highway a bicycle equipped with handlebars so raised that the operator must elevate his hands above the level of his shoulders in order to grasp the normal steering grip area.
What are the rules about the bike lanes?
Bicycles are required to ride in bicycle lanes provided they are traveling at a speed less than the normal speed of traffic moving in the same direction at the same time (California Vehicle Code 21208). This means if there is no traffic, or very slow traffic where the bicyclist is at the same or faster speed than motor vehicle traffic they can leave the bike lane and occupy the travel lane. Other times they can leave the bicycle lane include:

- When overtaking and passing another bicycle, vehicle, or pedestrian within the lane or about to enter the lane if the overtaking and passing cannot be done safely within the lane.
- When preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway.
- When reasonably necessary to leave the bicycle lane to avoid debris or other hazardous conditions.
- When approaching a place where a right turn is authorized.
- No person operating a bicycle shall leave a bicycle lane until the movement can be made with reasonable safety and then only after giving an appropriate signal in the manner provided in Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 22100) in the event that any vehicle may be affected by the movement.

What is a “Cycle track?”
A Cycle track is a common term for a class IV “separated bikeway” (the official term used by Caltrans). A class IV bikeway (separated bikeway) is for the exclusive use of bicycles and includes a physical separation between the bikeway and vehicular traffic. The separation may include, but is not limited to, grade separation, flexible posts, inflexible posts, inflexible barriers, or on-street parking.

What is a complete street? Are cities required to implement Complete Streets?
A complete street is a street that is planned, designed, operated, and maintained to provide safe mobility for all users, including bicyclists, pedestrians, and persons with disabilities, appropriate to the function and context of the street. You often may hear designing for ages 8-80, meaning the roadways are complete when they are designed for people of all ages and abilities, it is complete.

AB1358 (Leno-2008) requires cities and counties to incorporate Complete Streets when substantively updating the circulation element of their General Plan.

California Law mandates that vehicles must leave at least three feet of space between themselves and bicyclists when passing. If there is not sufficient space to pass, vehicles must wait until there is three feet distance to safely pass.