



Spotlight on Climate

Cycling into the New Year: A push for Sustainable Commuting

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(700 words)

As we usher in the New Year, many of us are thinking, what should I do differently this year? What's the best kind of New Years resolution? Usually we think of things that will make our lives healthier and happier. How about something that will make me healthier, improve my community, and help the Earth? Wouldn't that be better than just doing something for myself? Sure, but what would I really do? Well, how about biking? Yes, I know how. Yes, it would make me healthier. Yes, it would help Flagstaff reach its goal of Net-Zero by 2030. Yes, it would clear the air. Yes, it would reduce global climate change. Hmmmm, sounds pretty good, doesn't it?

In Flagstaff, you would also be joining a growing community of cyclists for whom biking isn't just a pastime; it's a testament to sustainable living, providing a beacon of hope for a healthier planet. Biking not only reduces our carbon footprint but also fosters a healthier community spirit. These cyclists won't honk at you. They won't cut you off. They won't "roll coal" or belch black smoke at you. In fact, they're friendly folks who will be happy to talk to you when you're next to them at an intersection.

As the City of Flagstaff aims for sustainability, City Council and Staff are recognizing the need to make biking as comfortable as possible. The design of bike lanes and traffic signals are key parts of this. City traffic engineers are now engaging with the community to achieve the best possible outcome at each traffic light. They are collaboratively working to enhance the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. However, resource limitations pose challenges in configuring each traffic light individually. Your insights are invaluable in building a safer urban landscape. If you spot a traffic light issue, voice it here:

<https://www.flagstaff.az.gov/forms.aspx?fid=214>.

From what I've seen, our present traffic light setups appear to favor cars, inadvertently pushing pedestrians and cyclists to the sidelines. Aligning pedestrian, cyclist signals, and traffic lights in harmony is crucial. Such coordination has the potential to reshape traffic flow, creating a space where every traveler, regardless of their chosen mode of transport, feels respected and secure.

A couple of things that City engineers are considering include "walk by default" settings at intersections and "pedestrian safe intervals" as lights switch from stop to go. Walk by default would reduce the need for cyclists to dismount and press the walk button, and pedestrian safe interval allows pedestrians to step onto the crosswalk before cars begin to turn right into the crosswalk without seeing them. I commend them for these proactive measures and encourage the adoption of these practices throughout the city. City

Council has also agreed to the importance of raising bike lanes to the level of sidewalks to reduce the sometimes-fatal interactions between bicycles and combustion vehicles. I commend them for this recognition and urge them to prioritize the funding for this change.

Of course, building a bike-friendly city is not solely the responsibility of city officials and engineers. It requires active community participation. If you believe in making Flagstaff more bike-friendly, please consider reaching out to the city council at council@flagstaffaz.gov. Your voice and advocacy can help to ensure that these efforts remain a top priority. Community action is indispensable in creating a safer and more sustainable transportation environment for everyone in Flagstaff.

The things I have mentioned here are just a beginning. As we champion bicycles as agents of change, we're not just cycling for health but also steering our city toward a greener horizon. Let's harness this collective energy, creating a future where sustainability isn't just a buzzword but a lived reality. As we step into the New Year, let's pedal towards progress. Let's pedal for change and let's do it together.

As part of the Northern Arizona Climate Change Alliance, we are actively engaged in various carbon reduction initiatives, including these bicycle safety measures, to create a safer and more sustainable community. If you share our commitment to fostering positive change and wish to contribute to these efforts, please reach out to me at Kevin.NAZCCA@gmail.com. Your involvement is crucial in building a safer and greener future for our town.

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Larger logo:

