

The Newberg-Dundee Police Department Traffic Safety Team along with the Newberg Graphic Newspaper have decided to devote a column to traffic safety every quarter in an attempt to minimize common violations committed by drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists.

One of the police department's recent complaints is bicycle riding on sidewalks in the downtown commercial area. The downtown commercial area is the area between River Street on the east, Main Street on the west, the north right-of-way boundary of Hancock Street on the north, and the south right-of-way boundary of Second Street on the south.

The downtown commercial area is also deemed a prohibited riding area for bicycles, skateboards, scooters, unicycles, roller blades and roller skates on city sidewalks (City of Newberg Municipal Code 10.20.040- Prohibited riding). Violations are addressed through Newberg Municipal Court.

Sidewalk riding is dangerous for three main reasons: predictability, visibility and speed. Bicyclists travel much faster than people on foot. At any given time there are many pedestrians frequenting downtown businesses and restaurants. Pedestrians aren't looking out for bicycles on the sidewalk. It is nearly impossible for them to anticipate or avoid sidewalk cyclists, nor should they be expected to. Pedestrians have the right-of-way, and a number of them are people with strollers, wheelchairs or walkers, seniors, children and even pets who are not compatible with fast-moving bikes. Bicyclists are essentially trespassing in the Pedestrian terrain when they are riding on the sidewalk.

Those bicyclists who are contacted are often frustrated as the streets are full of speeding cars and hazards; it's not surprising they feel sidewalks are the safer place to ride. Although they may believe it's a safer operation, motorists are simply not looking for bicyclists on the sidewalk, especially those riding against traffic. At every driveway and intersection, a bicyclist has a much greater risk of being struck by a motorist than if they were riding on the road with traffic in a designated bike lane.

Oregon Revised Statutes require that bicyclists follow all the same rules of the road as motor vehicles. In essence, riding your bike down the sidewalk is the same as if you hopped the curb and started rolling down the sidewalk in your car.

To increase safety, Bicyclists are encouraged to use bike lanes, and wear high visibility reflective clothing. Bicyclists are also required to use a white light on the front, and either a red light or reflector on the rear during limited visibility conditions.

The Newberg-Dundee Police Department takes an active approach to both bicycle and pedestrian safety. It is our agency's obligation to the community to protect and enhance the livability of Newberg and Dundee, and promote individual responsibility.

Drew Boggs is a senior motor officer with the Newberg-Dundee Police Department's traffic safety team.