



Planning, Development & Transportation

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RE: Stop as Yield Law: Considerations for Fort Collins

Purpose of this memo:

This memo provides an overview of the Stop as Yield law currently being considered by the City of Fort Collins' Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) and researched by City staff. Adopting a Stop as Yield law in Fort Collins would require an amendment to the City's traffic code and would need to go through the City's Transportation Board and ultimately the City Council. At this time, the BAC is evaluating the issue in order to develop a recommendation to the Transportation Board.

Attached to this memo is a chart outlining the potential strengths, limitations, opportunities, and weaknesses associated with implementing a Stop as Yield law in Fort Collins. This chart is intended to be an objective summary of the information and feedback collected to date around the concept. The chart is not intended, in itself, to draw any conclusions about the issue.

In recent months, the topic of adopting a Stop as Yield law in Fort Collins has garnered considerable publicity within the media and the community at large. Significant feedback has been received both supporting and opposing the concept of adopting a Stop as Yield law in Fort Collins.

What is it?

The Stop as Yield law, also referenced as the Idaho Stop Law, allows people on bicycles the legal right to yield at stop signs after following the applicable right of way rules at an intersection. Some jurisdictions have further modified their traffic code to allow people on bicycles the legal right to treat signalized intersections as stop signs, or in some cases, yield signs. At this time, the City's Bicycle Advisory Committee is considering Stop as Yield provisions only as it applies to stop signs.

Where does it exist today?

The following jurisdictions have modified their traffic code to afford bicyclists unique provisions at stop signs and in some cases, signalized intersections: The State of Idaho, Summit County, and the Cities of Dillon, Breckenridge and Aspen. Stop as Yield laws are relatively uncommon in the United States. While the Idaho Stop Law has been in effect since 1982, these laws have only recently been adopted in Colorado.



Potential impact:

Limited data and research exists demonstrating the direct impacts associated with implementing a Stop as Yield law for bicyclists. However, through this process, we've heard multiple perspectives regarding the potential implications associated with adopting a Stop as Yield law in Fort Collins. The attached chart serves as an objective summary of feedback and information collected to date regarding potential strengths, limitations, opportunities and threats associated with implementing a Stop as Yield law in Fort Collins.

Other considerations:

One of the challenges identified with implementing a Stop as Yield law in Fort Collins is the legal inconsistencies it would create between jurisdictions. In addition, inconsistencies would be created along state highways or county roadways within the City of Fort Collins. Some BAC members expressed interest in evaluating the potential for a statewide Stop as Yield initiative to address jurisdictional inconsistencies. Based on feedback received from the statewide bicycle advocacy organization, Bicycle Colorado, there does not appear to be significant interest in lobbying for a statewide ordinance at this time. Moreover, the Colorado State Patrol has expressed significant concerns over a traffic code change of this nature.

Attached: Overview of strengths, limitations, opportunities and threats associated with Stop as Yield (reflects public feedback, research and BAC input):

Overview of strengths, limitations, opportunities and threats associated with Stop as Yield (reflects public feedback, research and BAC input):

Potential Strengths	Potential Limitations	Potential Opportunities	Potential Threats
Establishes bicycle-friendly policy and law – one key element of a Bicycle Friendly Community – with the intent of making bicycling safe, comfortable, efficient and convenient.	Currently, very few jurisdictions in the United States have adopted a Stop as Yield code change and therefore little data exists demonstrating the impact.	Promotes bicycling. Generally, to increase bicycling, it should be safe, convenient, comfortable and efficient. Some research has shown excessive stopping impedes the desire of bicycling and path chosen by a bicyclist.	May create further divide between motorists and bicyclists based on perception of preferential treatment for bicyclists. May be perceived as destructive vs. constructive policy.
Codifies existing, natural behavior for people bicycling.	Difficult to implement, communicate and message the code change to roadway users, including youth, students, commuters and visitors/tourists.	Potential to improve public health by reducing cyclist exposure to auto-based air pollution, and by providing regulations that are less inhibiting to cyclists, the percentage of the population who choose to travel by bike may increase.	Difficult to implement, communicate and message the code change to roadway users, including youth, students, commuters and visitors/tourists.
Traffic control systems largely designed around motor vehicles. Stop as Yield policy changes acknowledge bicycles for their inherent differences to motor vehicles.	The majority of bicyclists in Fort Collins already practice Stop as Yield; therefore, codifying Stop as Yield may fail to create sweeping change.	Potential to reduce congestion by establishing more efficient traffic flow.	May be a slippery slope – by allowing cyclists to treat stop signs as yield signs, they may feel more entitled leading to reduced compliance of the law.
Supports efficient travel for people on bikes (goal of innovative infrastructure design).	Without CDOT approval, Stop as Yield code changes would only apply where the City has roadway ownership. This would create implementation challenges and inconsistencies within the City and beyond jurisdictional boundaries (patchwork of different laws).	May improve safety for bicyclists by allowing bicyclists to stay in motion, which provides more opportunity to make avoidance maneuvers, and by allowing bicyclists to clear intersections faster (reducing exposure time). In addition, as the number of bicyclists increase, we may experience increased safety performance of roadways through	Cost involved in effective implementation, including communication, outreach and data collection.

		the safety in numbers finding.	
Potential safety and health benefits: cyclist maintains greater balance and momentum at intersections; potential reductions in exposure time at intersections (to pollutants and vehicles).	To effectively implement, it may require significant outreach, education, messaging and data collection. As the code change may not lead to sweeping change, overall, Stop as Yield may present a low return on investment.	May create and communicate clearer enforcement priorities.	League of American Bicyclists educates around the principles of predictability and that cyclists fare best when behaving like vehicles. Concerns that Stop as Yield codifies unpredictability and is counter to advocacy and education around these principles.
Demonstrates a commitment to prioritizing bicycling as a mode of transport in Fort Collins.	High cost involved in effective implementation, including communication, outreach and data collection.	Presents the opportunity for a comprehensive outreach and education campaign.	Very little enforcement today; efforts to increase enforcement of "failure to yield" in combination with SAY may be unsuccessful.
One of the biggest complaints amongst drivers about cyclists is poor compliance with traffic control devices. Potential to reduce the perception of a "lack of enforcement" regarding bicyclists obeying the laws and allows for prioritized (stricter) enforcement of failure to yield.	May expend political capital and community goodwill for little return.		Fort Collins has a high level of community goodwill. This may undermine community goodwill and negatively impact future efforts to improve bicycling in innovative ways (bicycle boulevards, protected bike lanes, green wave corridors etc.).
Allows people on bikes to choose the safest time for crossing.	Difficult to implement on a community level and difficult to message to youth where "stop means stop."		Political capital costs -- price of formalizing existing behavior could be high.
Current law fosters illegal behavior and creates an internal conflict for cyclists as they approach the intersection. Stop as Yield may address this.	Potential to introduce additional ambiguity among roadway users.		May lead to more confusion and antagonism with users of the roadway.
Current law pertaining to bicycle stop behavior is rarely enforced today.	Stop as Yield may be a convenience factor rather than a safety factor.		Stop as Yield may work well for experienced cyclists, but may pose challenges for novice riders.