



CHAPTER 4

SAFETY & ENFORCEMENT



SAFETY & ENFORCEMENT GOAL:

To reduce bicycle-related crashes through remedial efforts such as education of bicycle related laws and consistent enforcement of bicycle laws.

Bicycles are legal vehicles in the State of Texas, and persons riding a bicycle are required to follow all the rules and regulations applicable to all vehicles, with only minor differences. Enforcement of traffic laws for all users is a key element in developing cooperative behavior among bicyclists and motorists.

The City of Austin should embrace bicycling in Austin as a safe and legitimate form of roadway use through its law enforcement policies and procedures. Thorough data reporting, reviewing law enforcement policies, and implementing additional traffic safety regulations will enhance the goal of providing a safe and accessible bicycle network.

Fear of a collision with a motor vehicle is one of the main deterrents to bicycle riding for non-cyclists and beginning cyclists. Safety must be addressed to encourage more of these potential users and accommodate current users. Violations of traffic laws by both motorists and bicyclists contribute to conflicts between users.

There is a perception that bicyclists do not obey traffic laws. While some bicyclists are frequently seen running red lights and stop signs, going the wrong way down the street, and switching unpredictably from the sidewalk to the street, this does not represent all bicyclists. However, this behavior does put the bicyclists at risk and increases conflicts with pedestrians and motorists. While there is no data that exists to suggest whether a higher percentage of bicyclists or motorists disobey traffic laws, the behavior of the bicyclist who does not obey traffic laws leaves an impression on motorists. This behavior contributes to the antagonism between bicyclists (even those who do obey the law) and motorists.

Conversely, motorists often drive in a manner that is dangerous to bicyclists. Bicyclists report that car drivers sometimes go out of their way to intimidate them by driving too close, throwing objects, blowing their horns, and generally harassing them (City and County of Denver, 1993, p. 53). Motorists also roll through stop signs, run red lights, fail to signal turns or lane changes, and other unlawful behaviors that are dangerous to bicyclists and other roadway users. Again, there is no research that has been done to suggest that bicyclists disobey traffic laws more often than motor vehicle drivers. Certainly, the behavior of both road users should be strictly enforced to create a safe and predictable environment.

Adequate enforcement of traffic laws pertaining to cyclists depends upon a well informed and supportive community. If enforcement is regarded as unnecessary harassment or a low priority by the community, then such enforcement will not be prioritized. Additionally,



The Safety & Enforcement goal is to reduce bicycle related crashes by reducing illegal and dangerous behaviors of all roadway users. Success of this goal will require a collaboration of enforcing traffic laws, educating bicyclists and motorists of their responsibilities as users of the road, and alerting motorists and bicyclists through signs and markings in the bicycle network.

1. *Ensure consistent interpretation of bicycle laws by Austin Police Department and the Bicycle Program.*
2. *Strengthen efforts to enforce proper motorist and bicyclist behavior and reduce bicyclist-motorist collisions.*





Objective 3.0

Ensure consistent interpretation of bicycle laws by Austin Police Department and the Bicycle Program.

Benchmark

Train 100% of APD law enforcement officers in bicyclist and motorist behavior laws and bicycle issues in conjunction with the City Bicycle Program.

CONSISTENCY IN LAW ENFORCEMENT

Local laws should be consistent and interpreted consistently so that neither law enforcers nor users of the road (motorists and bicyclists) will be confused on what is legal behavior. Educational materials discussed in Chapter 3 should be consistent with state and local traffic laws, which should also reflect the safest behavior enforced around the country.

Currently, the Austin Police Department includes bicycle law enforcement training in the Cadet Academy. The APD is also involved with the Child Safety Program in educating children on bicycle laws and safety. Continuing to train law enforcement officers on bicycling issues will help ensure consistent enforcement of the laws protecting bicyclists. The City of Austin Bicycle Program will work with the Austin Police Department to unify traffic laws and enforcement policies and ensure consistent interpretation of bicycle traffic law enforcement.

Objective 3.0 Benchmarks

- Train 100% of APD law enforcement officers in bicyclist and motorist behavior laws and bicycle issues in conjunction with the City Bicycle Program.

Objective 3.0 Actions

- 3.0.1 Amend local ordinances as necessary to reflect national best practices regarding safe behavior for bicyclists and motorists.
- 3.0.2 Clarify and increase enforcement of state laws and the City of Austin's traffic codes where necessary to improve safety for bicyclists, and amend the City Traffic Code as needed to support bicycling as a mode of transportation.
 - 3.0.2a Clarify legal status of bicycles as vehicles, with all rights to use the roadway.
 - 3.0.2b Clarify riding position on the roadway, riding abreast, riding on sidewalks, etc.
 - 3.0.2c Increase enforcement by Austin Police Department of state law prohibiting operation of smoking motor vehicles. Increased, unlawful emissions from motor vehicles may create a health hazard to bicyclists riding nearby and make bicycling uncomfortable.
- 3.0.3 Coordinate with, monitor and support bicycle safety efforts by APD.

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- 3.0.4 The City of Austin Bicycle Program should coordinate with the Austin Police Department to compile an annual report outlining data for bicycle-related citations, 311 calls on aggressive driving, crashes, injuries, and other enforcement/safety issues.
- 3.0.5 Review APD Uniform Traffic & Tolerance Policy to make recommendations of changes as necessary regarding bicycle specific issues.
- 3.0.6 Provide bicycle educational training for all law enforcement personnel in the Austin metropolitan area.
 - 3.0.6a Enhance bicycling issue education within Police Training Academy curriculum.*
 - 3.0.6b Require that all law enforcement officers receive an annual review on bicycle behavior laws and safety issues and the current Traffic and Tolerance Policies related to bicycling.*
 - 3.0.6c Require all law enforcement officers to pass at least a Road I, League of American Bicyclists certified (or equivalent) training course.*
- 3.0.7 Develop legal, uniform minimum bicycle safety recommendations and guidelines for use in local education and enforcement programs by law enforcement agencies, cycling groups, and bicycle educators and planners.
- 3.0.8 Require that any selective enforcement targeted to bicyclists is executed at the same time as selective enforcement of motor vehicles and is coordinated with the City Bicycle Program.



Austin Police Department
Bicycle Patrol



Objective 3.1

Strengthen efforts to enforce proper motorist and bicyclist behavior and reduce bicyclist-motorist collisions.

Benchmarks

Reduce to 3% the number of work-age (16+) bicycle-related crashes as share of bicycle commuters per US Census Bureau journey to work estimates by 2020.

STRENGTHENING ENFORCEMENT

Enforcement of traffic laws is an important component of educating motorists and bicyclists on the laws of the road as well as improving the safety of bicycling and driving with bicyclists. As discussed, traffic law enforcement does not refer solely to motorists, but to bicyclists as well. All users of the road are expected to respect and obey traffic laws to ensure a safe traveling environment.

The City of Austin Code states that “a bicyclist shall comply with the requirements of this title imposed on a driver of a vehicle, to the extent that the requirements may be applied to operation of a bicycle” (City of Austin, Statute 12-2-11). In other words, bicyclists are subject to the same traffic laws as motorists.

Bicyclist and motorists both have common behaviors that are illegal and dangerous to both road users. The table below illustrates common dangerous behaviors for each.

Table 4.1 Common Dangerous Behavior by Road Users

Bicyclists	Motorists
failure to have a red light during dark hours	failure to signal
running red lights	driving in a bicycle lane
rolling through stop signs at high speeds	rolling through stop signs at high speeds
passing on the right	stopping past stop bar
riding on sidewalks in prohibited areas	parking in a bicycle lane
riding the wrong way on a roadway	failure to yield right-of-way

Additionally, Chapter 525 of the Texas Transportation Code requires that the Department of Public Safety include bicycle awareness information in any edition of the Texas drivers' handbook (Texas Transportation Code, Statute 525.001). Chapter 9 of the Texas Drivers' Handbook addresses vehicular sharing of the road with bicycles; Chapter 13 addresses bicycle vehicle laws and safety; and Chapter 15 addresses safe passing of bicycles by commercial vehicles. Continuing to revise the Texas Drivers' Handbook with the most current and best practices of bicycle safety will ensure consistent education of motorists and bicyclists, enforcement of these laws, and may improve safety of bicyclists on the road.

Strategies to implement this Objective include increasing enforcement of traffic laws and increasing education of traffic laws in driving instruction

Objective 3.1 Benchmarks

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Source: SSTF, 2007, p. 22, recommendation no. IV.4.b