Using Kansas Roads & Sidewalks for Active Transportation

Kansas roads and sidewalks are transportation facilities designed to support many types of traffic. Understanding the laws governing how bicyclists and pedestrians fit into the Kansas transportation system is important to support the safety of all users. The Kansas transportation system includes roads; sidewalks; and other facilities, such as railroad crossings.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Use of Kansas Roads and Sidewalks

Pedestrian and bicycle use of Kansas roads and sidewalks is supported by and incorporated into Kansas law in several ways:

- Directly through specific bicycle and pedestrian laws; and
- Indirectly through Kansas court opinions interpreting and discussing the rights of pedestrians and bicyclists to use the road and the responsibilities of motor vehicle drivers to respect the rights of pedestrians and bicyclists on roads and sidewalks.

While Kansas traffic laws primarily focus on roads and sidewalks, Kansas law also identifies rights and responsibilities of transportation users, including but not limited to pedestrians, bicyclists, and motor vehicle drivers, on other transportation facilities such as crosswalks and intersections (usually part

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of a road), railroad crossings, and bridges. Legal definitions for these facilities, provided below, are important because these definitions determine how and where a specific term applies and who is responsible for a specific facility. For example, if a traffic law applies to a road, the legal definition of road clarifies that the traffic law applies to the portion of the road used for vehicular travel, including public bridges, but does not apply to the shoulder.

### Legal Definitions of Transportation Facilities

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<th>Facility</th>
<th>Legal Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Road/Roadway</strong></td>
<td>The portion of a highway improved, designed, or ordinarily used for vehicular travel, not including the shoulder.</td>
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<td>The term “road” also includes public bridges.</td>
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<td><strong>Highway/Street</strong></td>
<td>The entire width between the boundary lines of every way publicly maintained when any part is open to the use of the public for purposes of vehicular travel.</td>
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<td><strong>Sidewalk</strong></td>
<td>The portion of a street between the curb lines, or the lateral lines of a roadway, and the neighboring property lines intended for use by pedestrians.</td>
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<td><strong>Interaction</strong></td>
<td>The area within which vehicles traveling upon different highways joining at any angle may come in conflict; or</td>
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<td>The area between the lateral curb lines, or, if none, then the lateral boundary lines of the roadways of two highways which join one another at, or approximately at, right angles.</td>
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<td><strong>Crosswalk</strong></td>
<td>Any portion of a roadway at an intersection or elsewhere distinctly indicated for pedestrian crossing by lines or other markings on the surface; or the part of a roadway at an intersection within the connections of the lateral lines of sidewalks on opposite sides of the highway measured from the curbs or, in the absence of curbs, from the edges of the roadway.</td>
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<td><strong>Railroad Crossings</strong></td>
<td><strong>Highway-Rail Grade Crossing</strong> — The general area where a roadway crosses a railway—an at-grade crossing of the roadway and the railway. Pedestrians and bicyclists should be prepared to stop and make sure all railroad tracks are clear before crossing.</td>
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<td><strong>Pedestrian Grade Crossing</strong> — A separate designed sidewalk or pathway where pedestrians, but not vehicles, cross railroad tracks. Sidewalk crossings contiguous with, or separate but adjacent to, public highway-rail grade crossings are presumed to be part of the public highway-rail grade crossing and are not considered pedestrian grade crossings.</td>
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<td><strong>Public Highway-Rail Crossing</strong> — A location where a public highway, road, or street, including associated sidewalks or pathways, crosses one or more railroad tracks at grade. If a public authority maintains the roadway on both sides of the crossing, the crossing is generally considered a public crossing.</td>
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<td><strong>Bridge</strong></td>
<td>A structure having a clear span of more than twenty (20) feet, measured along the center line of the road between the inside faces of end supports.</td>
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<td>Public bridges are included when a Kansas statute uses the term “road” or “highway.”</td>
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Q: What rights do pedestrians and bicyclists have to use roads in Kansas?

A: Pedestrians, bicyclists, and motor vehicle drivers in Kansas have an equal right to use the streets and highways (except when specifically prohibited†). This right results in a corresponding responsibility to use ordinary care for one's own personal safety. An exception to this rule is at street intersections where a higher degree of responsibility toward pedestrians [and bicyclists] rests on motor vehicle drivers than elsewhere on the city streets.13

Q: Are there times when pedestrians and bicyclists do not have an equal right to use Kansas roads?

A: Yes. Pedestrians and bicyclists are prohibited from using Kansas roads in two general situations.

1 If a sidewalk or other usable facility intended for pedestrians is provided alongside a road, pedestrians must use the sidewalk or other facility instead of the roadway.14

(In contrast, bicyclists are not required to use the sidewalk and can choose to ride in the roadway. If a bicyclist chooses to use the sidewalk, the bicyclist must follow laws applying to pedestrians using sidewalks. However, if the bicyclist chooses to use the roadway, the bicyclist must follow traffic laws applying to other vehicles on the roadway.)15

2 If pedestrians and/or bicyclists are prohibited from using a type of road by law, they are required to stay off of the prohibited road. In Kansas, this includes interstate highways,19 turnpikes and toll roads,20 and other controlled access highways where non-motorized traffic is prohibited.21

Q: How do other Kansas laws impact bicyclists and pedestrians?

A: Kansas law specifies rights and responsibilities of different transportation users, including users of both motorized and non-motorized transportation, that create order and predictability in how different types of traffic move and interact on roads, sidewalks, and related facilities like railroad crossings. These rights include...

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† Non-motorized traffic is prohibited on all interstate highways within Kansas (KAN. ADMIN. REGS. § 36-14-1(2014)) and other controlled access roads as determined by law (KAN. STAT. ANN. § 8-1525 (2013)).
and responsibilities are important safety features that protect bicyclists and pedestrians from accidents and injuries. Responsibilities of pedestrians, bicyclists, motor vehicle drivers, and other users create rights that benefit others using the same road, sidewalk, or railroad crossing.23

Q: How do I know if a traffic law applies to a bicyclist?
A: In general, bicyclists’ rights and responsibilities on roads, sidewalks, and railroad crossings come from three different places within Kansas traffic law:

1. Specific bicycle traffic laws that apply when traveling on any road or path set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles;24
2. Laws that apply to vehicle drivers when traveling on roadways;25 and
3. Pedestrian laws that apply when bicycles travel on a sidewalk or crosswalk.26
Q: Do Kansas laws on vehicles apply to bicyclists?

A: Yes. Kansas law specifically applies “vehicle” laws to bicyclists. As a result, the majority of vehicle driver rights and responsibilities that apply to motorized vehicles also apply to bicyclists traveling on Kansas roads. If a particular law applies only to motor vehicle drivers and not to bicyclists, the law will generally use the term “motor vehicle” or “motor vehicle driver” instead of “vehicle driver” or “driver of a vehicle.”

For these reasons, depending on where they are traveling, bicyclists must be aware of different traffic laws that apply to them. At the same time, motor vehicle drivers must be aware that bicyclists have the same rights and responsibilities as motor vehicles and must treat them as such when bicyclists are traveling on the road. Motor vehicle drivers must also remember to respect bicyclists’ rights when bicyclists cross roads as pedestrians.

Traffic Rights and Responsibilities Impacting Pedestrians and Bicyclists

Kansas state law specifies how different types of traffic should behave when traveling throughout the state on roads and sidewalks, and when crossing railroad property. The ability of pedestrians and bicyclists to safely and efficiently travel depends on all forms of traffic understanding the laws governing their relationship to each other when sharing different transportation facilities.

Q: What types of rights and responsibilities does Kansas law identify that impact bicyclists and pedestrians?

A: Kansas law generally identifies the following rights and responsibilities that impact bicyclists and pedestrians:

- Vehicle Driver Rights & Responsibilities.
- Bicyclist Rights & Responsibilities.
- Pedestrian Rights & Responsibilities.

* This document discusses Kansas state law and does not provide a review of local Kansas law. Local laws may provide transportation users with additional protection beyond Kansas state law.
Rights & Responsibilities of Everyone Using Kansas Roads and Sidewalks

Everyone using Kansas roads and sidewalks must:

- Follow lawful orders and directions of any police officer, fireman, or uniformed school crossing guard with authority to direct, control, or regulate traffic.30
- Act reasonably under the circumstances and with care for their own and others’ safety.31
- Obey traffic control signals.32

Vehicle Driver Rights & Responsibilities

The following rights and responsibilities apply to both motor vehicle drivers and bicyclists:33

- When traffic-control signals are not in place or operation, vehicle drivers must stop or slow down to yield the right-of-way to a pedestrian crossing the road within a marked crosswalk or at any intersection with an unmarked crosswalk.34
- Vehicle drivers approaching from the rear of any vehicle stopped at a marked crosswalk or an intersection with an unmarked crosswalk to allow a pedestrian to cross the roadway are prohibited from passing the stopped vehicle.35
- Vehicle drivers must stop at any intersection or other place on the road to yield the right-of-way to any blind pedestrian carrying a clearly visible white cane or accompanied by a guide dog.36
- Vehicle drivers are prohibited from entering an intersection, marked crosswalk, or railroad grade crossing unless there is enough space on the other side of the intersection, crosswalk, or railroad grade crossing for the vehicle without obstructing the passage of other vehicles, pedestrians, or railroad trains. This applies even when a traffic-control signal indicates the vehicle driver may proceed.37
- Vehicle drivers must always:
  - Be careful to avoid colliding with any pedestrian or bicyclist;
  - Warn others by sounding the horn when necessary; and
  - Be especially careful when any child or obviously confused or incapacitated person is on or near a roadway.38
- Vehicle drivers traveling at less than the normal speed of current traffic are required to travel in the right-hand traffic lane, or as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway, except when:
  - Passing another vehicle traveling in the same direction, or
  - Preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway.39
  - Additional Exception for Bicyclists: Bicyclists are not required to ride as close as practicable to the right-hand curb or edge of the roadway when reasonably necessary to avoid conditions that make it unsafe to continue there, such as fixed or moving objects, parked or moving bicycles, pedestrians, animals, surface hazards, or narrow width lanes.40
- Vehicle drivers passing a bicycle traveling in the same direction are required to pass to the left of the bicycle, leaving at least three feet between the vehicle and the bicycle — and must not move back over to the right side of the road until safely clear of the bicycle.41
- Vehicle drivers may pass a bicycle proceeding in the same direction in a no-passing zone only when it is safe to do so.42
Vehicle Driver Rights & Responsibilities (continued)

- When two vehicles approach or enter an intersection from different roads at approximately the same time, the vehicle driver on the left is required to yield the right-of-way to the vehicle on the right, with certain exceptions for through highways.43

- Vehicle drivers are prohibited from driving through or within a safety zone.44

- Vehicle drivers (not including bicyclists) are prohibited from driving on a sidewalk or sidewalk area, except on a driveway.45

- Vehicle drivers are required to yield the right-of-way to any pedestrian on a sidewalk.46

- Vehicle drivers at a railroad crossing must stop at least fifteen feet away from the nearest railroad track, and not travel over the track until they can do so safely. These requirements apply when:
  - A clearly visible electric or mechanical signal or human flagman warns of the immediate approach of a railroad train;
  - A crossing gate is lowered;
  - An approaching railroad train gives an audible signal; and/or
  - An approaching railroad train is plainly visible and is dangerously close to the crossing.

- Vehicle drivers are prohibited from traveling through, around, or under any crossing gate or barrier at a railroad crossing while the gate or barrier is closed or is being opened or closed.48

- When stop signs are located at highway grade crossings of railroads (often because they are identified by the Kansas Department of Transportation (KDOT) or a local authority as a particularly dangerous crossing), vehicle drivers are required to stop at least fifteen feet from the nearest rail of the railroad track and must be especially careful when driving over the tracks.49

- Vehicle drivers emerging from an alley, building, private road, or driveway are required to stop immediately prior to driving onto a sidewalk or sidewalk area — or if there is no sidewalk area, vehicle drivers must stop at the point nearest the street to be entered where the driver has a view of approaching traffic.50

MOTOR VEHICLE DRIVER RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES

Motor vehicle drivers (and passengers) are prohibited from:51

- Opening any door on a motor vehicle next to moving traffic unless and until it is reasonably safe to do so and can be done without interfering with the movement of other traffic (including bicyclists and pedestrians); and

- Leaving open any door on the side of a vehicle next to moving traffic for longer than necessary to load or unload passengers.
Bicyclist Rights & Responsibilities

The following rights and responsibilities apply specifically to bicyclists. However, all users of roads and sidewalks must remember that traffic laws applying to vehicles also apply to bicyclists when on roads, and pedestrian traffic laws generally apply to bicyclists using crosswalks and sidewalks. If a vehicle or pedestrian law is inconsistent with a specific bicycle law, the general rule is that a bicyclist should follow the specific bicycle law. An exception to this rule is when the law specifies otherwise.

- Bicyclists are prohibited from having more persons on their bicycle at one time than the number for which the bicycle is designed and equipped.

- Bicyclists are prohibited from attaching themselves or their bicycle to any vehicle on a roadway.

- Bicyclists traveling on the road at less than the normal speed of current traffic (including motor vehicles) are required to ride as close as possible to the right side of the roadway, except when:
  - Passing another bicycle or vehicle traveling in the same direction;
  - Preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway; or
  - Reasonably necessary to avoid conditions that make it unsafe to continue along the right-hand edge of the roadway, such as fixed or moving objects, parked or moving bicycles, pedestrians, animals, surface hazards, or narrow width lanes. Narrow width lane means a lane that is too narrow for a bicycle and a vehicle to travel safely side-by-side within the lane.

- Bicyclists traveling on a one-way highway with two or more marked traffic lanes may ride as near to the left side of the roadway as practicable.

- Bicyclists traveling on a roadway are prohibited from riding directly beside more than one other bicyclist, except on paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles.

- Bicyclists are prohibited from traveling on the roadway when a useable path, designed for the exclusive use of bicycles, has been provided next to the roadway.

- Bicyclists are prohibited from carrying anything which prevents them from keeping at least one hand on the handlebars.

- Bicyclists must use the following hand and arms signals to notify others before making a lane change or turn:
  - Left turn. Left hand and arm extended horizontally.
  - Right turn. Left hand and arm extended upward.
  - Stop or decrease speed. Left hand and arm extended downward.

- Individuals riding a bicycle are required to sit on a permanent and regular seat attached to the bicycle. In other words, bicyclists are prohibited from riding while standing up and must be sitting on a bicycle seat at all times while riding.

- Bicyclists are required to use proper safety equipment, including reflective gear and brakes:
  - Every bicycle is required to have a brake that allows the bicyclist to make the braked wheels skid on dry, level, clean pavement.
  - Bicycle pedals are required to have a KDOT-approved reflector that is visible from the front and rear of the bicycle from 200 feet during darkness.
Bicyclist Rights & Responsibilities (continued)

- Bicyclists riding at nighttime are required to have the following equipment on their bicycle, in addition to the equipment mentioned above:
  - A lamp on the front with a white light visible from at least 500 feet in front of the bicycle; and
  - A red reflector on the rear of the bicycle, of the type approved by KDOT, which must be visible at all distances from 100 feet to 600 feet behind the bicycle when directly in front of lawful lower beams of head lights on a motor vehicle. (A lamp with a red light visible from 500 feet behind the bicycle may be used in addition to the red reflector.)

* KDOT has not published a master list of approved devices and it is therefore presumed that any reflector sold for use on bicycles, as well as any reflector provided with a new bike, has been approved. Are Your Lights Legal? Kansas Night Bicycling Laws, Kan. Cyclist (2012), http://www.kansascyclist.com/news/2012/02/are-your-lights-legal-kansas-night-bicycling-laws.

RIDING BICYCLES ON SIDEWALKS IN KANSAS

The prohibition of driving vehicles on sidewalks does not apply to bicycles. The Kansas Supreme Court ruled that users of bicycles, skateboards, tricycles, baby carriages, toy wagons, and other human-powered conveyances may legally use sidewalks, alongside pedestrians. At the same time, local city and county laws may prohibit the use of bicycles and other non-motorized forms of transportation on sidewalks in certain areas, such as business districts. For example, the City of Topeka prohibits bicyclists on sidewalks within the central business district. As a result, it is important to check the applicable traffic laws in a city or county before bicycling, skateboarding, or rollerblading on a sidewalk.

Pedestrian Rights & Responsibilities

- Pedestrians must always exercise care for their own safety even when they have the right-of-way.

- Pedestrians who begin to cross a road when no vehicles are present and traffic-control signals are not in place have the right to continue to cross the entire road and have approaching vehicles stop or slow down to yield the pedestrian’s right-of-way at all marked crosswalks or intersections with unmarked crosswalks.

- Pedestrians are prohibited from suddenly leaving a curb or other place of safety. Pedestrians are also prohibited from walking or running into the path of a vehicle which is so close that it is impossible for the driver to stop.

- Blind pedestrians carrying a clearly visible white cane or accompanied by a guide dog have the right-of-way before other traffic at all places, including all crosswalks and intersections and the middle of the road.

- Pedestrians are prohibited from crossing outside of a marked crosswalk between intersections where traffic-control signals are in operation.
Pedestrian Rights & Responsibilities

- Pedestrians crossing a road at any point other than within a marked crosswalk or an unmarked crosswalk at an intersection are required to yield the right-of-way to all vehicles on the road.\textsuperscript{78}
- Pedestrians are prohibited from crossing an intersection diagonally — unless authorized and as instructed by official traffic-control devices.\textsuperscript{79}
- Pedestrians are required to travel on the right half of crosswalks, when practicable.\textsuperscript{80}
- Pedestrians have the right-of-way before any vehicle on sidewalks.\textsuperscript{81}
- Pedestrians must use sidewalks rather than a roadway where a sidewalk is provided and usable.\textsuperscript{82}
- Pedestrians traveling on the road because of no available and usable sidewalk must travel on the shoulder, as far as practicable from the edge of the roadway.\textsuperscript{83}
- Pedestrians traveling on the road where no sidewalk or shoulder is available must walk as near as practicable to an outside edge of the roadway — and, if on a two-way roadway, must walk only on the left side of the roadway.\textsuperscript{84}
- Pedestrians traveling on a roadway are required to yield the right-of-way to all vehicles on the road.\textsuperscript{85}
- Pedestrians are prohibited from:
  - Entering, remaining on, or crossing any bridge or bridge approach beyond the bridge signal, gate, or barrier after a bridge operation signal indication has been given;\textsuperscript{86} or
  - Passing through, around, over, or under any crossing gate or barrier at a railroad grade crossing or bridge while the gate or barrier is closed or is being opened or closed.\textsuperscript{87}
- Pedestrians are prohibited from entering or traveling on any railroad property (including a railroad track, rail, or bridge) without permission. Anyone who does so is trespassing and is guilty of a misdemeanor.\textsuperscript{88}

SAFETY ZONE

The area or space officially set apart within a roadway for the exclusive use of pedestrians and which is protected, marked, or indicated by adequate signs that are plainly visible at all times while set apart as a safety zone.\textsuperscript{89}
The Public Health Law Center thanks Becky Pepper, State Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator with the Kansas Department of Transportation; Scott Wadle, City of Wichita Senior Planner; Clark Rusco, Barton County Engineer; and Barry Carroll, Bike Walk Wichita, for their assistance in reviewing and providing feedback on this document. The Center thanks research assistant Karie Mees for her assistance in developing these resources.

Endnotes

6 Kan. Stat. Ann. § 8-1428 (2013). Where a highway includes two roadways thirty feet or more apart, then every crossing of each roadway of the divided highway by an intersecting highway is regarded as a separate intersection. In the event such intersecting highway also includes two roadways thirty feet or more apart, then every crossing of two roadways of such highways is regarded as a separate intersection. The junction of an alley with a street or highway shall not constitute an intersection.
9 49 C.F.R. § 222.9 (2014).
10 49 C.F.R. § 222.9 (2014).
11 Kan. Stat. Ann. § 68–1101(1) (2013). Bridge also means, “multiple-span structures where the sum of the individual clear spans plus the aggregate width of the intermediate support or supports is in excess of twenty (20) feet.”