NY SAFE Streets Coalition Pass Stop as Yield in the NYS Senate

What is Stop as Yield?

A3986/S2643 - Stop as Yield (aka Idaho Stop) would amend the VTL to allow cyclists to treat stop lights as stop signs, and stop signs as yields. A3986 passed the Assembly in 2023.

Why do we need this bill?

• Twenty seven cyclists were killed in New York City in 2019. More than half the deaths involved commercial vehicles. 2023 was even deadlier with 29 cyclists killed.

• Enabling cyclists to enter an intersection before a light turns green gets them out of truck drivers’ blind spots and past cars blocking bike lanes—two major causes of cyclist deaths.

• Allowing cyclists to yield at stop signs reduces fatigue—and time in intersections when they’re apt to get hit—additional risk factors. And it facilitates networks of bikeways along secondary roads that cyclists often steer clear of to avoid repeated stopping.

• Eleven states have passed “stop as yield” laws. In 2022, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration found these laws allow bicyclists to mitigate risk to their advantage. “Stopping discourages bicycling, substantially increasing time, energy expenditure, discomfort, risk of collisions, and risk for strain and overuse injuries”

• Stop as Yield will also enhance pedestrian safety by re-focusing traffic enforcement on egregious behavior, including failure to “respect pedestrian right-of-way in a crosswalk” [VTL 1151(a)], or to “maintain a speed not reasonable or prudent” [VTL 1180(a)].

• Making it safer and easier to bike will reduce vehicle miles traveled; enhance access to green space; grow jobs and tourism; and broadly improve transportation equity, affordability and resilience—all goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.


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FAQ

Will the legislation apply to EBikes?
Yes. EBikes must follow the same rules as pedal bikes. At red lights, EBikes will be required to come to a full stop and wait for cross traffic and pedestrians to clear before proceeding. At stop signs, EBikes will also be required to reduce speed, be prepared to come to a full stop and yield to pedestrians.

Will Stop-as-Yield be harder to enforce?
No. The existing law is overly broad and badly enforced—typically at empty intersections where cyclists’ actions pose no risk to pedestrians or themselves. Under Stop-as-Yield, enforcement would target egregious behavior: failure to “respect pedestrian right-of-way” [VTL 1151(a)] or to “maintain a speed not reasonable or prudent” [VTL 1180(a)].

If cyclists don’t follow the existing law, will they abide Stop as Yield?
Yes. Because Stop-as-Yield factors in measures cyclists take to reduce fatigue and exposure to the elements and to avoid conflicts with motor vehicles.

Relevant data can be found in a controlled study of cyclists who were allowed to proceed during “leading pedestrian intervals” (“LPIs”)—a functional equivalent of Stop-as-Yield. Takeaway: When cyclists were allowed to enter an intersection during the LPI, red light violations dropped 66%.

New York City Department of Transportation