

SMART TRIPS

Whatcom Smart Trips
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Confident City Cycling

Tips for safe cycling
on city streets



whatcom council of governments

design: **good eye** design

cover photo: Evantide Photography

Cycling is Fun and Functional

Bicycling is a great way to get around town for short trips and daily errands. You will save money on gas and car repairs while sneaking a bit of fun and exercise into your day. Look over this brochure for tips and tricks to share the road confidently and safely with vehicles, pedestrians, and other cyclists.

Follow Traffic Laws

Bicycles are legally defined as vehicles. By following standard traffic laws, you will be more predictable to motorists and can avoid serious crashes. Just like motorists, cyclists who disobey traffic laws are subject to penalty fines. Be sure to follow these key traffic laws for road cycling:

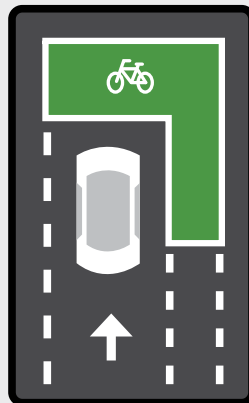
- Ride in the same directions as motor traffic
- Stop at all stop lights
- You may legally treat stop signs as yield signs when no other traffic is approaching and when you have slowed to a reasonable speed. (Safety Stop Law 2020)
- Stop for pedestrians in crosswalks and yield to people walking on trails
- Do not ride on sidewalks in Bellingham and Fairhaven business districts
- Do not use headphones or text while cycling
- Use a bike bell or a friendly voice to warn other trail users when approaching
- Speed limit on shared use paths is 15 mph



**Scan me to see all of
Washington State's
bicycle traffic laws**

Bellingham Bike Markings

Bellingham is creating a safe, well-connected network to encourage bicycling by all members of our community. Look for these graphics painted on Bellingham streets to help you use that network.



Bike Boxes at Intersections

Bicyclists wait in the green box ahead of traffic. Motorists stop behind the box. This makes bikes more visible and predictable to drivers.

Trigger a Green Light

Put your tires right on top of the two dashes on the bike symbol to trigger a green light. If a bike symbol is not present, position your bicycle in the center of the lane, 2 feet behind the stop bar. Report malfunctioning signals to the Public Works Department at 360-778-7700, askpw@cob.org.



Shared Lane Marking

Shared lane markings or "sharrows" guide bicyclists to the safest place on the street to ride and help motorists expect to see and share the lane with bicyclists. They also provide wayfinding along a bike route.

Share the road safely and confidently

➤ Getting Ready to Ride

LOOK FOR BIKE FRIENDLY ROUTES. The route you drive in a car isn't necessarily the fastest or most appealing for bicycling. Use a Smart Trips bike map or Google maps (click on the bike icon) to plan routes with lower traffic, wider shoulders, or trails.

ABC Quick Check

Air Pump your tires every few weeks to roll more easily and avoid pinch flats.

Brakes Make sure your brakes are working and your brake lever does not squeeze all the way to your handlebar grip.

Chain Oil your chain every month to clean it, avoid rust and keep your bike shifting smoothly.

Quick Release Make sure all your quick release levers are snug. They should be tight enough to leave a mark on your hand when you close them.

Useful Bike Gear

Lock Always carry a sturdy U-lock or folding lock (any cable lock is easily clipped) and lock up every time you leave your bike, even for short stops. Be sure to lock through your frame (not a wheel) to a solid rack or post. Register your bike at Project529.com. It may help you recover your bike if it is stolen.

Helmet Wear a helmet every time you ride. Your helmet should stay in place when you shake your head but still be comfortable to wear.

Bike Accessories Use a headlight and taillight in low light situations including rain and dusk. Fenders will keep you clean and dry. A front basket or rear rack and saddlebags make it easy to carry everything you need. Reflective stickers on your helmet and bike will help keep you visible.

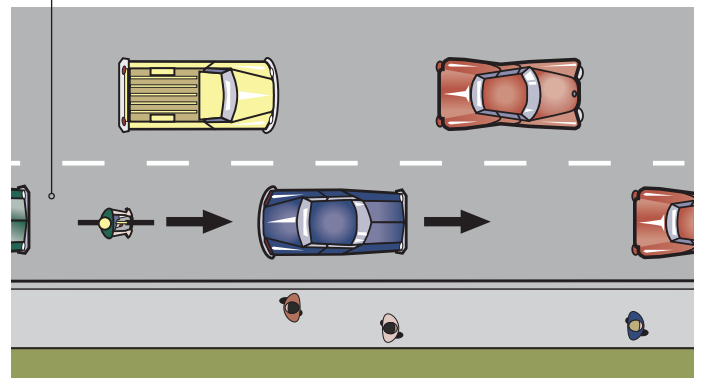
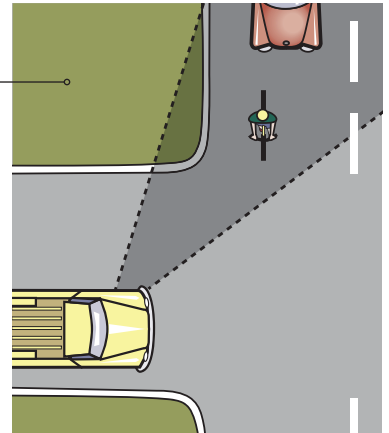
➤ Ride Visibly

Ride on the Right, with Traffic

Be visible to drivers by riding in the right third of the lane, not hugging the curb or swerving in and out of parked cars.

Ride in the Middle of the Lane When Necessary

When lanes are too narrow to share, ride in the middle of the lane as a signal that motorists should cross into the other lane to pass you (as they would do for another vehicle). When riding along a row of parked cars, ride in the middle of the lane to avoid hitting suddenly opened car doors.



Use Lights and Reflectors at Night

Use a bright white headlight and red taillight at night to see and be seen. Cyclists without lights are invisible to motorists. Bright clothing increases visibility in the daytime.

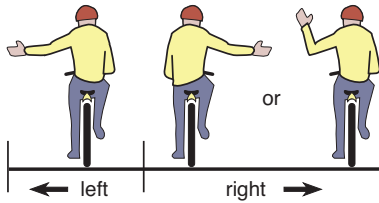
Avoid Riding on Sidewalks

Riding on sidewalks puts you on a collision course with turning motorists as they aren't looking on sidewalks for traffic. If you must ride on the sidewalk ride at walking pace, yield to pedestrians and use caution at every driveway, alley, and intersection. Sidewalk riding is prohibited in the downtown areas of Bellingham and Fairhaven.

➤ Communicate With Drivers

Signal before Turning

Use hand signals well before a turn to let drivers know where you are going. Check back and make eye contact with drivers before crossing a lane of traffic

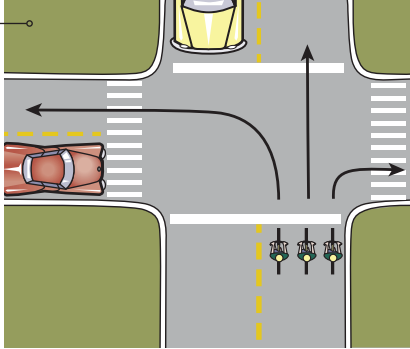


Lane Positioning

Where you ride in the lane helps let drivers know where you are going.

Make eye-contact

A driver's view may be obstructed by other vehicles, signs, mirrors, or roof supports. Beware of blind spots and make eye-contact before entering an intersection.



➤ Handle Intersections Confidently

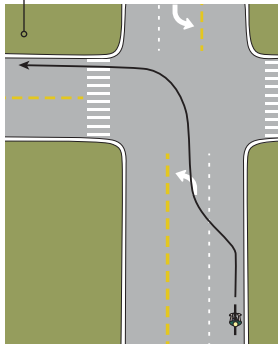
Most bicycle/car crashes happen at intersections. Cyclists can prevent many of these by following traffic laws, riding predictably, and scanning ahead as they approach intersections. Move into the correct lane position about five car lengths before the intersection. Look back and yield to traffic before signaling and merging across lanes.

Single Lane Intersection

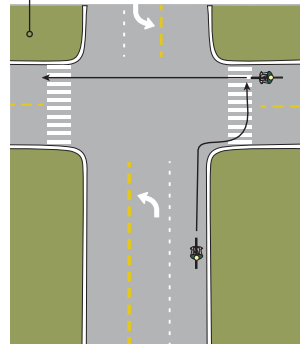
Position your bike in the proper part of the lane. Make eye contact with drivers as you move through the intersection. (See diagram above)

Turning Left

To use the left turn lane, look back, signal and merge across traffic into the left hand turn lane just like a car.



You can also be a pedestrian. Use the crosswalk, wait for the light to turn and then cross the intersection.

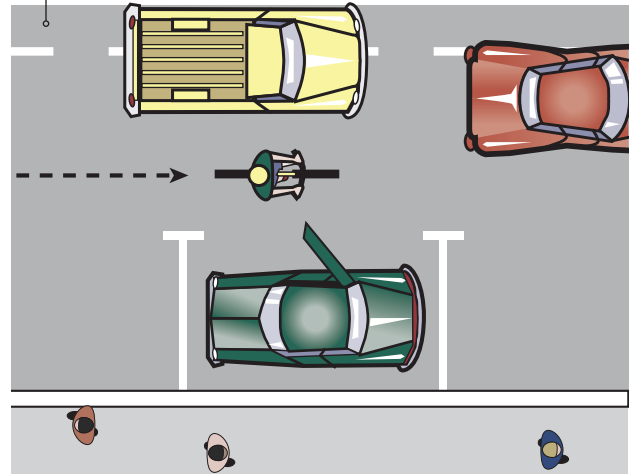


Drivers should never wave you across an intersection when you have the stop sign and they have the right of way. This is very dangerous if another lane of traffic doesn't stop, or the unpredictable driver gets rearended.

➤ Watch for Roadway Hazards

Door Zone

Ride at least three feet from parked cars to avoid suddenly opened doors.



Large Vehicles

Trucks and busses have large blind spots and make wide turns. Keep behind these vehicles at intersections to avoid getting trapped against the curb.

Angle in Parking

Drivers backing out of angle in parking have limited visibility. Watch for white back up lights and keep four feet away from parked cars.

Slippery and Uneven Surfaces

Wet leaves, steel plates, roadway markings, gravel and black ice allow tires to slip sideways. If you can't avoid the slippery area, ride in a straight line without braking or turning. Avoid a flat by riding around uneven surfaces like potholes or glass.

Poor Visibility

Morning and evening sun can blind drivers, especially if car windows are dusty. Rainy weather can fog windows and reduce visibility. Make sure drivers see you by making eye contact.

Railroad Tracks

Always cross railroad tracks with your wheels at right angles to the tracks. Tracks will be very slippery when wet.