

City of Kingston helps with Light My Ride 2018

by Hal Cain

Cycle Kingston partners with City of Kingston to help cyclists light their ride to Standard Time.

Cycle Kingston and the City of Kingston is using the change back from daylight savings time to standard time to remind cyclist that a white front light and a back red light will not only enhance safety for night time cyclists but it's also the law. The annual Light My Ride campaign starts November 1st and will last for about a week. Cycle Kingston volunteers will be set up at various locations around Kingston to talk with cyclists and distribute these lights to those riding at dusk or in the evening without lights. The City of Kingston has provided bicycle lights for distribution during this year's Cycle Kingston awareness project.

A white front light helps a cyclist see at night, but more importantly, it allows motorists and other road users to see the bicycle. Most any white light over 5 lumens will increase the chances you will be seen. However, front lights that produce at least 50 lumens will help you see potholes and other hazards and at least 100 lumens recommended for urban riding. If you venture a bit further out of town, at least 500 lumens is recommended for night riding or touring. A red rear bicycle light makes the bicycle visible to motorists and other road users approaching from behind. Red tail lights don't need to be as bright, but suggest at least 15 lumens.

Flashing or steady? A flashing light certainly catches attention. However, a flashing front light makes it more difficult for the rider to see the road surface and also to judge distance. When there is plenty of street lighting, seeing is typically not an issue and the flashing mode helps others see the bicycle in city traffic. Likewise, red rear lights in flashing mode make it easier for other road users to spot the bicycle from behind, among city traffic. However, super bright rear (and front) lights in flashing mode can not only be annoying, but can potentially be more difficult for others to judge their distance distance to the light/bicycle and disorientating.

Any bicycle light is only good if it has a battery charged and is being used. Run-time for bicycle lights varies greatly. Check documentation that comes with the lights for average time before charging or replacing batteries. Always check your lights' batteries charge before use. For cycle commuters who use their lights frequently, make sure lights are "topped up" by frequent charging. It's also a good idea to keep a small backup front light in whatever bike bag you normally use.

When do you need to use bicycle lights? Of course the answer is at night when it's dark. However, cyclists who ride between evening hours and early mornings must use lights on their bicycles – 30 minutes before sunset until 30 minutes after sunrise. This rule of half-hour before and after is the law here in Ontario (as well as most other places). The fine for cyclists riding without proper lights during that timeframe is \$110. Besides in the evening, at night, and early morning, lights can also be used during the day. Some good daytime uses of lights include dreary weather days (rain, fog, snow) and busy highways / roads. A general cue for me to use my bicycle lights is, when the street lights are on my lights are too.

You don't have to get fancy with the lights. Basic bicycle lights for front and back can be purchased for around \$30 – a small investment for safety and possibly saves money in the long run if you are fined for riding without lights. Light your ride!

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