



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Driving Change campaign?

The Driving Change campaign is a bicycle safety education effort seeking to grow awareness of bicycle-related ordinances, educate motorists and bicyclists on new road infrastructure (e.g. new bike lanes), and build a more respectful culture between bicyclists and motorists.

Why is this program necessary?

The Grand Rapids area has one of the worst bicycle-related crash rates in Michigan. The goal of Driving Change is to reduce the number of bicycle crashes and fatalities in the Greater Grand Rapids area. Grand Rapids has the second-highest percentage of fatal crashes involving bicycles of any city in the state. Additionally, research done in 2015 shows people in the Grand Rapids area are:

- Unclear about how they are supposed to interact with new bike lanes
- Unaware of the new bicycle ordinances
- Frustrated with bad behavior displayed by both motorists and bicyclists while on the road
- Believe motorists and bicyclists can share the road together in harmony

How will the effectiveness of the Driving Change campaign be measured?

Success of the education efforts will be measured via a pre- and post-campaign survey to track knowledge gains and attitude shifts. In addition, the city will track traffic data to determine if the number of bicycle-vehicle crashes declines. Kent County ranks fourth in the state in population, but it had the third-highest number of car-bike crashes in 2014 with 151. Two of those were fatal.

Where and why do bicycle and motorist crashes occur in Greater Grand Rapids?

The most common place for a crash to occur is at an intersection on major roadways such as Division avenue and Leonard, Fulton and 44th streets in the Grand Rapids area. Many crashes involve a motorist turning at an intersection and not seeing a bicyclist who is going straight through the intersection. Many times bicyclists are less visible to motorists because they are entering an intersection from the sidewalk rather than riding on the road where bicyclists are more visible to motorists. There is 50/50 shared responsibility between motorists and bicyclists for crashes in Kent County.

What are some examples of the bicycle-related ordinances that promote bicycle safety?

The Driving Change campaign will promote bike safety through education about rules, including:

- Motorists passing a bicycle must leave at least 5 feet between the right side of their vehicle and a bicyclist.
- Bicyclists must be visible, using a forward white light and rear reflector or white light when riding at night.
- Motorists should watch out for bikes, especially when making a right-hand turn.
- Bicyclists must obey all traffic signals and signs.
- Motorists should not drive or park in a bike lane.
- Bicyclists are safer on the road than on sidewalks. Additionally, riding a bicycle on the sidewalk is prohibited in certain areas, such as downtown Grand Rapids.

How is the Driving Change campaign funded?

This program is funded primarily through a \$632,000 federal grant to the Michigan Department of Transportation in partnership with the City of Grand Rapids.

Is the Driving Change campaign connected to the city's Vital Streets program?

No. The Driving Change and Vital Streets program are two separate but well-aligned projects. Driving Change is focused on improving road relationships in Greater Grand Rapids through communication and education of the public on bicycle-related rules and behavior. The Vital Streets initiative is working to develop a Grand Rapids Vital Streets Plan & Design Manual to guide street and sidewalk design for the future. The manual will guide the city in efforts to design safer, more efficient and more attractive streets for everyone using those streets, whether they are on a bike, in a car, on a bus, in a wheelchair or walking.

Please visit GRDrivingChange.org to learn more.

