

PEDAL PUSHERS: Controversy rolling on over cycling stops

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We've all been there.

Note that Idaho is the only state to adopt such a law. A good reference is https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idaho_stop
Electric bikes will change the dynamics of this issue. - cjk

Cycling along an empty street, you come to a stop sign. You are progressing at a reasonable pace, but it would be real work to stop and start back up again. You slow down, look, listen and feel the lack of vibration under your tires. You cautiously poke your front wheel out past the sign, using all your senses to discern whether you should cross the intersection, or brake. You see, hear and feel nothing to stop you - no cars, no pedestrians, no other cyclists. You proceed. You just broke the law. The Idaho Stop law was enacted in 1982 as part of a general overhaul of the state law governing transportation. The law allows cyclists to treat stop signs as yields, coming to a slow roll to check that the intersection is clear before continuing. In 1983, the year after the Idaho Stop law was implemented, the number of bicycle injuries declined by 14.5 per cent.

Here in B.C., cyclists are required to stop at all stop signs. In 2010, Randi Gurholt-Seary made news in Vancouver as she rolled through a stop sign at a pedestrian-controlled intersection during an active walk signal. Police served Gurholt-Seary with a \$167 ticket. She contested it and while eventually police dropped charges, the case brought the whole rolling stop issue to light.

Proponents argue that rolling stops are safer for cyclists, since they are most stable while crossing intersections steadily, rather than in a jerky, start-and-stop fashion. A steady pace is certainly the most efficient use of a cyclist's energy, whereas starting and stopping takes a huge amount of effort - particularly on North Shore hills. Cyclists can also take advantage of surrounding cues with eyes, ears and sense of touch all open to the air.

Those against rolling stops worry about children cycling, and cyclists following their own set of rules when in many jurisdictions they are required to follow the same rules as cars. Wouldn't this cause confusion? Are there enough savvy cyclists who would follow this law intelligently if implemented? Or, would we suddenly be catapulted over our communal handlebars into a bloodbath of collisions?

Possibly the reason this issue remains controversial is that cycling education is still not very pervasive and we don't have safe infrastructure that encourages cycling.

Few people cycle, which means in turn few people understand the benefits of the rolling stop.

Either way, the reality is that pretty much everyone who cycles in B.C. now breaks the law riding down a quiet residential street on their way to the library, or riding to work or school. There just seems to be something wrong with that.

The Pedal Pushers are Dan Campbell, Antje Wahl, Anita Leonhard and Heather Drugge, four North Shore residents who use their bikes for transportation. northshore.pedalpushers@gmail.com (<mailto:northshore.pedalpushers@gmail.com>)

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