

Safe Use of Bicycles

Traffic accidents that involve bicycles amount to about 20% of all traffic accidents, and in 60% or more of these accidents there is a violation of the law by the bicycle users.

In cooperation with local public organizations, schools, bicycle-related businesses, etc., the police are working to familiarize cyclists of all ages with the rules of the road for bicycles, using “Instruction in Methods of Traffic”, the “5 Rules for Bicycle Safety Usage” etc.

Moreover, the Road Traffic Act was revised, and was put into operation in June 2015, to require bicycle users who repetitiously violate the Act in a way that poses a danger to the traffic to take courses (courses for cyclists) to prevent traffic dangers while riding on a bicycle.

[How the Course for Cyclist is obligated]



* The fine for violating the order to attend the course is up to 50,000 yen

Holding Traffic Safety Forums

- The Cabinet Office holds “Traffic Safety Forums” to which experienced academics that are knowledgeable regarding the local traffic situation and persons involved in traffic safety are invited, and at which there are lectures on local traffic safety measures, panel discussions, etc.
- In fiscal 2014 this was held on November 18 at the Convention Hall, Okayama Convention Center under the theme “Safe Use of Bicycles - Creating a People- and City-friendly Traffic Environment”, jointly with Okayama City, Okayama Prefecture, and was attended by about 700 persons.
- At this forum, recommendations were provided from influential persons through the keynote speeches and panel discussions on the development of safe cycling spaces, further enlightenment regarding the rules and manners of bicycle use, etc., calling for the promotion of safe bicycle use.



(View during a keynote speech)



(View during a panel discussion)

Details of the Recommendations from the Keynote Speeches and Panel Discussions

● Keynote speeches

The recommendations of Associate Professor Seiji Hashimoto of Okayama University Graduate School focused on the promotion of the use of bicycles in an environment that is friendly not only to bicycles, but also to spatially efficient vehicles. In the hard aspect of this recommendation it is important to create an integrated series of safe spaces that extends from residential areas to arterial roads. Because it is difficult to create bicycle paths that are physically separated from automobile roads, roads should be colored to provide bicycle lanes. Also, regarding the soft aspects, it is important for cyclists to obey the rules of the road, such as cycling on the left side of the road. He recommended that it is necessary to improve the bicycle use environment by both hard and soft aspects.

● Panel discussions

There was a discussion on the “safe use of bicycles” coordinated by Professor Hashimoto and attended by Akira Kato, Director of the Traffic Department and Head of the Traffic Planning Section, Okayama Prefectural Police Headquarters, Kenichiro Kunishi, Announcer at Sanyo Broadcasting, Junko Tokuyama, Head of Kyoyama Junior High School, Okayama City, and Shigeyuki Hirasawa, Head of the Road Project Division of the Urban Development Bureau and Urban Promotion Section of the Bicycle Promotion Division, Okayama City.

Recommendations from Mr. Kato

- Bicycles are classified as “vehicles” in accordance with the Road Traffic Act, so they are subject to penalties for violations such as ignoring traffic signals, not stopping, etc., and so it is important to obey the rules of the road
- If a cyclist causes an accident, the cyclist could be liable for compensation under civil liability, so it is important that bicycles have a “TS Mark” fixed indicating that it has been maintained once per year at a bicycle safety maintenance shop, and that accident insurance and public liability insurance is set.

Recommendations from Mr. Kunishi

- In Holland, which is an advanced bicycle country, dedicated bicycle lanes are provided from city centers to the countryside, there are also many bicycle parks provided, so the traffic environment is developed taking bicycles into consideration.
- In Okayama, development of the environment is actively progressing, but it is considered that the use of bicycles can be promoted by developing dedicated lanes along the comparatively gently sloping rivers in the valley areas for Saturdays and Sundays only, and holding events there.

Recommendations from Ms. Tokuyama

- Instruction on safe riding is provided for students coming to school by bicycle. The instruction includes (a) considering the route on which the student will travel, (b) keeping in to the side of the road, (c) no playacting or dangerous riding, (d) wearing a helmet, and (e) sharing of stories of bicycle accidents and large amount of compensation.
- The school has prepared a leaflet calling for safe use of bicycles, and this has provided an occasion for the students themselves to review their own road matters.

Recommendations from Mr. Hirasawa

- Okayama City is actively proceeding with the development of the environment for bicycle users, such as providing bicycle lanes on the road shoulders, and development of bicycle parts on the roads in order to eliminate bicycles parked on the pedestrian sidewalks.
- It is considered that the bicycle is an important tool for improving circulation. The city is being vitalized through the use of “Momo Chari” (community bicycles that can be rented anywhere and returned anywhere).

Such opinions and recommendations are being received and vigorously discussed.