

LANE SPLITTING – SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT



Any commuter in any of New Zealand's major cities has likely witnessed motorcyclists travelling between queued traffic on busy roads during peak commuter traffic times. This practice, known as lane splitting, is the cause of an amount of friction between motorcyclists and other road users.

Over and above the potential safety issues, there is some confusion on whether or not lane splitting is legal on New Zealand roads. The short answer is –it depends!

The following outlines the legal situation, and also offers some advice on keeping yourself safe should you, as a motorcycle rider, elect to lane split.

Lane splitting falls within the overtaking rules as found in the Land Transport (Road User) Rule 2004.

2.6 General requirements about passing other vehicles

- (1) A driver must not pass or attempt to pass another vehicle moving in the same direction unless—
 - (a) the movement can be made with safety; and
 - (b) the movement is made with due consideration for other users of the road; and
 - (c) sufficient clear road is visible to the driver for the passing movement to be completed without impeding or being likely to impede any possible opposing traffic; and

(d) until the passing movement is completed, the driver has a clear view of the road and any traffic on the road for at least 100m in the direction in which the driver is travelling.

- (2) Sub clauses (1) (c) and (d) does not apply if the passing vehicle and the vehicle being passed are in different lanes and are, throughout the passing movement, either on a one-way road or on the same side of the centre line.
- (3) A driver must not, when passing another vehicle moving in the same direction, move into the line of passage of that vehicle until the manoeuvre can be made safely and without impeding the movement of that other vehicle.

» What it means

Overtaking can be completed at any time provided you don't impede oncoming traffic, have 100 metres clear view of traffic throughout the manoeuvre, don't cut off the vehicle being overtaken when you pull back into the lane and can complete the manoeuvre with due consideration for other road users. The speed limit for the area must also be complied with. If travelling in separate lanes you may overtake on either the left or right provided you remain in your lane.

2.7 Passing on right

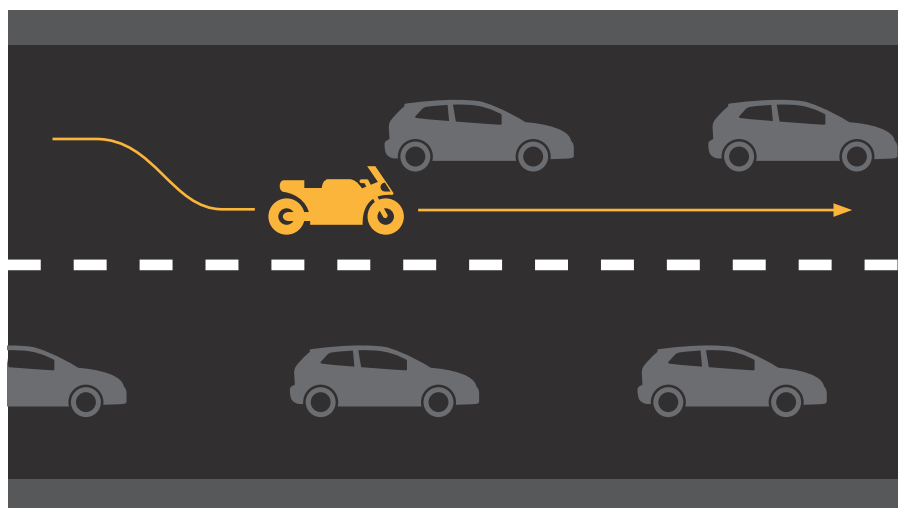
A driver must not pass or attempt to pass on the right of another vehicle moving in the same direction when—

- (a) approaching or crossing an intersection unless—
 - (i) the roadway is marked in lanes and the driver can make the movement without the driver's vehicle encroaching on a lane available for opposing traffic; or
 - (ii) in any other case, the driver can make the movement with safety and with due consideration for users of the intersecting road; or
- (b) approaching or passing a flush median, unless the driver—
 - (i) intends to turn right from the road marked with the flush median into another road or vehicle entrance; or
 - (ii) has turned right onto the road marked with the flush median; or
 - (iii) can make the entire movement without encroaching on the flush median.

»What it means

Overtaking approaching an intersection may only be performed if the manoeuvre can be made without entering lanes available for oncoming traffic, and can be made safely with consideration for other road users. On roads marked with a flush median, the median is not available as an overtaking lane. Flush medians can only be driven on if you intend turning into a side road or driveway, or have pulled out from a side road and are using the flush median to merge with traffic.

You may overtake on the right if you remain completely in the lane you are travelling in.



2.8 Passing on left

- (1) A driver must not pass or attempt to pass on the left of another vehicle moving in the same direction except in accordance with this clause.
- (2) In any case in which the movement referred to sub clause (1) may be made,—
 - (a) the 2 vehicles must be in different lanes; or
 - (b) the overtaken vehicle must be stationary or its driver must have given or be giving the prescribed signal of that driver's intention to turn right; or
 - (c) if the overtaken vehicle is a light rail vehicle moving in the same direction, the light rail vehicle must not be—
 - (i) signalling an intention to turn left or to stop; or
 - (ii) stationary for the purposes of allowing passengers to alight or board.

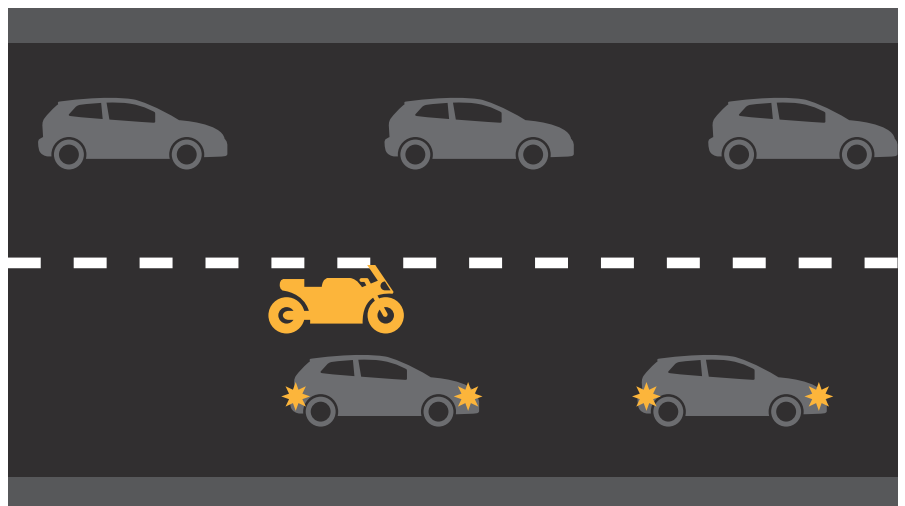
- (3) If the roadway is marked in lanes, the driver may make the movement referred in sub clause (1) only if the driver's vehicle does not encroach on a lane that is unavailable to a driver.

»What it means

You may overtake on the left if the vehicles being overtaken are stationary or are indicating a right hand turn. You may also overtake on the left if travelling in separate lanes.



Image by MSAC





Safety Considerations Be Safe - Be Seen!

Driving is a busy task. There is much to do and much to observe. Motorcycles are difficult to see in busy traffic situations, especially when placed in positions other drivers wouldn't expect to see them. While most commuter drivers have become accustomed to motorcycles lane splitting, you as a rider have no idea of who is driving that car ahead of you. It may be their first time in busy traffic and they may not expect to be overtaken.

Do all you can to be seen by other motorists, and concentrate on what you are doing. Keep a good lookout for vehicles changing lanes and be aware of the blind-spot all vehicles have.

Speed difference is the main cause of tension between motorcyclists and other road users when lane splitting. While most drivers will make room for motorcycles, they do need time to see and react to you. Those riders who elect to lane split at high speed do nothing for the reputation of the majority of motorcyclists and place themselves and other road users at risk. By traveling at a sensible speed

other drivers have a chance to see you and on most occasions, will move to give you more room to get past easily.

Motorcycling is gaining in popularity. Unfortunately, as more bikes take to the road more crashes occur. Do all you can to stay safe and enjoy your two wheel experience!

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