



# HB511 & SB826 – Bicycle Operation at Intersections - Bicycle Safety Yield

## Frequently Asked Questions

February 27, 2024

**Position: Favorable**

### **What is the Bicycle Safety Yield?**

The Bicycle Safety Yield permits a person riding a bike approaching a stop sign at a crossing with two or fewer travel lanes to treat the STOP sign as if it were a YIELD sign. It requires the bike rider to slow to a reasonable speed, yield to traffic in or approaching the intersection and then cross if there is no traffic in or approaching the crossing and it is safe to do so.

### **Why is it safer?**

This enables a person riding a bike to cross at the safest possible time while the intersection is clear and get across faster, straighter and more reliably than from a standing start. A person riding a bike has no blindspots and gets clearer sight lines than a driver. Also, a moving bike rider is cognitively more visible to drivers since the human mind is more keenly attuned to detecting moving rather than stationary objects. MDOT provided a Letter of Information that supports this safe approach.

### **Does this permit people riding bikes to “blow through” the intersection?**

Absolutely not! The person on the bike is required to slow, get clear sight lines and only cross if there is no traffic approaching or in the intersection. It is a YIELD which means the bike rider must stop if it is not clear to cross. This will align Maryland law with an established safe practice.

### **Has this been implemented in other states and what has been their experience?**

There are currently 10 states and the District of Columbia that have “Bicycle Safety Yield” laws on their books, including several who have enacted these laws in the past few years ([NHTSA Bicyclist Stop As Yield Fact Sheet, 2022](#)). Since the NHTSA report was published, Colorado, Minnesota and D.C. have enacted such laws. 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](#)).

### **How does this change the right-of-way rules and the “boulevard” rule?**

The cyclist has a duty to YIELD. The drivers in the crossing road or "boulevard" (assuming there is no 4-way or 3-way stop) have the right of way. This is no different from a driver approaching a YIELD sign from the cross street.

### **What about the safety of pedestrians at the crossing?**

Cyclists approaching an intersection must always yield to pedestrians and that requirement is already in Maryland transportation code. Under sec. [21-1202](#), a person riding a bike has all the rights and duties required of a driver of a vehicle under Title 21, with some exceptions (i.e., otherwise specified under code, not possible to apply to a person on a bike). Sec. 21-1202 specifically mentions that the duty to avoid collisions with pedestrians under [21-504](#) applies to people riding bicycles. Under HB511, a bike rider would also still be required to stop for a pedestrian crossing the street under [21-502](#).

### **What about trucks and trailers approaching the crossing on the main road?**

Trucks and trailers require longer time and distance to stop or slow because of their weight. By permitting the bike rider to cross quicker, straighter and more reliably while the intersection is clear, this will reduce the probability of a crash for all vehicles, especially heavier ones.

### **What about ebikes, cargo bikes and disability assistive bikes?**

A person riding an ebike, cargo bike or assistive bike is just as vulnerable as a person riding a conventional bike and therefore should have the same legal rights and responsibilities. In fact for some of these larger, heavier bikes, it is even more important to be able to cross at the safest time and in the safest manner - the Bicycle Safety Yield provides this.

### **Does this law apply at red lights?**

No, this bill only applies to Stop signs. Some states have provisions to permit "Red as Stop" but this bill is confined to Stop Signs, not Red Lights.

### **Does this change liability if there is a crash?**

The liability should be no different than in any crash involving any types of vehicles where one vehicle has a duty to yield and the other has the right of way.

### **How does this actually work in operation?**

You can view a 1 ½ minute video from Delaware at this [link](#) and a more recent short video from Bikemore in Baltimore [HERE](#).