



Commentary
by:
Cathy Carlat



Bicyclist and Pedestrian Safety

*Councilmember – Mesquite District
City of Peoria*

Over the past few months I have received various comments from residents who regularly use the City of Peoria's streets and sidewalks for walking and biking. In talking with these residents, it seems there is a universal concern about how these paths are being shared.

With 176 square miles of Sonoran desert, we have great opportunities for outdoor recreation including walking and biking. Recognizing this, the City of Peoria has identified bike lanes as a vital component of our roadway system. This allows us to provide bike lanes in new areas and ensure that existing high travel areas have the convenience of bike lanes as well.

In spite of miles of bicycle lanes, it is not illegal for bicycles to be ridden on sidewalks. This allowance is common in many cities and states. Arizona State Law does not specifically address the use of bicycles on sidewalks.

While we strongly encourage the use of bike lanes, whether or not they are used often depends upon the comfort of the bicyclist. A parent with small children on bikes may not feel safe riding in a bike lane close to a high traffic street and will choose to ride on the sidewalk. Scenarios like this are not hard to understand considering the ever increasing issue of distracted drivers on our roads.

As bikers use the sidewalks, pedestrians then wonder what areas are available for them to safely and openly walk.

There has to be a way to ensure that those walking, biking, and driving can safely co-exist. Obviously, the answer to this is having consideration for others. Drivers must to be attentive to the bike lanes and the bicyclists that are rightfully using them. This includes being aware and respectful of the space between the vehicle and the bike.

In addition, bicyclists who choose to use the sidewalks must be considerate and yield to the pedestrians who are walking on those same paths. A simple ring of a bike bell, neighborly hello, or familiar "passing on your left," are all appropriate ways to make your presence known to others.

The general rule of thumb is that bigger and faster, yield to smaller and slower. By keeping this thought in mind, I have no doubt that we all will have better experiences on these paths.



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To keep updated about what is happening in your city, register for the Mesquite District electronic news alerts by visiting www.peoriaaz.gov/mesquite. Contact Councilmember Cathy Carlat at Mesquite@peoriaaz.gov or by calling 623-773-7306.