



# Share the Road for a Healthy Maine



## Problem

Barriers to bicycling in Maine included concerns about real and perceived safety issues, limited roadway space, and inadequate funding for improving roadways and building more trails. The Bicycle Coalition of Maine wanted to use public education and awareness to change behavior to make the existing infrastructure safer immediately. Although a multifaceted statewide “Share the Road” campaign existed in Maine, the public had limited exposure to this information through popular media.

## Background

Beginning in 1996 the Bicycle Coalition of Maine (BCM) began a statewide Share the Road campaign that through the years has included popular bumper stickers, drivers education instructor training, additions to the Maine Motorist Handbook and Maine Driver’s Exam, and general education at various venues. In 2000 an independent videographer helped the BCM produce four different Share the Road television public safety announcements, but these aired only intermittently.

In 2005 the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) selected the Bicycle Coalition of Maine to research, produce, and broadcast Share the Road messages in the greater Portland region. (This project was one of four Share the Road pilot projects; the others were headed by the Utah Department of Public Safety/Highway Safety Office, the City of Clearwater [FL] Parks and Recreation, and the Marin County Bicycle Coalition. Information on Marin County’s project can be found at <http://www.marinbike.org/Campaigns/ShareTheRoad/Index.shtml>).

## Solution

The “Share the Road for a Healthy Maine” project was built on a three-piece framework:

1. data collection to identify what motorists and bicyclists already knew about sharing the road, and how and when they got their information
2. using the data to design targeted, compelling messages and deliver them efficiently
3. evaluation to determine changes in awareness and behavior.

The BCM collaborated with several partners to develop each piece of the framework. The Center for Research and Evaluation (CRE) at the University of Maine helped to design surveys and analyze the resulting data. The New England School of Communication (NESCom) assisted with message design, media consultation, and voiceover work in the TV and radio ads. The Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) allowed the BCM to distribute surveys in two Greater Portland BMV offices. Other entities also helped with survey distribution (AAA, the Bureau of Highway Safety, colleges, universities, senior and community centers, and Portland Public Schools’ Office of Multicultural and Multilingual Programs).

Survey data showed no significant difference in existing knowledge between specific target groups (drivers ages 15-25, drivers over 65, immigrant groups) and the general population before the campaign was launched. The research helped the BCM decide on several key educational messages; NESCom and the local NBC affiliate developed radio, print and TV spots around these. The BCM and its partners planned a two-week blitz of consistent messages deployed through the media — television, radio, print and the Web — that the survey had shown to be most important to the target groups.

# Share the Road for a Healthy Maine — Portland, ME

The messages focused on these main points:

- “Same Roads, Same Rules, Same Rights”
- etiquette for motorists (yield when turning, slow down and allow three feet of clearance, no honking, no dooring)
- etiquette for bicyclists (obey all traffic laws and signals, ride on the right, signal turns, use lights at night)

## Results

Over a span of two weeks in May 2006, a targeted media blitz of the Greater Portland area rolled out 115 television ads, 276 radio spots, 10 newspaper ads and 300,000 Web impressions. Positive anecdotal evidence suggested that the campaign made a big impression and helped motorists and bicyclists in Maine share the road. The reliability of post-campaign surveys showing inconclusive results was called into question because of significant delays, changes in post-surveying methodology, and personnel changes at the survey evaluator. Even without clear-cut evaluation results, the BCM gleaned valuable information regarding the message content and partnerships needed to expand the program state-wide. There are no plans for future evaluation.

The campaign was updated and expanded statewide in 2007 with help from a celebrity spokesperson Eric Weinrich (one of the National Hockey League’s best known players, an avid cyclist, and new BCM board member) and funding from the Bureau of Highway Safety and the MaineDOT.

## Costs

The BCM received \$50,000 from NHTSA and an additional \$20,000 from the MaineDOT over the two-year project. The bulk of the grant was spent on media buys. The BCM’s partners contributed in-kind to the project with discounts on their fees, costs, and labor.

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The Bicycle Coalition of Maine used bold graphics and concise wording to publish its Share the Road message.

For more information, please visit the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center Web site at [www.walkinginfo.org](http://www.walkinginfo.org).

