

Recently ATWA has received concerns from citizens with regard to the operation of snow/fat bikes on single-track trails. It seems that some bikers do not know *who should yield to whom* when encountering other trail users, particularly walkers. One person who contacted us indicated that, “the predominant attitude seems to be that walkers should leap off the path when a bike comes through.”

For obvious reasons our trails are receiving more usage this year. People are getting involved for the first time in winter activities such as skiing, snowshoeing, and snow/fat biking. Such people may not know the rules of trail etiquette that commonly applies to their activity.

We are aware that the recently approved 2020 Trail Plan suggests the *adoption of a trail code of etiquette* that would apply to all trail users and their respective activities. (See Action #9) However, in the meantime we would ask the City to do the following: Add the Bicycle Bylaw’s *yield to pedestrians* requirement to both the City’s bicycle webpage and to the winter bicycling pamphlet.¹

The first should be a quick fix. The second would require more work, but perhaps the online pamphlet available on the City’s website could be immediately updated to include the *yield to pedestrians* requirement. As well, it would be a good time for the City to use its resources such as its *City News Highlights* and its *Facebook Page* to get the message out with regard to good trail etiquette.

One of the individuals who contacted us simply wanted to know “if there is discussion anywhere about how walkers and fat bikers can coexist a bit more peacefully.” The individual suggested that (when possible) the City and the CMBC co-host a town hall style meeting to discuss what walkers and bikers can do to improve the current situation.

Other concerns were raised about off-leash dogs, which can be particularly challenging to solo walkers and runners. Dog waste on City trails was also mentioned as a continuing problem.²

The new 2020 Trail Plan also mentions these concerns and states, “that actions need to be taken to improve trail etiquette and education among all trail users to reduce conflicts.” (p.25) However, it also states “this does not necessarily mean that off-leash dogs should be excluded from trails.”

¹ The Bicycle Bylaw says that “A person operating a bicycle on a **trail** or on a sidewalk as permitted in section 8 of this bylaw shall: (1) yield the right of way to pedestrians.”

² No owner of an animal shall allow the animal to defecate on public land within the City, or on private property other than the owner’s. It is not a violation of this section where the owner of an offending animal immediately cleans up and properly disposes of the defecation. (Animal Control Bylaw Section 56)

This seems to conflict with Section 55 of the City's Animal Control Bylaw, which reads as follows: "No owner of an animal shall permit such animal to be upon *any public property within the municipal boundaries of the City* unless such animal is *on a leash* that is held at all times by a person exercising control over the animal." The City's own website under *Animal Control* says, "When you are out for a walk, please *keep your dogs on a leash* and bring a bag to clean up after them."

To add to the confusion the City's *Off-Leash Pamphlet* makes the claim that Section 53(1) of the Animal Control Bylaw says, "areas 100 meters from the perimeter around all subdivisions, roads, developed parks, or paved trails are *off leash* areas. This includes country residential subdivisions, urban areas, and other private property within the City of Whitehorse." (See <https://www.whitehorse.ca/home/showpublisheddocument?id=1582>.)

Yet Section 53(1) of the bylaw says no such thing. (See <https://www.whitehorse.ca/home/showpublisheddocument?id=109>, p. 14)

I know the bylaw was amended in January of 2005 and provisions were made to allow for off-leash areas, but these changes do not seem to be reflected in the Animal Control Bylaw found on the City's website. (Please note that on Jan. 4 2021, I contacted City Bylaw and the office is currently looking into this matter.)

The City should clarify the current rules as to how dogs are to be controlled on our trails, correct the Off-Leash Pamphlet's reference to Section 53 of the Animal Control Bylaw, and *if* the bylaw was changed in the manner the pamphlet suggests, then ensure the bylaw reflects those changes.

We would ask that this clarification be done as soon as possible. The City's *Facebook Page* and its *City News Highlights* could be used to get the message out, although other media resources could also be employed.

Thank you for your attention to these concerns.

Sincerely,

Keith Lay (Active Trails Whitehorse Association)
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