



The Colorado Safety Stop

What is the Safety Stop?

The Safety Stop creates a safer way for people on bikes and other “low-speed conveyances” (e.g. scooters) to cross at intersections when they have the right of way. The maneuver allows people riding these vehicles to:

- treat stop signs as yield signs.
- treat stop lights as stop signs.

The Safety Stop does not impact the current right-of-way whatsoever. People on bicycles and low-speed conveyances can proceed straight, right, or left at a reasonable speed of no more than 15 miles per hour only when the coast is clear.

Why make this legal statewide?

Intersections are by far the most dangerous locations for bicyclists, in Colorado and elsewhere. The most recent data we have from the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), which is comprehensive for the state from 2017-2019, indicates that in that time frame 72.2% of reported crashes between bicyclists and drivers took place at intersections (63.3%) or were "intersection related" (8.9%). When bicyclists are able to get out of the intersection and away from that conflict zone before a potential crash can even occur their safety improves.

The Safety Stop has a number of benefits, including the fact that it:

- is cost-neutral, safety-enhancing policy.
- encourages people to ride for transportation, protecting and enhancing our air quality.
- attracts tourism and increases livability.
- allows police to focus on major infractions (e.g. reckless endangerment) rather than common behaviors.

Most importantly, it's safer for bicyclists and motorists alike. Research shows that the Safety Stop:

- Reduces interactions between motorists and bicyclists in intersections.
- Reduces crashes in intersections.
- Increases the visibility of bicyclists in the intersection.
- Reduces the number of bicyclist-only injuries associated with starting and stopping on a bicycle.

Additionally, adopting the safety stop decriminalizes a common-sense behavior for bicyclists, taking a potential crime off the books. This also frees up law enforcement resources to focus on bigger, more pressing issues. Conversations with law enforcement officials across the state indicate this is not a crime they currently enjoy focusing on.



Finally, Colorado's current system for adopting the Safety Stop on a community-by-community basis creates a dangerous patchwork of places where this is and is not allowed. It is unrealistic to expect bicyclists to know where they can and cannot do this maneuver legally, and statewide adoption eliminates that confusion. Adoption statewide also signifies an important step in creating consistent, uniform bike laws across the state, which is essential for encouraging bicycling as a sensible, safe and sustainable form of transportation.

Why now?

COVID-19 has created the biggest bike boom the world has ever seen. People are discovering and rediscovering bicycling in droves, as both:

- a means of transportation that feels safer than public transportation or ride share services during a health crisis.
- a healthy way to recreate, get outside, and take care of their physical and mental health when under stay-at-home, safer-at-home or protect-our-neighbors restrictions.

It is imperative that the State find ways to protect these new and experienced riders alike. The Safety Stop enhances safety for bicyclists and drivers, and does so at **no cost to the State or taxpayers.**

Where is the Safety Stop in place?

In Colorado:

- Aspen
- Berthoud (enacted 10/2020)
- Breckenridge
- Dillon
- Englewood (enacted 12/2020)
- Manitou Springs (enacted 10/2021)
- Steamboat Springs (enacted 6/2021)
- Summit County
- Thornton

Nationwide:

- Idaho - since 1982!
- Delaware - 2017, unanimously reaffirmed by legislature in 2021
- Colorado - community by community in 2018
- Arkansas - 2019
- Oregon - 2019
- Washington - 2020
- North Dakota - 2021
- Utah - 2021
- Oklahoma - 2021



Research on the Safety Stop

- [Crashes Involving Bicycles in Delaware \(2014-2020\)](#)
 - Highlight: All reported **injury crashes involving bicycles at stop sign controlled intersections dropped 23%** in the 30 months after adopting the Safety Stop compared to 30 months prior to adoption
- [Bicycle Safety and Choice: Compounded Public Cobenefits of the Idaho Law Relaxing Stop Requirements for Cycling](#)
 - Highlight: In year after adopting the “Idaho Stop,” **crashes between bicyclists and motorists fell 14.5%**, and Boise was 30-60% safer on a bicycle compared to similarly sized cities
- [Policies for Pedaling](#)
 - Highlight: When cross traffic is not present, few bicyclists comply with stop signs and lights. **When cross traffic is present, compliance with existing law is much greater.** The Safety Stop is legalizing commonsense and commonplace behaviors.
- [Innovative approaches of promoting non-motorized transport in cities](#)
 - Highlight: Current laws are ensuring the ease and flow of motorized traffic often at the expense of the ease, flow and even safety of non-motorized traffic. **Bicyclists are much more aware of their surroundings on the road, and thus much more likely to make smart decisions to protect their own safety at an intersection.**
- [Scofflaw bicycling: Illegal but rational](#) (co-authored by CU Denver's Wes Marshall)
 - Highlight: “The current iteration of our transportation system was not designed with bicycles in mind, and most bicyclists seem focused on surviving in a system designed for a very different mode of transportation.”
- [Identifying behavioral norms among bicyclists in mixed-traffic conditions](#) (also co-authored by Wes Marshall)
 - Highlight: “Bicyclists must choose to break the law out of safety concerns or abide by the law despite such concerns ... **when a bicyclist in the US behaves in ways that may feel rational, safe, and/or efficient, they are frequently breaking the law or behaving in a fashion that could be perceived as rude.** This is largely due to the fact that in the US, the laws regulating driving are often applied to bicycling, despite the obvious differences in these two modes.”