



Legislation Text

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City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JUNE 5, 2013

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER /s/

DOCKET TITLE:

Public Hearing, Second Reading and Final Passage of an Ordinance to Amend Chapter 7 (Bicycles), Title 10 (Motor Vehicles and Traffic) of the Code of the City of Alexandria, Virginia. [ROLL-CALL VOTE]

ISSUE: Recommendation to amend the ordinance to be consistent with the Virginia State Code.

RECOMMENDATION: That City Council hold the public hearing and pass a proposed amendment on the proposed changes to the bicycle section of the City Code, introduced on Tuesday, June 11, 2013.

DISCUSSION: With exception to the helmet rules of the code, the City's bicycle code has not been updated since 1963. To be consistent with the State of Virginia code and neighboring jurisdiction's codes, staff is proposing updates to Chapter 7 of title 10 of the Code of the City of Alexandria. Attachment 1 contains all proposed changes.

Proposed changes include:

- 1) Removing the local bicycle registration requirement since the National Bike Registry is now utilized nationally to register bicycles;

- 2) Making the City code consistent with the State code regarding how bicycles are operated on the roadway, and;
- 3) Removing the requirement that bicycles utilize paths on certain roadways;
- 4) Change the rules regarding bicycle riding on sidewalks.

Currently the City of Alexandria code, title 10-7-4 states that with exception of police officers, no bicycle can be operated on a sidewalk except sidewalks designated by City Council resolution as bicycle routes. Any cyclist riding on a city sidewalk for any distance in a non-designated area may be subject to a citation. This causes problems for young or less confident cyclists, or cyclists on major arterials in the City, such as Duke Street or Beauregard Street.

The State of Virginia code, 46.2.904, states that bicycles may be ridden on sidewalks unless prohibited by local ordinance or traffic control devices, and if so, signs must be posted with the prohibition. Following the State code, recently Arlington County updated their code section 14.2-65, to state that persons of any age may ride a bicycle upon any sidewalk, except for those sidewalks, designated by the County Manager. Signs indicating such prohibition shall be conspicuously posted in general areas where bicycle riding is prohibited.

To be consistent with the State code and neighboring jurisdictions, staff is proposing the following section to replace existing Section 10-7-4-(d) of the City code:

Sec. 10-7-4 - Non-roadway Bicycle routes; Duties of riders.

Unless designated by signage prohibiting such conduct, persons may ride a bicycle upon any sidewalk located within the City, subject to the following conditions:

- 1) A person riding a bicycle on a sidewalk or shared-use path shall yield the right-of-way to any pedestrian and shall give an audible signal, either verbally or by the use of a bell or other device capable of giving a signal audible for a distance of 100 feet, before overtaking and passing a pedestrian;
- 2) A person riding a bicycle on a sidewalk or shared-use path shall have all the rights and duties of a pedestrian under the same circumstances;
- 3) The foregoing sections shall not apply to bicycles operated by police officers in the course of their law enforcement duties;
- 4) The designation of sidewalks on which bicycling is prohibited shall be determined by the Director of Transportation & Environmental Services after consultation with the Chief of Police and subsequent to a public hearing before and recommendation from the Traffic & Parking Board.

Staff presented the proposed changes to the ordinance and public comment was sought at the Alexandria Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee meeting on April 15, 2013, the Transportation Commission meeting on May 8, 2013 and a public hearing was held at the Traffic and Park Board's May 20, 2013 meeting.

Speakers at the Traffic and Parking Board public hearing, including those that had been ticketed for riding on sidewalks, spoke in support of the proposed changes to the code. Speakers at the Alexandria Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee meeting also spoke in favor of the changes, with the exception that the proposed ban on sidewalk riding in the King Street Dining overlay zone or in future dining zones was not supported.

The Traffic and Parking Board recommended that there be an age limit of fourteen with an accompanying adult (s) for sidewalk riding. In addition, the Traffic and Parking Board recommended that children aged 14 and under with an accompanying adult(s) may ride on any sidewalk in the City. Further the Traffic and Parking Board recommended allowing sidewalk riding for children aged 14 and under with an accompanying adult(s) within the King Street Dining overlay zone, as this zone overlaps with the school walking/biking zones.

However, to be consistent with Virginia State Code and neighboring jurisdictions, an age limit has not been added to this recommendation. Also, in response to the Traffic and Parking Board recommendation, the proposed ordinance does not prohibit bicycling on sidewalks in the King Street Dining overlay zone or future dining zones.

In addition to the above meetings, notification of the code change was sent to communication outlets, including the city website, social media, and other outlets.

FISCAL IMPACT: There is no fiscal impact.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Ordinance Cover

Attachment 2: Ordinance

STAFF:

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