

NEW Bicycle Traffic Signals at Panhandle Path crossing at Fell Street and Masonic Avenue

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



Are the bicycle traffic signals at Fell Street and Masonic Avenue new?

Yes, the bicycle traffic signals crossing Masonic Avenue from the Panhandle Multi-use Path parallel to Fell Street are San Francisco's first traffic signals especially designed for bicycle traffic.

How do bicycle traffic signals work?

Bicycle traffic signals are simply traffic signals that specifically regulate bicycle traffic. They are sometimes referred to as "bike heads." Bicyclists must obey the bicycle traffic signals just as vehicle drivers must obey traffic signals. The bicycle traffic signal uses the same colors as a traffic signal: green for go, yellow for yield and red for stop. The key difference between a bicycle signal and a conventional traffic signal is that the bicycle signal displays color-coded bicycle symbols instead of the conventional round-lens traffic signals. Bicycle traffic signals are primarily used to reduce conflicts between bicyclists and motorists at existing signalized intersections.

Sections 21456.2 and 21456.3 of the California Vehicle Code (CVC) clarify the operation of bicycle traffic signals. (These CVC sections can be viewed in their entirety at <http://www.dmv.ca.gov/pubs/vctop/vc/tocd11c2a3.htm>.)

Are the bicycle traffic signals part of an experiment?

No. Although bicycle signals are new to San Francisco, they are already used in a number of California communities. The bicycle traffic signal is an approved traffic control device in the State of California, contained in the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD). A relevant CA MUTCD section can be viewed in its entirety at the following link: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/traffops/signtech/mutcdsupp/pdf/camutcd/CAMUTCD-Part4.pdf>.)

Why did you install the first and only bicycle signal at Fell Street and Masonic Avenue?

The Fell-Masonic bicycle signal was installed to improve conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists at this important intersection along the Panhandle multi-use path. The new signal creates a protected crossing time for bicyclists and pedestrians, during which time all motor vehicle traffic wait to make the left turn from Fell Street onto southbound Masonic Avenue. \

Why are bicyclists and pedestrians made to wait for left-turning vehicles from Fell Street?

Vehicles turning left from Fell Street are given the green light before bicyclists and pedestrians so that bicyclists and pedestrians can be given time to cross without potential motor vehicle conflicts. If there are no or few vehicles waiting in the left-turn pocket, more time is allowed for the pedestrian and bicycle crossing.

Fell Street and Masonic Avenue was previously a fixed time signal intersection where each signal phase had a set amount of time regardless of how many people or vehicles were waiting or traveling through the intersection. The Fell Street left-turning vehicles now have an actuated signal where sensors in the pavement detect vehicles in the left-turn lane. If there are only a few vehicles in the left-turn lane and they do not need the maximum green arrow time, then any unneeded time that is left over will automatically be given to bicyclists and pedestrians to cross Masonic Avenue. If there are no vehicles in the left-turn lane once the signal for Masonic Avenue turns red, then the left-turn arrow on Fell Street will remain red and bicyclists and pedestrians will receive the maximum green time possible.

Both bicyclists and pedestrians used to cross Masonic Avenue via the Panhandle Path using the pedestrian signal. Since the bicycle traffic signals and the pedestrian signals are timed together, why were bicycle traffic signals installed at all?

Bicycle traffic signals were installed to clarify to all users (bicyclists, drivers, and pedestrians) which traffic signals bicyclists should obey depending on whether they are on Fell Street or the Panhandle path. For eastbound and westbound bicyclists at the intersection of Fell Street and Masonic Avenue, bicyclists may legally travel either on the Panhandle Pathway (where they will encounter and must obey the bicycle traffic signal) or with other vehicle traffic on westbound Fell Street (where they will encounter and must obey the traffic signal). The bicycle traffic signals for the Panhandle Pathway also clarify the legal right for bicyclists to cross Masonic Avenue via the Panhandle Pathway without dismounting and walking through the path crossing at Masonic.

Is the City planning to install more bicycle signals around San Francisco?

San Francisco plans to install more bicycle signals as needed. There are no other specific locations identified yet. Though the City received permission from the Superior Court to install this signal, the Bike Plan lawsuit [injunction](#) prevents the City from implementing bicycle facility improvements until completion of environmental analysis of the Bike Plan.

DIAGRAM AND/OR VIDEO OF FELL STREET AND MASONIC AVENUE BICYCLE TRAFFIC SIGNALS COMING SOON!