

Motorized Foot Scooters

A new law passed in the 2005 legislative session ([Laws 2005, chapter 135](#)) generally gives to motorized foot scooters the same rights and responsibilities as bicycles on streets and highways. This law takes effect August 1, 2005.

What is a “motorized foot scooter”?

The new law defines “motorized foot scooters” as vehicles that:

- ▶ have handlebars;
- ▶ can be either stood on or sat on by the operator (saddle optional);
- ▶ are powered by an electric motor or internal combustion engine that is capable of powering the device with or without human propulsion; and
- ▶ have either (1) wheels no more than 10 inches in diameter, or (2) an engine that is capable of a maximum speed of not more than 15 miles per hour on a flat surface.

What is and isn’t included?

Most devices generally regarded as “scooters” that have some type of motor are included in the definition of “motorized foot scooter.” However, the new law doesn’t cover some other devices that are sometimes referred to as motorized scooters or motor scooters. These include the following:

- ▶ “Step-through” motor scooters such as Vespas and similar vehicles. These must be registered as motorcycles. Operators must have a driver’s license with a motorcycle endorsement and must wear a helmet if under age 18.
- ▶ Many “pocket bikes” and “mini-choppers” that have wheels over 10 inches and a speed capability over 15 mph. These too are treated as motorcycles.
- ▶ Motorized bicycles or “mopeds,” which are bicycles that also have attached electric or liquid-fuelled motors and have a maximum speed capability of 30 mph. These must be registered as motorized bicycles and can be operated on either a driver’s license or a motorized bicycle permit.
- ▶ “Segways” (human transporters), which are exempt from registration and require no driver’s license.

Motorized foot scooters are treated as bicycles

The new law generally treats motorized foot scooters as bicycles, meaning that their operators have the same rights and responsibilities as bicyclists. This means that these vehicles may be operated on streets and highways without a driver’s license and without the vehicle being registered, licensed, or insured.

Drivers of motorized foot scooters must follow certain operating rules

There are some operating rules for motorized foot scooters that apply whenever the vehicle is operated on a public street or highway.

Sidewalks. Motorized scooters may not be operated on sidewalks except when necessary to go on or off adjacent property.

Passengers. A motorized scooter cannot carry anyone but the operator.

Helmets. An operator of a motorized scooter who is under age 18 must wear a helmet approved by the Department of Public Safety.

Minimum age. A person must be at least 12 years old to operate a motorized scooter on public streets and highways.

Lights. A motorized scooter must have a headlight and taillight that meet Department of Public Safety standards if it is operated when lights are required on vehicles (from sunset to sunrise, and whenever weather or other atmospheric conditions such as fog or smoke reduce visibility to 500 feet).

Riding. Operators must ride as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway, except to pass another vehicle or avoid impediments. The operator of a motorized scooter making a left turn must dismount at the right-hand curb and cross the roadway on foot; that person is also subject to any pedestrian restrictions. Riders must ride in the same direction as adjacent traffic, even when on a shoulder. Riders may ride up to two abreast.

Bicycle paths, bicycle lanes, and bicycle trails. Motorized foot scooters may be operated on bicycle paths, bicycle lanes, bicycle trails, and bikeways unless (1) the path, lane, trail, or bikeway is reserved exclusively for nonmotorized traffic, or (2) the path, lane, trail, or bikeway is under local jurisdiction and that local jurisdiction prohibits their use.

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