

## 5: TRAFFIC BASICS

### RIDING PREDICTABLY

On the street, most motorists follow traffic rules. Traffic flows smoothly because all the drivers can predict what each other will do. A collision usually happens only when someone does something abnormal.

When you ride in traffic, you can maneuver better than the cars around you. You might be tempted to ignore traffic rules—but don't! **This is how most bicyclists get into crashes.** When you break traffic laws you put yourself in danger: Motorists and other cyclists won't know what you'll do next, making it harder to avoid you and prevent a crash. But if you *act like a vehicle*—signaling turns, turning from the correct lanes, and stopping at red lights—*drivers can predict what you'll do.*

**Being predictable is the key to safe bicycling in traffic.** And if you follow traffic rules, motorists will come to respect bicyclists as drivers of vehicles—which is how Illinois law says bicyclists should act. **5** (See the back cover for details.)

Here are the basic rules for riding predictably:

**Get Smart:** Know the traffic rules you should follow and when others should yield to you. See "Traffic Rules for Cyclists," below.

**Be Confident:** Learn riding skills so you don't hesitate in traffic, and always be courteous. See "How to Learn Traffic Skills," page 12.

**Communicate:** Make eye contact, signal your moves, and wave when someone yields. See "Communicating," page 13.

### TRAFFIC RULES FOR CYCLISTS

You probably know that a red octagon means "stop." **6** But Illinois requires you, as a bicyclist, to know and obey **all** of the state's traffic signals and pavement markings. To learn these, read "Rules of the Road," a free booklet from the Secretary of State. Get a copy at any driver's license test office, or have one mailed by calling 800/252-8980.

**Messengers:** Some areas have other rules that apply only to bike messengers (e.g., messengers must wear helmets or display identification). Contact local officials to find out.

**Right of Way:** "Right of way" means permission to go ahead of somebody else. As a bicyclist, you must give right of way in the same situations that motorists do. If you don't know when to yield to pedestrians and other vehicles, read "Rules of the Road."

