



The LEA+DRS Program

Results-Based Traffic Safety for Red Deer Road Users

BICYCLING SAFETY 3: BLIND INTERSECTIONS AND PARKING LOT ENTRANCES / EXITS

“If you can’t see, how do you know it’s safe?”

Even before the bicycle lanes were marked on the pavement, the unsignalized intersections on 48 Avenue between 43 Street and 48 Street were a dilemma for drivers wanting to cross or turn left onto 48 Avenue.

The issue occurs during weekday business hours, and during Saturday mornings and afternoons when the Public Market is operating. The problem is that vehicles parked in the parallel parking slots at the end of the block on either side of 48 Avenue seriously interfere with the ability of drivers, who are waiting at the cross street stop signs, to see oncoming traffic from their left. For many drivers, to see whether it is safe to move forward from the stop sign area, they must inch their vehicle so far forward that it will be in the 48 Avenue travel lanes.

The photo below on the left shows the impaired view of oncoming traffic to the left for a driver waiting at the westbound stop sign of 46 Street and 49 Avenue. The middle photo gives a sense of how far forward a waiting driver must move to adequately see oncoming traffic from the left. And if a delivery truck is parked at the upstream end of the block, the problem can be much worse.



The situation doesn’t just occur at the stop sign intersections with 48 Avenue, it’s also the case for the exits to 48 Avenue from the Red Deer Lodge parking lot.

Note that if you cause a collision when inching forward onto 48 Avenue to see whether it is safe to proceed further, you are likely to be ticketed for a stop sign violation. (This is confirmed by collision reports: in one case, several occupants of the inching forward vehicle were severely injured and its driver was fined.)

Now consider the case when the parking spots are full and you are a bicyclist in a 48 Avenue bicycle lane. Your attention is on the uneven road surface ahead and the possibility of vehicle doors opening on the driver’s side of the parked vehicles ahead. Due to the parked vehicles on the side of 48 Avenue, you are not likely to notice what is happening at the intersection ahead until you have passed the last parked vehicle. Can you stop fast enough if a vehicle enters your path immediately ahead from the right?

The likelihood of a bicycle-vehicle collision increases as more bicyclists use the 48 Avenue bicycle lanes and as more vehicles enter or cross 48 Avenue at the stop sign intersections. Every day, there is more traffic of all kinds everywhere.

At least three actions are possible to reduce the likelihood of these collisions:

- Vehicle drivers could use only the signalized intersections at 45 Street and 48 Street to enter or cross 48 Avenue. This would minimize the opportunity for at-fault collisions with bicyclists or vehicles approaching from the left.
- Bicyclists could be advised of the potential hazard at the stop sign intersections and parking lot exits so that they approach those danger points with appropriate caution.
- The City of Red Deer could eliminate sufficient upstream parking spots so that drivers wanting to enter or cross 48 Avenue from stop sign intersections or parking lots could have an adequate view of oncoming bicycles or vehicles.

The 48 Avenue situation is not unique: drivers and bicyclists need to be alert for similar hazards in all communities. After all, if you can't see, you can't know if it's safe.