




Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Public Works Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	November 18, 2024
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Bicycle Yield at Stop Signs – Idaho Stop (PW24081) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SUBMITTED BY:	Carolyn Ryall Director, Transportation Division Public Works Department
SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

At its meeting of May 1, 2023, Public Works Committee provided the following direction:

That the Hamilton Cycling Committee Citizen Committee Report respecting Bicycle Yield at Stop Signs (Idaho Stop), be received and referred to staff for a report back to the Public Works Committee respecting stop as yield laws and practices for bicycles and the safety environmental transportation outcomes, including consultation with the Hamilton Police Services.

INFORMATION

The State of Idaho passed the “Idaho Stop Law” in 1982. This law allows cyclists to yield at stop signs and proceed when safe, rather than being required to come to a complete stop. Cyclists are required to stop at a stop sign for approaching traffic or when making a right turn as they need stop for oncoming traffic which has the legal right-of-way. Additionally, cyclists are required to yield to pedestrians.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

Idaho Stop types of laws have not been implemented in Canada, although the Province of Alberta did consider passing a law in 2019 but it was not approved. In addition to the State of Idaho, ten additional jurisdictions in the United States have adopted similar laws with some choosing to modify the parameters of the law. Modifications to the Idaho Stop Law include being applied only to cyclists 15 years or older (Colorado), limited to roadways with two or fewer lanes (Delaware and North Dakota), cyclists permitted to treat flashing red lights as yield (Oregon), not applying to stop signals at railway crossings (Utah) and does not apply to school bus stop signs (Washington).

The Hamilton Cycling Committee prepared a report that was received by the Public Works Committee which recommended that the City of Hamilton request that the Province of Ontario enact a law where cyclists can yield at stop signs. The Hamilton Cycling Committee Report is attached as Appendix “A” to Report PW24081 for reference.

The Transportation Division conducted a review of Idaho Stop Laws, including a jurisdictional scan. Based on this, high-level advantages and disadvantages of Idaho Stop Laws include the following:

Advantages

- Fatality rate of cyclists in the United States that have adopted the Idaho Stop Law has shown to be lower than the national average, however based on the review that was completed there is limited comparable before and after crash data available to conduct a thorough analysis.
- Idaho Stop Laws can lead to easier and more efficient results from a cyclist’s perspective as their loss of momentum while riding is reduced.
- Easier and more efficient cycling can incentivize more individuals to use bikes as a mode of transportation. This increase in cycling can lead to various benefits, such as reduced traffic congestion, lower pollution levels, and improved public health.
- No evidence demonstrates that laws requiring bicyclists to yield to stop signs have increased conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians. Collisions between bicyclists and other cyclists or pedestrians on the road statistically are infrequent based on collision data.

Disadvantages

- There is limited continuous evidence showing any long-term decrease in cyclist injury or fatality rates and limited research providing any prolonged safety benefits.

- Idaho Stops are not widely understood in Canada which can lead to confusion and misunderstandings at stop-controlled intersections, potentially increasing the risk of collisions.
- An inconsistent implementation across multiple jurisdictions can create confusion for all road users who travel between areas with different laws.

Cyclists are considered vehicles in the province of Ontario and are legally required to abide by rules of the road, including adherence to all stop signs and traffic signals as per the Ontario Highway Traffic Act RSO 1990, cH.8. The Highway Traffic Act defines vehicles as per the following:

“vehicle” includes a motor vehicle, trailer, traction engine, farm tractor, road-building machine, bicycle and any vehicle drawn, propelled or driven by any kind of power, including muscular power, but does not include a motorized snow vehicle or a street car; (“véhicule”).”

The Province of Ontario would be required to amend the Highway Traffic Act to permit municipalities to implement Idaho Stop types of laws up to and including removing bicycles from the ‘vehicle’ definition and other revisions to enable cyclists to treat stop signs as a yield. The Transportation Division is not aware of any on-going efforts by the Ontario Ministry of Transportation to consider revising the Highway Traffic Act to allow for Idaho Stop type laws. The City of Hamilton does not have the ability to implement an Idaho Stop type of law without amendments to the Highway Traffic Act.

As directed by Council, the Transportation Division met with Hamilton Police Services to discuss Idaho Stop type laws to aid in the writing of Report PW24081. Hamilton Police Services are impartial regarding their opinions on Idaho Stop type laws as they are required to enforce traffic regulations defined within the Highway Traffic Act. Therefore, if the Highway Traffic Act was revised to permit Idaho Stop type laws, they would enforce changes as required.

At its quarterly meeting in July of 2024, the Hamilton Strategic Road Safety Committee discussed Idaho Stop type laws to aid in the writing of Report PW24081. For reference, the membership of the Hamilton Strategic Road Safety Committee includes the Transportation Division, Transportation Parking and Planning Division, Transit Division, Public Health, Hamilton Police Services, Hamilton Wentworth District School Board, Hamilton Wentworth Catholic District School Board and the Hamilton Fire Department per Report PW19015(a). The Committee members did not voice any concerns regarding the concept of Idaho Stop type laws and recognized that if the Province of Ontario amend the Highway Traffic Act, that clear framework would need to be included to ensure that the laws could be applied in an effective and safe manner.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix “A” to Report PW24081 – Hamilton Cycling Committee - Citizen Committee
Report - Bicycle Yield at Stop Signs (Idaho Stop)