

powered by feet first



# feet first policy

taking a stance to advance walkability

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Feet First policies

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## Jaywalking

### Policy

#### where we stand

Advocacy is a major component of the work Feet First does. These policy papers, prepared by our Policy Committee, convey Feet First's position on key issues of interest to increase safe and easy ways for people to choose to go by foot.



### background

The term "jaywalking" stems from early in the 20th century and was promoted to assert motorist superiority in the roadway. A "jay" was a term used to describe country bumpkins in the city who aren't paying attention to their surroundings and cause congestion with other pedestrians. The use of jaywalking as a term of ridicule against people crossing the road took off in the 1920s, and anti-jaywalking laws became the norm in many cities by the 1930s. Seattle, Washington was known for being especially strict on jaywalking between the 1930s and 1980s, but a change of policy in 1988 was enacted after a study showed that the most vulnerable pedestrians were the elderly, children, and drunks – not jaywalkers.

### Mission

#### who we are - what we do

Feet First promotes walkable communities and envisions people walking every day for their health, transportation, environment, community, and pleasure.



**feet first**  
promoting walkable communities



# Jaywalking

## why it matters to walking

The safety of jaywalking is relative to many factors including roadway width, vehicle traffic volume, and the speed, visibility, and number of people walking. Where there are a large number of people walking or where vehicle traffic volume is low in a given area the balance of power shifts toward pedestrians such as at Pike Place in Seattle or on any quiet residential street. On the other hand, areas with heavy traffic and/or longer crossing distances, or where walking is rare, the balance shifts to motorists such as on a limited access highway.

Despite this natural balance of pedestrians and motorists, there is an apparent imbalance in enforcement in Seattle. In 2011, only 376 tickets were given to drivers for failure to yield according to the Seattle Department of Transportation. In comparison, 1,635 citations for pedestrian infractions such as jaywalking were given during the same period. In 2012 there were 455 collisions between vehicles and people walking with around half of these resulting in failure to yield tickets. Clearly, these tickets are predominantly given when there is a collision – when there is a blatant need to write a ticket.

## feet first position

The enforcement of jaywalking requires discretion. Law enforcement has limited time and resources, and time spent enforcing jaywalking should have a clear societal benefit in improved safety. In dense urban areas where there are a large number of people walking relative to motorists, traffic speeds should be kept low and safe, and laws and enforcement should be more tolerant of jaywalking.

## resources

Jaywalking: How the car industry outlawed crossing the road.  
[www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26073797](http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-26073797)

KPLU wonders why Seattleites don't jaywalk.  
<http://walkinginseattle.org/?p=2913>

In defense of jaywalking.  
[www.slate.com/articles/life/transport/2009/11/in\\_defense\\_of\\_jaywalking.html](http://www.slate.com/articles/life/transport/2009/11/in_defense_of_jaywalking.html)

Jaywalker or freedom fighter?  
[www.thestar.com/news/insight/2010/01/30/jaywalker\\_or\\_freedom\\_fighter.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/insight/2010/01/30/jaywalker_or_freedom_fighter.html)

Hume: Maybe we'd all be safer jaywalking.  
[www.thestar.com/news/gta/2010/01/28/hume\\_maybe\\_wed\\_all\\_be\\_safer\\_jaywalking.html](http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/2010/01/28/hume_maybe_wed_all_be_safer_jaywalking.html)

A history of "jaywalking."  
<http://westnorth.com/2009/02/01/a-history-of-jaywalking/>

SDOT 2011 Traffic Report:  
<http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/docs/2011%20Traffic%20Report%20final.pdf>

SDOT 2012 Traffic Report:  
<http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/docs/2012TrafficReportfinalv3.pdf>





# Jaywalking

## References in the Revised Code of Washington:

Pedestrian:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=46.04.400>

Pedestrian's right of way:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=132S-50-150>

Crosswalks:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=46.61.235>

Pedestrian right of way:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=132N-156-430>

Pedestrian's right of way:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=132P-116-200>

Traffic laws apply to persons riding bicycles:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=46.61.755>

Traffic control signal legend:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=46.61.055>

Cover photo courtesy of :

Jaywalking: How the car industry outlawed crossing the road

11 February 2014 | By Aidan Lewis BBC News, Washington



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