



Legislation Text

File #: ORD. 2026-088, Version: 1

To amend City Code § 27-197, concerning parking prohibitions in specified places, for the purpose of clarifying the definition of the term “bicycle lane” and authorizing certain emergency medical services providers to move vehicles from prohibited areas.

THE CITY OF RICHMOND HEREBY ORDAINS:

§ 1. That section 27-197 of the Code of the City of Richmond be and is hereby **amended** and reordained as follows:

Sec. 27-197. Parking prohibited in specified places.

(a) No person shall park a vehicle, except as may be permitted in accordance with Chapter 24, Article II, Division 4.1 or when necessary to avoid conflict with other traffic or in compliance with the directions of a police officer or traffic control device, in any of the following places:

- (1) On a sidewalk.
- (2) In front of a public or private driveway.
- (3) Within an intersection.
- (4) Within 15 feet of a fire hydrant.
- (5) On a crosswalk.
- (6) Within 20 feet of a crosswalk at an intersection.
- (7) In front of a ramp leading to the crosswalk at an intersection or located at any other point along a curb, constructed for use of persons with disabilities.
- (8) Within 30 feet upon the approach to any flashing beacon, stop sign or traffic control signal located at the side of a roadway.
- (9) Between a safety zone and the adjacent curb or within 30 feet of points on the curb immediately opposite the ends of a safety zone, unless a different length is indicated by official signs or markings.
- (10) Within 50 feet of the nearest rail of a railroad grade crossing.
- (11) Within 15 feet of the driveway entrance to any fire station and on the side of a street opposite the entrance to any fire station within 75 feet of the entrance when properly signposted.
- (12) Alongside or opposite any street excavation or obstruction where such parking would obstruct traffic.
- (13) On the roadway side of any vehicle parked at the edge or curb of a street.
- (14) At any place where official signs prohibit parking or during street cleaning.
- (15) At any place where an order, rule, or regulation issued under section 2-428 prohibits or restricts parking.
- (16) On a curb, or with any wheels off of the roadway and on the far side of the curb from the roadway.
- (17) On a median.
- (18) Within a bicycle lane. For purposes of this subdivision, the term “bicycle lane” [has the meaning ascribed to that term in Code of Virginia, §46.2-100] means that portion of a roadway designated by signs and/or pavement markings for the protection and preferential use of bicycles, electric power-assisted bicycles, motorized skateboards or scooters, and mopeds.

(b) No person other than a police officer or a licensed or certified emergency medical services provider shall move a vehicle into any such prohibited area or away from a curb such distance as is unlawful; start or cause to be started the motor of any motor vehicle; or shift, change or move the levers, brake, starting device, gears or other mechanism of a parked motor vehicle to a position other than that in which it was left by the owner or driver thereof or attempt to do so.

§ 2. This ordinance shall be in force and effect upon adoption.

DATE: March 23, 2026

TO: The Honorable Members of City Council

THROUGH: RJ Warren, Council Chief of Staff

THROUGH: Will Perkins, Senior Legislative Services Manager

THROUGH: Sophie McGinley, Council Policy Analyst

THROUGH: Sven Philipsen, Council Liaison

FROM: The Honorable Katherine Jordan, Councilmember 2nd District

RE: To amend § 27-197, concerning parking prohibitions in specified places, for the purpose of clarifying that the buffer area of a bicycle lane is included within the area in which parking is prohibited and authorizing emergency medical technicians (EMTs), in addition to police officers, to move vehicles into such prohibited areas when necessary in the course of official duties.

CNL-2026-0020

PURPOSE: Patron requests to amend City Code § 27-197, concerning parking prohibitions in specified places, to (i) clarify that any painted buffer area of a bicycle lane is included within the area in which parking is prohibited, thereby improving enforceability and enhancing safety for bicyclists, and (ii) authorize emergency medical technicians (EMTs), in addition to police officers, to move vehicles into such prohibited areas when necessary in the performance of their official duties.

BACKGROUND: Ordinance 2019-315 amended Sec. 27-197 to prohibit parking within a bicycle lane and, for purposes of that prohibition, adopted by reference the definition of “bicycle lane” contained in Code of Virginia § 46.2-100. That state definition focuses on the portion of roadway designated for the preferential use of bicycles. In practice, several streets in Richmond - including 1st Street, Brook Road, East Franklin Street, Malvern Avenue, and Patterson Avenue - contain parking-protected buffered bike lanes with painted buffer areas intended to provide horizontal separation between parked vehicles and the bicycle travel lane. The City does not currently issue citations for vehicles parked in the buffered area.

The Federal Highway Administration’s Separated Bike Lane Planning and Design Guide, which informs Virginia bicycle facility standards (VDOT Complete Streets: Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Guidelines, Bus Stop Design and Parking Guidelines), states that “a minimum 3 ft buffer should be used adjacent to parking.” The guidance explains that while parked cars are not a barrier type on their own, they can provide an additional

level of protection and comfort for bicyclists when properly separated from the bicycle travel lane. A minimum three-foot buffer is required to allow for the safe opening of vehicle doors (Federal Highway Administration Separated Bike Lane Planning And Design Guide). The FHA Guide further recommends pairing this horizontal buffer with vertical elements such as periodic delineator posts and cautions against barrier types that obstruct door opening or create tripping hazards. The buffer is therefore intended to remain clear as protective space, not to be used for parking.

The City of Richmond Department of Public Works has received multiple 311 requests regarding vehicles parking within buffered bike lanes and buffer areas, particularly along Brook Road, forcing cyclists into vehicular traffic and creating safety hazards. Additional requests document repeated incidents of vehicles driving through buffer areas and knocking down delineator posts. National research indicates that “dooring” incidents account for approximately 3% to 10% of cyclist injury collisions, underscoring the importance of maintaining adequate buffer space between parked vehicles and bicycle travel lanes (Descriptive Analysis of Cyclist Dooring Events Using Data from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System).

Currently, Sec. 27-197 defines “bicycle lane” by reference to Code of Virginia § 46.2-100. This amendment would instead include the definition directly within the City Code using the same language contained in the state definition, with the addition of the word “protection.” This clarification ensures that areas designated by pavement markings or signs to protect bicycle travel, including buffered bike lanes, are included within the scope of the parking prohibition. The amendment also clarifies that only police officers or EMTs may move vehicles into such prohibited areas, when necessary, in the course of their duties.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: This request is informed by recurring RVA 311 requests over the past year and a half regarding vehicles parking within buffered bike lanes and painted buffer areas, particularly along Brook Road. Requests include DPW000169933 (April 5, 2024), documenting daily parking violations near 2017 Brook Road that force cyclists into vehicular traffic, and DPW000162456 (January 6, 2024), noting that delineator posts were not replaced following repaving, resulting in drivers parking in the bike lane. Additional 311 reports since 2024 (including DPW000170365, DPW000163227, DPW000188443, DPW000188597, DPW000188441, DPW000188440, and DPW000191878) document repeated instances of drivers traveling through the buffer and striking delineator posts.

ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC INITIATIVES: This amendment directly advances key goals within the City of Richmond’s Mayoral Action Plan (MAP), which translates the Mayor’s seven pillars for a thriving Richmond into measurable goals and outcomes across city policy areas. The MAP pillars include a Thriving and Sustainable Built Environment focused on improved multimodal transportation, and safe, connected infrastructure that meets the needs of all residents; as well as Thriving Neighborhoods and Public Safety and

Preparedness objectives centered on preventing harm and enhancing mobility for people in every part of the city. Specifically, this ordinance supports:

- **Goal E: Make it easier for residents to get around by walking, rolling, riding, or taking the bus.** Enhancing bicycle facility function and safety by clarifying parking prohibitions in buffered bike lanes aligns with the Map’s commitment to a Thriving and Sustainable Built Environment that prioritizes multimodal transportation and reduces barriers to active travel. When bicycle lanes are kept clear of parked cars - including the protective buffer area - cyclists experience fewer conflicts with motor vehicles, and routes become more reliable and predictable for all ages and abilities. This is consistent with the Mayor’s emphasis on a transportation network that supports alternatives to driving, including biking and walking, as a core measure of mobility improvements citywide.
- **Goal D: Keep our neighborhoods safe and prepared.** By explicitly including the buffer area of bicycle facilities in the City’s parking prohibition, the amendment strengthens enforcement tools to prevent “dooring” - a known crash mechanism where a bicycle rider is struck by a suddenly opened car door. Clear enforcement language ensures that safe design elements, such as the minimum 3-foot buffer required to allow for safe door openings, remain functional rather than occupied by parked vehicles. This builds on the MAP’s public safety objectives by proactively reducing preventable collisions and improving conditions for vulnerable road users.

FISCAL IMPACT: Minimal. Implementation may require internal education and communication among enforcement staff to clarify the updated definition and enforcement parameters; however, these efforts can be accommodated within existing departmental operations and are not expected to result in significant additional costs.

DESIRED EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon adoption

REQUESTED INTRODUCTION DATE: April 13, 2026

CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING DATE: April 27, 2026

REQUESTED AGENDA: Consent

RECOMMENDED COUNCIL COMMITTEE: Land Use, Housing, and Transportation

AFFECTED AGENCIES: Richmond Police Department
Department of Public Works

RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING ORD. OR RES.: Amends and builds upon Ord. 2019-315.

ATTACHMENTS: Buffered_Bike_Lane_Design_Specification.pdf
Screenshots_of_Parking_in_Buffers.pdf

STAFF: Sophie McGinley, Council Policy Analyst (804-646-5862)