



HB1289 – Bicycle Operation at Intersections

House Environment & Transportation Committee

March 14, 2023

Position: Support

Greetings Chair and Members of the Committee

Our mission is to promote bicycling, increase safety, improve conditions, and provide a voice for bicyclists in Maryland. We partner with advocacy organizations to promote vulnerable road user safety legislation on the state and county level and work with government agencies, including police departments, to develop policy and awareness campaigns that protect the rights and well-being of bicyclists and pedestrians in Maryland.

We the undersigned represent multiple community-based organizations advocating for safe biking, walking and active transportation, submit this testimony on behalf of tens of thousands of members across the State of Maryland.

As bicycling has increased in popularity across the United States and provides many environmental, economic, and health benefits, there is a need for creating a safe transportation system which makes people the priority; using all available tools to help achieve zero injuries and fatalities on our roadways and allowing all people to get to their destinations safely. HB1289 will help with this effort by authorizing cyclists to slow down and yield when appropriate during a turn or proceeding through an intersection.

There are currently 8 states and the District of Columbia that have Stop-As-Yield laws on their books, five of which enacted these laws in the past two years ([NHTSA Bicyclist Stop As Yield Fact Sheet, 2022](#)). In 1982, Idaho was the first State to pass such a law, commonly known as the "Idaho Stop Law." After Idaho adopted the law, bicyclist injuries from traffic crashes declined by 14.5% the following year ([Bicycle Safety and Choice, Meggs 2010](#)). In our neighboring state, the "Delaware Yield" led to decreases in traffic crashes involving bicyclists at stop sign intersections by 23% in the 30 months after the law's passage ([Delaware Yield Crash Data, 2020](#)).

By permitting cyclists to retain a modest amount of forward momentum, the law makes it easier for drivers to see cyclists since the human mind is keenly attuned to detecting moving rather than stationary objects. And by reducing the time that cyclists are in the intersections, they are able to enter and exit intersections more quickly than if they were required to come to a

complete stop. These laws do not negate a bicyclist's responsibility to yield to other traffic before crossing an intersection or to follow all work zone traffic rules.

This bill will help to advance Maryland's Vision Zero goals by enhancing the safety and protection of cyclists, and have the added benefits of positively impacting our environment and promoting multi-modal and active transportation in our state.

We request that the committee support the passage of HB1289.

Bicycle Advocates for Annapolis & Anne Arundel County (BikeAAA)
Bike Maryland
Bikemore
Bike HoCo
East Coast Greenway Alliance
Frederick Bicycle Coalition
Montgomery Bicycle Advocates (MoBike)
Potomac Pedalers Touring Club
Washington Area Bicyclist Association (WABA)
Worcester County Bike and Pedestrian Coalition

Traffic Safety Facts



Bicyclist “Stop-As-Yield” Laws and Safety Fact Sheet

Background

Fatalities in traffic crashes involving bicyclists and other cyclists continue to rise. From 2011 to 2020, bicyclist and other cyclist fatalities increased by 38% from 682 in 2011 to 938 in 2020 (Stewart, 2022). In 2020, 26% of bicyclist and other cyclist fatalities occurred at intersections, which are extremely hazardous for bicyclists and present a high risk for crashes where bicyclists cross paths with motorists (NHTSA, 2022).

Bicycling has increased in popularity across the United States and provides many environmental, economic, and health benefits. Further, people in low-income, marginalized communities and communities of color may rely on biking as their primary mode of transportation. A safe transportation system makes people the priority and is designed to accommodate the mistakes people make. This approach requires all road users to work together using all available tools to help achieve zero injuries and fatalities on our Nation’s roadways. The ultimate goal is a transportation system that allows all people to get to their destinations safely.

Communities across the United States have been exploring ways to increase bicyclist safety and reduce confusion in potentially hazardous and high-risk situations. Many States have enacted bicycle safety laws to enhance safety and protect all road users. For example, bicyclist stop-as-yield laws allow bicyclists to treat stop signs as yield signs and/or red-light signals as stop signs. These laws allow bicyclists to mitigate risk to their advantage. “Stopping discourages bicycling, substantially increasing time, energy expenditure, discomfort, risk of collisions, and risk for strain and overuse injuries” (Tekle, 2017).

In 1982, Idaho was the first State to pass such a law, commonly known as the “Idaho Stop Law.” The law allows bicyclists to yield at stop signs and proceed when safe, rather than come to a complete stop. After Idaho adopted the law, bicyclist injuries from traffic crashes declined by 14.5% the following year (Meggs, 2010). In



2017, Delaware adopted a similar, limited stop-as-yield law, known as the "Delaware Yield." Traffic crashes involving bicyclists at stop sign intersections fell by 23% in the 30 months after the law’s passage, compared to the previous 30 months. Eight States (Arkansas, Delaware, Idaho, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Utah, and Washington) have similar laws. Colorado passed a law in 2018 that allowed local municipalities to adopt standard language on safe bicycle yielding at stops. Table 1 shows a summary of State law characteristics. These laws do not negate a bicyclist’s responsibility to yield to other traffic before crossing an intersection or to follow all work zone traffic rules. State laws vary, so bicyclists must be sure to know the laws in their State.

Table 1. List of States With Stop-As-Yield Laws

State	Enacted	Yield At Stop Sign	Red Signal As Stop Sign
Arkansas (§ 27.51-1803)	2019	Yes	Yes
Delaware (§ 4196A)	2017	Yes	No
Idaho (§ 49-720)	1982	Yes	Yes
North Dakota (§ 39-10.1-05.1)	2021	Yes	No
Oklahoma (§ 47.11-202.1)	2021	Yes	Yes
Oregon (§ 683.1)	2020	Yes	No
Utah (§ 41-6a-902 & § 41-6a-1105)	2021	Yes	Yes
Washington (§ 46.61.190)	2020	Yes	No

Benefits: Safety, Environmental, and Transportation Impact

The benefits of bicycling extend beyond personal and physical, to environmental benefits that can lead to healthier, quieter, cleaner, and safer streets. Fewer motor vehicles on the road equate to less congestion and lower emission outputs.

Bicyclist stop-as-yield laws allow cyclists to mitigate risk to their advantage, increase their visibility to drivers and reduce exposure. Bicyclists have greater incentive to yield, as they are at high risk for injury at intersections. One study cites research showing that pedestrians and bicyclists exert more care and attention before crossing red signals than green (Leth et al., 2014). A naturalistic study of bicyclists in Florida’s Tampa



Bay area found that bicyclists highly complied with general traffic rules (88.1% in the daytime, 87.5% at night). In contrast, drivers were mostly noncompliant with the law on yielding to bicyclists’ right-of-way (Lin et al., 2017). Additionally, there is no evidence showing bicyclist stop-as-yield laws have increased bike conflicts with other bikes or pedestrians. Roadway collisions between bicyclists with other cyclists or pedestrians are uncommon, as found in an Australian study (O’Hern & Oxley, 2019). When bicyclists can maintain a safe but precautionary momentum through an intersection, it allows continuous traffic flow.

Finally, bicyclist stop-as-yield laws decriminalize a riding behavior, possibly encouraging more ridership. More bicyclists on the roadway traveling together increases their visibility and attention by motorists, a concept referred to as “Safety in Numbers” (SIN). Studies of SIN show motorists drive more cautiously, and bicyclists are safer on roads when traveling with a higher volume of bicyclists. Research by Meggs (2010) suggests that removing stops may reduce injury risk by half through SIN alone.

Summary

A safe transportation system makes people the priority. Working together to enhance bicycle safety by preventing and eliminating crashes that lead to serious injuries and fatalities is more important now than ever. Many States have enacted bicyclist stop-as-yield laws to enhance safety and protect cyclists. Based upon the current research and data available, these laws showed added safety benefits for bicyclists in States where they were evaluated, and may positively affect the environment, traffic, and transportation.

For more information, please visit www.nhtsa.gov/road-safety/bicycle-safety.



References

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DELAWARE YIELD CRASH DATA

MAKING CYCLING AND WALKING SAFE, CONVENIENT AND FUN IN DELAWARE

In October of 2017, Governor Carney signed the [Bicycle Friendly Delaware Act](#) into law. The Act contained a provision (known as the *Delaware Yield*) making it lawful for people using bicycles to safely yield at stop sign-controlled intersections. The Delaware State Police provided the following data on crashes involving bicycles in the 30 months before the passage of the Act and, for comparison, the 30 months after:

Crashes Involving Bicycles in Delaware (2014-2020)		
November 1, 2014 through April 30, 2017 (30 months)	November 1, 2017 through April 30, 2020 (30 months)	CHANGE (%)
All Crashes Involving Bicycles At Stop Sign Intersections ONLY		
82	63	-23%
All OTHER Crashes Involving Bicycles		
383	351	-8%
All Fatal Crashes Involving Bicycles At Stop Sign-Controlled Intersections		
0	0	0%

According to the Delaware State Police, crashes involving bicycles specifically at *stop sign – controlled intersections* fell by **23%** in the 30 months after Governor Carney signed the Bicycle Friendly Delaware Act into law (compared to the comparable 30 month preceding period). At the same time, all *other* crashes involving bicycles in Delaware only fell 8%.

Increased VISIBILITY and Reduced EXPOSURE

For cyclists, the safety value of the *Delaware Yield* is intuitive. It fits with our everyday riding experience. But for people who experience Delaware streets primarily from behind a vehicle windshield, why a more “permissive” Rule of the Road actually makes our streets safer may be more difficult to understand and appreciate. So here’s what’s happening: There are **two general strategies** for cyclists to reduce risk at intersections: (1) **increase our VISIBILITY** to drivers and (2) **reduce our EXPOSURE** (i.e decrease the amount of time we spend in an intersection). The *Delaware Yield* maneuver enables cyclists to do both of these things. By permitting cyclists to retain a *modest amount of forward momentum*, the law makes cyclists *easier for drivers to see*: Human visual perception has been evolutionarily optimized to be more sensitive to moving than stationary objects and it’s also easier for drivers to see things that are in front of them than to their side. And cyclists also reduce the total amount of time that we are exposed to a possible crash with vehicles, *entering and exiting intersections more quickly* than we could if we were required to always come to a complete stop.

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