

Policy Recommendation Status

Improving the Safety of Bicyclists and Enhancing Their Interactions with Metropolitan Police Department Officers

(Updated February 2013)

Recommendation	Status
<p>Revise MPD General Order 401.03, which covers crash reporting procedures. The MPD general order requiring officers to finish crash reports by the end of their shifts is unfair to both officers and bicyclists. MPD should revise its directive to allow officers to leave crash reports as pending until all necessary statements are obtained. MPD should also require that officers explain in the final report any missing statements from those involved in the crash, similar to the policy in Minneapolis.</p>	<p>Adopted in part, not adopted in part. MPD revised General Order 401.03. Although the Department rejected PCB's recommendation that crash reports remain pending, the new order clarifies that all parties must be interviewed and requires that officers fill out supplemental reports (a "PD 252") to include statements obtained later. MPD also reports having developed a training module that includes video scenarios that reinforce already issued policies regarding the handling of certain types of bicycle crashes.</p>
<p>Include a bicycle-specific field on the PD Form 10. MPD should add a category for bicyclists in its "Type of Crash" field, and add a "riding into the road" category in its "Primary Contributing Circumstance" field. The ability to select specific actions and possible risk factors makes reporting collisions more efficient and ensures accurate data are captured in a manner that allows officer discretion only in the initial recording of the data rather than allowing for an additional interpretive step when the statistics-collecting body tries to deduce these actions or factors from an officer's narrative in a report form. The resulting, more detailed statistical report of crash data will allow targeted action to be taken to address the problems identified therein.</p>	<p>Not adopted. MPD asserts that the form should remain as is, pointing out that the current fields can be searched for bicycles, allowing for adequate research and analysis, and that these fields already allow for selections that fit bicycle crashes. In rejecting this proposal, MPD acknowledges the need for greater emphasis on better narratives prepared by officers, interviewing all involved parties, and proper charging of bicycle-related offenses.</p>

<p>Continue training MPD officers on bicycle safety. MPD has commendably launched efforts to establish better understanding of cyclist behavior and concerns through its bicycle and pedestrian safety class. However, some vital subjects are missing from the curriculum, such as the proper use of bike lanes. Moreover, officers who take the bicycle and pedestrian safety course are not rigorously tested on the regulations that they review in the class. MPD should allow for outside bicyclist advocates, such as members of WABA, to contribute to the class by reviewing and providing input on the curriculum and providing additional training where needed. Also, the District should provide funding for the printing of more WABA books so that MPD officers may quickly and easily look up particular bicycle laws while in the field. At a minimum, DDOT, which has the source material for the WABA book on its website, should make sure to provide this information to MPD electronically, so that MPD could disseminate the information to all officers responsible for enforcement of the bicyclist and traffic laws.</p>	<p>Adopted. MPD reports that it has increased roll call training, completed a training module in 2011, and has nearly completed a new module with video-based scenarios, as suggested by the BAC Safety Committee after it reviewed the 2011 module. MPD also states that more WABA books have been printed and distributed, that it has been posted on and viewed from MPD’s intranet.</p> <p>DDOT reports that it contributes to the training of MPD officers through the computer-based interactive module, that it has printed and delivered more pocket law guides, and that it is working with WABA to develop an app with similar and additional information for officers and cyclists</p>
<p>MPD’s involvement in the Bicycle Advisory Council (BAC) should increase and BAC should be strengthened. While a District government-led task force, BAC, already exists, MPD’s involvement has not been consistent and the group has not recently issued any recommendations regarding MPD enforcement of bicycle regulations. Therefore, MPD and the city’s bicyclist community could both benefit from an increased MPD presence in BAC, similar to the way the bicycle task force operates in Los Angeles. Because there are perceptions that some officers are pro-motorist and that a certain percentage of bicyclists openly flout the traffic laws, bringing together MPD and various representatives of the District’s biking community more often would promote greater understanding of relevant concerns and allow BAC to directly address them. MPD and bicyclist advocacy groups could also use this forum to make targeted recommendations to MPD, DDOT, and WABA that would educate police officers and cyclists and promote awareness and understanding between the two groups, similar to how the bicycle task force functions in Los Angeles. Since BAC has already been given the authority to provide advice to the District on matters pertaining to bicycling issues, the task force should exercise that power when faced with concerns from the cycling community, such as those discussed at the February 2011 hearing. Finally, to increase its visibility and encourage more public participation, BAC should publish a full list of committee members, post its meeting minutes on its website, and establish a listserv that generates messages notifying interested parties of upcoming meetings and other important developments.</p>	<p>Adopted. MPD reports having representatives occasionally attend BAC meetings and actively participating in BAC-hosted online discussions. The Department states that it has used bike-mounted officers to engage the bicycling public in an effort to conduct better outreach. MPD describes its participation with BAC as “solid.”</p> <p>DDOT reports that MPD has increased its involvement with BAC, and BAC states that MPD is now the most engaged it has been in the past 20 years.</p> <p>BAC also states that it has published its membership list on its website, http://dcbac.blogspot.com/p/about-bac.html, and that notice and minutes of the advisory council’s meetings are emailed to the BAC listserv.</p> <p>PCB notes that BAC has an extensive online presence, posting a variety of information about its activities on its blog, which include developing policy recommendations. BAC also maintains a Twitter feed (twitter.com/DCBAC), a Facebook page (DC BAC), and a Google group (DC Bicycle Advisory Council), and posts updates through Google+ (DCBAC).</p>