

New Bedford, A Bike Friendly City?

Be active and hit the streetscape!



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You may have noticed already, that New Bedford is slowly becoming increasingly bike friendly. As many cities across the nation, regardless of size are flourishing with a bike infrastructure because of the demand for better bike facilities, New Bedford is not far behind. Gasoline prices are now at nearly \$4 a gallon and there is no going back to the old \$1 a gallon days. As a result, more and more bikes will be roaming our streets as citizens are re-discovering the joys of biking, not just for leisure or exercise, but for commuting.

The great thing about our fair city is the compact density due to it being built in an era where the car did not exist. Essentially, its streetscape was built with the pedestrian in mind and not the car. That is why most of our streets are narrower than usual. So it's not a sprawling city like some cities in the South or out West. This density allows us to have greater access to parts of the city at shorter distances like the many restaurants, bars, parks, and our wonderful waterfront.

So as more of our citizens are choosing to ride their bikes either for exercise, leisure, or to run errands, more of us will demand better facilities.. Also, as better bike

infrastructure is planned and built, more citizens will demand the bicycle. So what will most likely happen to our city is that it will become a biking haven not only that will encourage neighbors to dust off their garaged bikes, but also attract others from surrounding cities to come to our city to use these facilities. Hopefully at the same time while shopping in our art galleries, eating at our restaurants, and drinking at our watering holes.

The New Bedford Bike Committee has been working with the city leaders in making the city more bike friendly, while improving the pedestrian access of our favorite parts of the city. As the committee continues to work with the public and its citizens on their concerns and improvement suggestions, they have worked hard to make their opinions heard by those that make the city planning decisions. As a result, Mayor Mitchell and his staff have been fully supportive of the bike committee's efforts! So, if you have issues or concerns about the city's bike planning, it is important that you show up at the committee's meetings in order to have your suggestions considered! This includes the future bike rack placements that are coming soon!



New Bedford is bike friendly!

It is important that you recognize the rules of the road while driving or even biking in New Bedford. While biking, always stay to the right at the same direction the car traffic is flowing. If traveling on the newly paved bike routes you may have noticed on South Front St or Acushnet Ave, always keep in mind to stay on the bike lane and keep to the far right of it. If you see a vehicle ahead parked on the bike lane, always slow down and stop before you pass this parked car as another car may be approaching or the door of the parked car might open. As a motorist, you will actually be at fault if opening the door as a biker passes and you'll receive a ticket for \$100. So as a biker or a car driver, please be aware!

If you are a driver, always be aware of bikers when making right turns on the roads marked by paved bike lanes. This is how most bike accidents happen in other cities with on road bike lanes. Being aware of bikes while driving on roads with marked bike lanes might be the difference between saving or taking a life! Also, if passing a biker, it is best to pass them giving them plenty of room in case they happen to fall or jump out in front of your car by mistake. This may happen and may be the difference of striking a biker, hurting or killing them or avoiding the situation altogether. I cannot recall how many times cars have passed me inches away. Remember, as a driver of a motor vehicle, you are responsible if you hit a bicyclist riding on the right of the road. So even if they jump out in front of you, as long as you hit them on the right side of the road, the driver of the motor vehicle will be at fault. So it is best to be safe than sorry!

While biking in our roads, it is prudent to wear a helmet. This also might be the difference between you getting hurt with just a few scrapes or getting brain trauma. If you are biking at night, always wear plenty of reflectors on your bike and or your clothing. It is also a good idea to shop around for a good lighting set for your bike. I have a set of flashers on my own bike for the front and rear and find that

they really help in getting a driver's attention.

So as a car driver, moped rider, and bicycle rider myself, I have to be aware of the laws as they help me stay safe and keeps me from paying unnecessary fees for tickets or fines. Like most of us, if you want to enjoy our community, it is best to follow these rules and be aware of potential risks. Doing so will give you more confidence on the road and will allow you to still have fun. So get to the basement, go to the nearest bike shop, or even shop the weekend yard sales and dust off that old bike to get out and see the city from a different vantage point! Your wallet, body and soul will reward you for it!

If you want to help or contribute to the future of bike planning in our city, go to the meetings held every month in City Hall. Check the New Bedford Bike Committee's web site at www.nbbike.org and like them up on facebook!

For more info on rules and regulations for drivers and bicycle riders, go check the massbike website here: <http://massbike.org/resourcesnew/bike-law/bike-law-update/>
