

Shared Principles on Sidewalk Bicycle Riding

For consideration by the D.C. Bicycle Advisory Council

Modified from the version approved unanimously by the D.C. Pedestrian Advisory Council on February 23, 2015

- Pedestrians and bicyclists are vulnerable road users, and we share similar concerns about the threats to our safety posed by drivers who speed, drive recklessly, encroach on our space, and fail to yield the right-of-way.
- In recent years, the District of Columbia has improved many streets to provide better and safer accommodations for pedestrians and bicyclists, but there are still many streets that need improvements.
- While recognizing that sidewalk riding is sometimes appropriate, it is generally considered safer for pedestrians and bicyclists when bicyclists ride in the street rather than on the sidewalk.
 - Sidewalks are designed for walking speeds and maneuverability so they may not be safe for higher speed bicycle use.
 - Pedestrians may change their speed and direction with little warning, which may not give bicyclists enough time to react to avoid colliding with a pedestrian.
 - Sight distance may be limited by obstructions like buildings, walls, fences and shrubs along sidewalks.
 - Drivers turning at intersections may not expect fast moving bicyclists on the sidewalk, which could increase the risk to bicyclists crossing the street.
- On streets where bicycle infrastructure is lacking or inadequate, some bicyclists may feel safer riding on the sidewalk.
- Although it is not recommended safe cycling practice in most instances, D.C. law permits bicyclists to ride on the sidewalk except in the Central Business District ([map](#)ⁱ) or in any location where a sign is posted prohibiting riding on the sidewalk.
- If cyclists ride on the sidewalk they must ride in a safe and non-hazardous manner that does not endanger any other person on the sidewalk. ([DCMR 18-1201.2](#)ⁱⁱ) This includes yielding the right-of-way to pedestrians and traveling at a speed that is safe for the conditions existing on the sidewalk. ([DCMR 18-1201.10](#))
- Bicyclists should be aware that the hearing and reaction time of pedestrians can vary greatly and may not be visibly apparent so bicyclists should pass all pedestrians with great care.
- Bicyclists should always give an audible warning when attempting to pass pedestrians and, if the sidewalk is too narrow or crowded to ride safely, dismount and walk the bicycle.
- Bicyclists who ride on the sidewalk should be aware of the fact that pedestrians, particularly older adults or children, may perceive a threat to their safety in situations in which the average pedestrian may not.
- The D.C. Pedestrian Advisory Council (PAC) and the D.C. Bicycle Advisory Council (BAC) believe that the District of Columbia should improve bicycle facilities across the city as quickly as possible to make the streets the preferred choice for bicyclists.
- The PAC and BAC also encourage the District Department of Transportation to: (1) educate the bicycle riding public, especially newer residents and visitors, about safe bicycling practices and D.C. laws regarding bicycling on the sidewalk, and (2) explore the installation of signs and markings to clearly signal locations where sidewalk riding is prohibited.

ⁱ http://ddot.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/ddot/publication/attachments/dc_central_business_district_bikes.pdf

ⁱⁱ D.C. Municipal Regulations 18-1201, <http://www.dcregs.dc.gov/Gateway/FinalAdoptionHome.aspx?RuleVersionID=4383447>