



CYCLING ON SIDEWALKS

APRIL 2015

Cycling in Edmonton is governed by both municipal and provincial legislation. Under the Alberta Traffic Safety Act, the law considers a person riding a bicycle to be a vehicle with all the rights and responsibilities as a person driving. This means that people riding bikes have the right to cycle on streets but are expected to follow the rules of the road.

What are the rules in Edmonton for riding a bike on sidewalks?

The City of Edmonton Traffic **Bylaw 5590** specifically regulates where people can ride bicycles. **Bylaw 5590** prohibits riding a bicycle on sidewalks unless:

- The sidewalk is a designated bicycle path (such as a shared-use path or shared-use sidewalk); or
- The bicycle has a wheel diameter less than 50 centimeters.

Bylaw 5590 and the Cycle Edmonton Map define the location of shared-use paths and sidewalks designated as shared-use. When cycling on them, **Bylaw 5590** requires people riding bikes to:

- Yield the right-of-way to people walking;
- Give an audible signal before passing someone; and
- Travel at a reasonable rate of speed.

The wheel diameter exception in **Bylaw 5590** allows children to cycle on the sidewalk until they develop the skills to handle themselves safely in traffic and graduate to a larger bike.

Why is riding a bike on sidewalks restricted? Isn't it safer for cyclists?

The issue of people riding a bike on sidewalks does come down to safety. However, riding a bike on sidewalks makes sidewalks **unsafe** for people riding bikes and for people walking. It also increases the risk of collisions between people driving motor vehicles and people riding bikes.

Sidewalks are designed and built for people who walk. They are narrower than shared-use paths built to be shared by pedestrians and cyclists. Sidewalks are full of obstacles, leaving people riding a bicycle vulnerable to conflicts with people walking, strollers and wheelchairs, people getting on and off buses, and people emerging from building entrances or parked cars.

Fixed objects such as benches, bus stops, trees, planters, sign posts, and street lights, all become potential risks for people riding bikes. As the Ontario Traffic Manual points out, this is because people riding bikes “travel at much higher speeds than pedestrians, yet they cannot change their direction or speed as quickly as a pedestrian can.”



CYCLING ON SIDEWALKS

APRIL 2015

There are also hazards at intersections where people driving and people biking could cross paths. CAN-BIKE has found that a “very high percentage of car-bike collisions happen at intersections when the cyclist is coming off the sidewalk.” One reason for this is that people driving might be unaware or are unable to see a cyclist entering an intersection from the sidewalk, especially when the driver is turning.

In 2009, the University of British Columbia Centre for Health and Environment Research reviewed all of the English language scientific literature examining how street design and the type of cycling infrastructure affect the risk of injury to people riding bikes. The study concludes:

- Purpose-built bicycle-only facilities (i.e. bicycle lanes and paths) have the lowest risk of crashes and injuries.
- Sidewalks and unpaved off-road trails have the highest risks for crashes and injuries.

For all these reasons, the City of Edmonton urges cyclists to stay safe, stay off sidewalks and follow the rules of the road.

Why doesn't the City of Edmonton ticket cyclists who break the rules?

In fact, the City of Edmonton does enforce the provincial and municipal legislation related to travelling by bicycle. In 2013, 265 charges were laid with regard to riding bikes on sidewalks, improper operation of a bicycle, bicycle not properly equipped with lamps and reflectors, and various other infractions. More information on Laws and Safety can be found at www.edmonton.ca/cycling.

For more information, contact:

Transportation Planning
cycling@edmonton.ca