

Bicycle Ordinances

Since bicyclists move freely across municipal boundaries, a key consideration should be ensuring that municipal laws do not contradict each other.



- **Amend code regulations to allow electric assist bicycles to operate wherever bicycles are allowed.** The City of Iowa City has adopted the following language in order to distinguish e-bikes from all classes of motor bikes and to operate wherever traditional bikes are permitted: “A bicycle equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, and that ceases to provide assistance when the bicycle reaches the speed of 20 miles per hour. An electric assist bicycle is not a bicycle, motorized bicycle or motor vehicle as defined herein.”
- **Amend code language that prohibits bicyclists from operating on the street.** Coralville and North Liberty, bicyclists are prohibited from riding in the street where an adjacent path is provided: “Whenever a usable path for bicyclists has been provided adjacent to a roadway, bicycle riders shall use such path and shall not use the roadway.”
- **Review laws that restrict riding on the sidewalk adjacent to commercial zones.** Riding on sidewalks is permitted in all MPO communities, except in specific areas such as the central business or commercial districts. In all cases bicyclists are required to yield the right-of-way to pedestrians on the sidewalk and to signal before overtaking pedestrians. Local context is important as communities may be prohibiting bicycling in areas where they are also encouraging bicyclists to travel, such as along Highway 6/2nd Street and First Avenue in Coralville.
- **Because the speed with which some bicyclists ride on trails and sidepaths is a common concern it may be useful for all communities to address bicycle speed specifically for all shared-use facilities.** The codes for Coralville, North Liberty, and Tiffin all include the following general provision: “No person shall operate a bicycle at a speed greater than is reasonable and prudent under the conditions then existing.”
- **Riding two abreast:** All MPO communities currently allow bicyclists to ride up to two abreast within the traffic lane with exception of University Heights, where riding single file is the law.
- All MPO communities require a front headlight that is visible at a distance of 300 feet for operating a bike between dusk and dawn. Coralville, North Liberty, and Tiffin specify a red light may be used in lieu of reflectors for visibility from the rear; Iowa City and University Heights do not provide this substitution and require only reflectors visible at a distance of 300 feet from the rear. **It is recommended that regulations allow for equivalent equipment “such as headlamps and red light attachments to the head, back, arm, or leg may be used in lieu of a lamp or the front and a red light on the rear of the bicycle”.**
- **Review unusual restrictions.** North Liberty’s code specifies that “No person riding a bicycle shall follow closer than 500 feet of a rescue vehicle, as defined by Iowa Code Section 321-1, that has emergency lights or a siren activated, and shall not stop, park, or leave a bicycle within 500 feet of a rescue vehicle stopped in response to an emergency.”

- **Define the terms *multi-use trail* and *sidepath* and clarify access control and block length.** Multi-use trails are those facilities that are located primarily outside the public right-of-way and have few conflicts points with motor vehicles and fewer street intersections. Sidepaths are shared use facilities, similar in width and construction to trails, but located within the street right-of-way, following parallel with the roadway. For sidepaths to be truly efficient and safe for bicyclists, the number of curb cuts (driveways) should be limited. Each community's access management standards should control how frequently sidepaths are crossed by driveways. Subdivision standards will determine the distance separating road intersections along arterial streets.