



# Bicycling in Oak Park

A Guide to Safely Traversing Intersections



**B**icycling in Oak Park may raise the question, “Will the traffic signal turn green for me?” If you are an avid bicyclist, occasional rider or just curious, this brochure will explain how traffic signals in Oak Park work and how to be detected at intersections both with and without signals.

## How Traffic Signals Work

Oak Park has two types of signals — fixed-time signals and actuated signals. Fixed-time signals turn green periodically for each direction, whether or not there is traffic. Actuated signals are automatically triggered by a vehicle presence.

Fixed-time signals do not present a challenge to bicyclists. However, these signals are being steadily phased out in favor of actuated signals. At intersections where actuated signals are installed, minor streets or left turns may not get a green signal unless a vehicle is detected. Vehicles are detected by an electromagnetic loop buried in the road, typically near the painted stripe where a vehicle is supposed to stop. Loop detectors work basically like metal detectors, detecting metal, such as steel, aluminum

or alloy. Since they do not work by pressure, the weight of the vehicle does not matter. However, the closer to the ground the metal of the vehicle is, the more likely it will be detected.

Most of the green time at actuated signals is reserved for the major street. Major streets in Oak Park have signals timed so cars and trucks can travel through a number of signals without stopping. This keeps through traffic on the many arterials roadways and off of neighborhood streets. However, it also means that you may have to wait up to a minute and a half to get a green signal on the minor street. Drivers and bicyclists need to be patient to safely cross these streets.

### **How to be Detected at a Signalized Intersection**

At many signalized intersections, the rectangular or square sawcuts in the pavement for the loop detectors can be seen. If you see sawcut lines in the pavement, position your bicycle wheels directly over the sawcut on the right-hand side of the road. Keep your bicycle pointed in the same direction as the traffic flow.

If an intersection has been paved after the loops were installed, the sawcut lines showing loop locations may not be visible. Some intersections in Oak Park have signs indicating where to place your bicycle wheels in the markings to activate the signal. Eventually, more intersections will be marked. These signs and markings are part of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), a federal manual for signs and markings.

### **How to be Detected at Other Intersections**

At other locations, or if you find that you are not being detected after waiting for more than two minutes, you have three options — dismount and walk to the pedestrian push button, try a different sawcut or wait for a motor vehicle to drive up and activate the signal. Tilting your bike or adding magnets to your bicycle probably won't work, since they are either too far away or too small.

For more information on bicycle safety, call 708.358.5700 or email [publicworks@oak-park.us](mailto:publicworks@oak-park.us).