NO RIGHT TURN ON RED - *Resolution from the MGCC board (November 2024)*

In all states across the nation, “Right Turn on Red” was made legal during the oil/gas crisis of the seventies. The federal mandate was that “Right Turn on Red” should be allowed to the maximum extent practicable. Not adopting it would lead to withdraw of federal (conservation) funds.

Today, many cities are reviewing this rule, because it is in conflict with the need to make streets safer and more comfortable for people walking. The rule is no longer relevant and the federal government seems to no longer require or enforce it either.

First, “Right Turn on Red” leads to increased risk of getting hit by a driver. Allowing such risk is in conflict with current policy goals to protect the safety of people walking and to promote walking by creating more comfortable walking conditions. The walk phase on controlled intersections should serve and prioritize people walking, and thus be free of risk and conflict with drivers turning right on red.

Second, the argument that “Right Turn on Red” will limit idling and save gasoline does no longer apply. The engine of a modern car automatically shuts off when the car is not moving, and increasingly more cars will have electric motors instead of gasoline engines.

Third, posting "No Turn on Red" signs on a limited number of intersections is not a viable solution to prioritize the safety of people walking. The logic behind these selective prohibitions is not obvious to drivers, leading to inconsistent compliance. A city-wide prohibition of “Right Turn on Red” creates a more straightforward rule for people. Exceptions can be made on a small number of intersections where right on red is safer than making right-turning drivers wait.

The past decade, many cities have adopted a city-wide ban of “Right Turn on Red”, or are posting "No Turn on Red" signs on a large majority of controlled intersections (see appendix for an overview of several cities, including Atlanta, Denver, Indianapolis, Raleigh, and Washington D.C).

The MGCC requests that the City council adopts a city-wide ban of “Right turn on Red.” Such action is consistent with Saint Paul Transportation Safety Action Plan, which mentions “No turn on Red” on pages 23-24 as a remedial action step to improve safety on city streets!

About Macalester Groveland Community Council (MGCC). The board and transportation committee member of MGCC advocate for a St Paul where more people will walk to nearby parks, stores, schools and work. A place where sidewalks and crosswalks are safe, comfortable, and beautiful places to be and be seen and where minor injury impacts, near misses and stressful interactions between drivers and pedestrians are no longer common to the lived-experiences of people in St Paul.

How “Right Turn on Red” leads to <u>increased risk</u> of getting hit by a driver. Right turn on red creates conflicts between drivers and pedestrians, as well as between drivers. While these

conflicts rarely lead to severe injury and death (thankfully!), they do lead to unsafe actions that can result in minor injury impacts, near misses, and perceived safety issues that affect all road users.

For instance, a driver who chooses not to make a right turn on red may get honked at by drivers behind them. This peer pressure can lead to stress, anxiety, and friction between drivers. It also can lead to drivers engaging in unsafe action to execute right turns on red.

Negative impacts are highly common for people walking. In the process of making a right turn, drivers creep into the crosswalk to better see traffic on their left. They often block the crosswalk during the walk phase, obstructing the right of way of people walking. Because drivers are busy looking left for a gap in traffic, they may not see people on the crosswalk. This is a stressful and dangerous situation for people walking and significantly increases the risk of getting hit by the driver. People manage this risk in several ways. Some do assertively seek eye contact with the driver by waving, shouting or knocking on the vehicle. Others may step back and postpone crossing the intersection until the driver has cleared the crosswalk. In some cases, people will forfeit their right to cross and wait for the next walk phase.

The risk of getting hit by a driver turning right on red is real and limits people's freedom. Some people avoid walking on certain city streets, others avoid walking during certain times of day, or avoid walking altogether. This hinders people from making more of their (everyday) trips by walking and biking. Thus, prohibiting "Right turn on Red" is one of the key actions to promote walking in our cities.

Appendix.

HISTORY of "Right turn on Red"

The Energy Policy and Conservation Act of 1975 required in §362(c)(5) that in order for a state to receive federal assistance in developing mandated conservation programs, they must permit right turns on red lights.

RTOR is governed federally. The mandate is that RTOR should be allowed to the maximum extent practicable consistent with safety. Thus, unless there is a safety issue determined by engineering judgment, these turns must be allowed.

All 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and Puerto Rico have allowed right turns on red since 1980, except where prohibited by a sign or where right turns are controlled by dedicated traffic signals. The few exceptions include New York City, where right turns on red are prohibited, unless a sign indicates otherwise. In some states, including New York, a right turn on red is prohibited when a red arrow is displayed. But cities are souring on right-on-red.

Atlanta, Denver, Indianapolis, Raleigh, Washington D.C. and other major cities have recently proposed or passed laws banning it in parts of their busy downtowns or citywide. They believe it

will protect people walking and biking amid the highest number of pedestrian fatalities in more than 40 years.

Select cases are reviewed on the next 4 pages (some with only limited info).

Indianapolis

After a record 40 pedestrian deaths in 2022 the city/county council proposed banning RTOR in the downtown district and possibly other high traffic intersections. In April 2023 a Republican State Senator proposed a pre-emptive ban on Indianapolis (and only Indianapolis) to regulate RTOR. Eventually the state ban passed but due to the late timing the city was able to implement their plan, but moving forward the state ban is in effect.

Denver

As of February 2024, the Denver Streets Partnership has renewed their 25-year push to ban RTOR across Denver. Denver reported 33 pedestrian deaths in 2023 while Colorado as a whole reports 133 peds and 20 bicyclists. They are encouraging the city to focus on the most dangerous intersections first.

Chicago

Chicago Mayor Brandon Johnson's transition plan called for "restricting right turns on red," but his administration hasn't provided specifics.

Seattle

Not allowing drivers to make a free right turn at a red light, or a left turn from a one-way street, will be the default setting for any new or modified traffic signal, according to a memo signed by leadership within the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) in early March 2023. The memo requires a determination for any deviation from the no-right-on-red policy and outlines a clear justification for the policy around safety. The policy change comes on the heels of the "top to bottom" review of the Vision Zero program, which recommended restricting right-on-red among other safety interventions.

The memo cites a recent study, published in the journal of the Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE), looking at Washington, D.C.'s implementation of no-turn-on-red restrictions at 100

intersections in 2019. Driver-to-driver conflicts were reduced by 97%, and vehicle-pedestrian conflicts were reduced by 92% following the installation of consistent no-turn-on-red (NTOR) signage. “The outcomes of this study indicate potentially positive effects of NTOR restrictions that can serve as a basis for developing a standardized methodology that considers both peak and off-peak vehicle and pedestrian demands,” the ITE journal notes. “These improvements came at overall minor impacts to traffic operations. These findings have helped the District identify a low-cost safety tool that will help in its pursuit of Vision Zero.”

But the study also noted a 30% increase in crosswalk encroachment by drivers following the deployment of the broad signage, as drivers started their turns but didn’t complete them.

The new policy will not apply when the city does routine maintenance, or when it modifies signals to add Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS), which provide low-vision people auditory clues that it’s safe to cross the street. The rule will also not apply when signal timing is the only thing about a signal that is modified.

As a footnote Washington state Sen. John Lovick, sponsored a bill this year that would have prohibited right on red statewide near schools, parks and certain other locations. It didn’t make it out of committee.

Washington DC

The D.C. Council in October 2022 voted 12-1 to pass the Safer Streets Amendment Act of 2022 that prohibits drivers from making a right turn on red at most intersections. This goes into effect January 2025.

The exception would be at intersections where DDOT determines right on red is safer than making right-turning drivers wait.

After 100 intersections were converted to prohibit right turns on red, a DDOT study found greater safety. (See the memo noted under the Seattle section)

The bill also allows bicyclists and scooter riders to maintain their momentum and roll through, without stopping, at intersections with stop signs and red lights when it’s safe to do so — something else that its supporters said would improve safety.

Raleigh NC

The Raleigh City Council in early 2023 authorized changes to ban motorists from turning right on red in the downtown core.

Following a January 2019 crash downtown which killed a pedestrian who was a state employee, Governor Cooper directed NCDOT engineers to initiate a study aimed at improving pedestrian safety in the downtown area. Working alongside city transportation staff, they completed the study in 2021, and issued a series of recommendations, which included adding Leading Pedestrian Intervals, lowering and posting the speed limit to 25 MPH, removing dual turning movements, and prohibiting turning right on red.

San Francisco

In 2021, San Francisco launched a pilot program to eliminate turn on red across the Tenderloin, covering over 50 intersections. As a result, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency observed a 70% reduction in vehicles blocking or encroaching onto crosswalks while the light was red.

San Francisco approved a project in April 2024 to ban right turns for motorists when the stoplight is red at about 200 downtown intersections. Once completed by August 2025, turning on red will be barred across virtually all of downtown, including SoMa and the Financial District. The Tenderloin is already a no-turn-on-red zone.

This earlier approval was taken up by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors at its August 6, 2024 meeting and declined to act on the proposal that would ban right turns at an estimated two-thirds of red lights in the city. The board instead signaled support for a blanket ban for all intersections.

Many public comments at that meeting focused on stress for bicyclists and pedestrians who are unsure if a driver will make a right turn on red or not.

Improving the walkability of streets, more so than the safety of them, has driven San Francisco's push for right on red bans, according to a staff memo from ahead of the meeting.

"Walkability is more than survivability," said public commenter Stephen Lawson, a self-described longtime San Francisco resident and frequent pedestrian.

The board continued discussion in September. In the meantime, the city would continue to put up signs downtown banning turns at red lights, City Traffic Engineer Ricardo Olea said. A discussion was also had by the Vision Zero Committee on August 27th.

https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/sf-supervisors-pause-right-turn-on-red-proposal-consider-citywide-ban/

Ann Arbor, Michigan

The City of Ann Arbor in early 2023 installed new “No Turn on Red” signs throughout the downtown area.

The new signage is part of an effort to reduce conflict points at intersections and city staff are working to communicate the changes with the public and are collaborating with the Ann Arbor Police Department on education and enforcement.

Cambridge, Massachusetts

The majority of the Cambridge City Council passed a resolution in 2022 banning drivers and cyclists from turning right on red to prioritize safety. This already applied to 80% of the city's intersection, but about 225 more signs were needed to make it clear. This project completed in April 2024 and now all RTOR are banned in Cambridge.

Atlanta

On February 14, 2024, the Atlanta City Council approved legislation prohibiting drivers from turning right on red in three central neighborhoods. It requires implementation before 2026.

Some supported it because, as pedestrians working Downtown near City Hall, many had experienced their own close calls. Also, councilmembers who drove some of the largest vehicles supported the effort due to near-misses they’d experienced with pedestrians.

The legislation was made additionally critical because of the 52% increase in pedestrian deaths between 2020 and 2023; the highest number in over 40 years. Propel ATL’s research found clear racial disparities in pedestrian fatalities. https://www.letspropelatl.org/

Some council members raised concerns about the potential for this ban to increase police interactions with Black and brown Atlantans, or to overburden low-income families. However, designing safer streets can encourage safer behavior, rather than requiring additional enforcement. To address these important concerns, the City created an unarmed traffic enforcement unit and advocates are exploring income-based traffic fines.

Also, of note for passage is that the Federal Highway Administration recommends banning right turns on red to increase pedestrian safety and decrease crashes at intersections, especially in combination with leading pedestrian intervals.

https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/saferjourney1/library/countermeasures/44.htm