

CHAPTER 5: EDUCATION, ENFORCEMENT, AND ENCOURAGEMENT

Objective #3: Provide bicycle education, enforcement, and encouragement programs through partnerships

The Bicycle Facility Network is designed to provide safe, convenient access for bicyclists to travel to destinations throughout Seattle. Like facilities for other transportation modes, this network of bicycle facilities must be used appropriately to be effective. For example, bicycle facilities are designed under the assumption that bicyclists ride the correct direction on streets and stop at red traffic lights and that motorists yield to bicyclists when turning and do not drive or park in designated bicycle lanes.

Therefore, it is not acceptable for bicyclists or motorists to disregard traffic rules. Breaking these laws puts bicyclists and other roadway users at risk and is inconsistent with the City's overarching goal of increasing safety. The education, enforcement, and encouragement programs recommended in this chapter are intended to help grow the number of bicyclists while also increasing safe and appropriate behavior by bicyclists and all other roadway users in Seattle.

Bicyclist Rights and Responsibilities

Bicyclists have the legal right under Washington State law to travel on all roadways other than limited-access roadways (and other locations that are specifically signed to prohibit bicycle travel). Bicyclists share the same responsibility as drivers to operate safely and respectfully in the roadway environment and obey all traffic laws. The bicycle facilities recommended in this Plan are intended to improve bicyclist safety and increase the number of people who bicycle in Seattle. However, bicyclists are not limited to using roadways with designated bicycle facilities.

Bicycle Program Background

Bicycle education, enforcement and encouragement programs have been an important part of the bicycling experience in Seattle for many years. These programs have been implemented by various organizations and agencies in order to improve bicycle safety and encourage more bicycling throughout the City.

"Education of cyclists and drivers is also important. Many cyclists do not ride with consideration for the traffic laws, and many motorists are not aware of how to drive safely around bicyclists."
--Seattle Resident

As the Bicycle Facility Network is built and more people are encouraged to bicycle, new programs will be needed to educate bicyclists and motorists about how to co-exist safely in the roadway environment. Drivers should be expected to treat bicyclists as legitimate users of the road and operate safely around bicyclists. Unsafe behavior by either bicyclists or drivers should be targeted through education and enforcement efforts. In addition, programs will be needed to promote bicycling as a fun, healthy form of transportation in the City.

As the agency responsible for planning, building, maintaining and operating Seattle's transportation infrastructure, SDOT is primarily focused on the "physical" elements of the Bicycle Network. However, the City recognizes that education, enforcement and encouragement programs are also essential activities in order to achieve the goals of this Plan. For that reason, this chapter addresses activities that are needed in order to support existing programs, as well as programs that will be needed in the future to support bicycle transportation in Seattle.

Partners for Bicycle Programs

Bicycle education, enforcement, and encouragement programs are offered by a wide variety of agencies and organizations in Seattle. Appendix L: Partners for Bicycle Programs lists a sample of some of the groups that either already have a role in providing bicycle programs for Seattle residents, or could make good partners for the City in the future.

“Strong efforts aimed at encouraging changes in travel behavior, and educating system users about basic safety and traffic laws, need to be made regularly to have an effect and create mutual respect among all roadway users. Successfully raising public and government awareness about the importance of bicycle and pedestrian transportation, as well as how to best implement regional and local networks and safely use them, will rely upon ongoing collaboration between citizen interest groups and government agencies.”

--Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Implementation Strategy for the Central Puget Sound Region

The actions listed below are recommended to improve bicycle education, enforcement and encouragement in Seattle.

Action 3.1: Educate Seattle transportation system users about new bicycle facility types.

The City will provide Seattle residents with information about the purpose of new bicycle facility treatments (e.g., bicycle boulevards, shared lane pavement markings, etc.) and safe behaviors for using these facilities. SDOT will work with SPD to educate users about the new facilities, including the following strategies:

- Develop web pages and disseminate information about each treatment
- Install temporary orange warning flags, flashing lights, or cones at locations where new facilities are installed
- Increase police patrols for a period of time as roadway users adjust their behavior after a new facility is installed

Action 3.2: Promote bicycle and pedestrian education and encouragement in Seattle through partnerships with community organizations.

The City will contract with a team of organizations to offer bicycle and pedestrian education and encouragement programs in Seattle. While bicycle safety issues are important, this program must also focus on pedestrian safety, including pedestrian interactions with bicyclists and motor vehicle drivers. Key components of bicycle safety education programs are included in Appendix M: Key Components of Bicycle Education Programs. Examples of services that could be offered through this program include:

- Hands-on bicycle and pedestrian safety training for children and adults
- Bicycle commuter classes
- Bicycle “ambassadors” at intersections in all parts of Seattle who can provide helmets and bicycle lights, assist with bicycle maintenance, and remind bicyclists about laws and safe behaviors
- Media outreach to promote bicycling and increase awareness of bicycle safety, including billboards, direct mail, television and radio advertisements, etc.
- A “Share the Road” campaign to increase safe travel behavior and respect between all types of roadway users
- Community rides in all parts of Seattle that are comfortable for less-experienced bicyclists
- Outreach to lower-income and minority populations that are typically under-represented in the Seattle bicycle community
- “Drive with Care” campaign targeted to improve motorist behavior around bicyclists (similar to City of Chicago)
- Outreach through Seattle Public Utilities newsletters and bills

While contributing to bicycle and pedestrian programs within its own jurisdictional boundaries, the City of Seattle expects PSRC and other localities to contribute to a regional effort to improve bicycle safety. This regional effort should include education of pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists, enforcement of laws related to pedestrians and bicyclists, and promotion of bicycling and walking as convenient transportation options. Bicyclists, motorists, and pedestrians are not confined to any particular jurisdiction, so all citizens in the region should receive these education, enforcement, and encouragement messages. In addition, the programs can be delivered more cost-effectively on a regional basis. For example, with a regional strategy, the organizations that provide hands-on bicycle and pedestrian safety training can use the same equipment in multiple jurisdictions. Billboards, brochures, and other media messages can also be produced in greater quantities at a lower unit cost if they are distributed regionally.

Action 3.3: Increase enforcement of bicyclist and motorist behavior to reduce bicycle and motor vehicle crashes.

SDOT will work with SPD to enforce laws that reduce bicycle/motor vehicle crashes and increase mutual respect between all roadway users. This enforcement program will take a balanced approach to improving behaviors of both bicyclists and motorists. Motorist behaviors that will be targeted include:

- Turning left and right in front of bicyclists
- Passing too close to bicyclists
- Parking in bicycle lanes
- Opening doors of parked vehicles in front of bicyclists

Bicyclist behaviors that will be targeted include:

- Ignoring traffic control (particularly traffic signals)
- Riding the wrong way on a street
- Riding with no lights at night
- Riding without helmets

Bicyclist safety is a shared responsibility between all roadway users. Enforcement priorities should be established through a collaborative process involving SDOT, SPD, the Bicycle Advisory Board, the Bicycle Alliance of Washington, and the Cascade Bicycle Club.

Action 3.4: Support efforts to obtain funding for bicycle education and enforcement programs.

SDOT will work with local organizations to pursue additional funding for bicycle safety education and enforcement programs (see list of existing programs offered by local organizations above). By providing support to grants and other funding applications, the City can help organizations that conduct education and enforcement to increase their resources and reach more Seattle residents.

Action 3.5: Update and distribute the Seattle Bicycling Guide Map.

As new bikeways are added to the network over the next ten years, regular updates will be needed to the Seattle Bicycling Guide Map to ensure that bicyclists are aware of new routing options, and to reflect changes in the bicycle route network. The maps can be distributed in paper form, be posted online as a .pdf document, and may also be used as the basis for a web-based bicycle route-finding program (see the following action). Similarly, agencies that produce regional bicycle maps and other information of interest to bicyclists should be encouraged to update information relating to Seattle bicycle improvement efforts. In addition, SDOT should work with transit agencies such as KC/METRO, Sound Transit, and Washington State Ferries to distribute the maps.

Action 3.6: Develop an online bicycle route wayfinding program.

An online bicycle route wayfinding program should be developed by the PSRC, with support from SDOT, to help bicyclists determine preferred routes to destinations throughout Seattle and the Puget Sound Region. This program would allow bicyclists to enter their origin and destination and

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generate an optimal route to follow, given their experience level, time-sensitivity, willingness to ride on steep hills, or other potential factors. This online program could also include tourist destinations, park amenities, transit access information, school locations and other information that may be useful to bicyclists.

“Implement a computerized wayfinding program.” -- Seattle resident

Action 3.7: Encourage bicycling by displaying bicycle route system maps in key Downtown and Urban Village locations.

Downtown Seattle and the Urban Village Centers are important hubs in the City’s Signed Bicycle Route system. Many routes in the system connect bicyclists between neighborhoods to the Downtown Area. Downtown is an important destination for commuters, recreational bicyclists, tourists, and many potential bicyclists. In addition, the Signed Bicycle Route System connects all Urban Villages, so these key locations should have easy-to-understand information for bicycle wayfinding. Bicycle route system kiosks should be displayed at key locations in the Downtown area, Urban Villages, as well as other key destinations throughout the City such as along the Burke-Gilman Trail in Gas Works Park and at BikeStation Seattle®.

Action 3.8: Promote bicycling as an alternative to driving alone through Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Programs.

Bicycling should continue to be promoted as a non-polluting, healthy form of transportation through Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs, such as Commute Trip Reduction programs, the SDOT Way To Go Program, and the Healthy Streets Initiative.

The Washington State Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Law requires employers to work with employees to reduce the number and length of drive-alone commute trips made to the worksite. The City and SDOT support this law and encourage all commuters to use alternatives to driving alone to work. Employees are encouraged to ask their employers to take actions to improve bicycling as a part of their CTR programs, including:

- Provide bicycle parking facilities
- Provide bicycle maps, brochures, and other promotional materials
- Hold a “bicycle commute challenge” for employees to commute the most days by bicycle
- Develop agreements with local bicycle shops to provide reduced price items for their organization

SDOT’s Way To Go Program includes a variety of initiatives intended to improve livability by reducing automobile usage for non-work trips. Improving conditions for bicycling will help achieve this goal, so bicycling should be emphasized as viable mode of travel in Way To Go initiatives, such as the Commuter Cash program and the One Less Car Challenge.

Action 3.9: Expand safe routes to schools to encourage children to walk and bicycle to school.

The City should build on its existing efforts work with the Seattle Public Schools, public health organizations, parent associations, and local walking and bicycling advocacy groups to develop safe bicycle and pedestrian routes to Seattle schools. These routes could be identified as a part of local Safe Routes to Schools programs and could be improved in conjunction with the implementation of the City of Seattle Pedestrian Master Plan.

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