

A Brief History of Bicycle Registration in Madison

The following is summarized from various reports in TE files

I have no idea when the City of Madison began requiring bicycles to be registered

1) Report to Common Council on Bicycle Registration Safety & Law Enforcement by Ad Hoc Bicycle Safety & Traffic Committee, April 12, 1972

In 1971, only 23,000 bicycles were registered out of an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 bicycles owned in the City. The report listed some of the same reasons for this that we cite today, limited enforcement, bicyclists not seeing any benefit to them of registration.

Registration at that time was on an annual renewal cycle and on a calendar year (January 1 to December 31). One of the report's recommendations was to change the renewal year from January 1 to July 1.

Currently, registration is for a calendar year. The July 1 date is recommended because it not only accommodates the out-of town University and MATC students who may be here for only two semesters, but it occurs at a time when bicycles are being used. The January registration occurs at a time when most bicycles are not being used and it is easy for the occasional cyclist to put off and subsequently forget registration.

License plates were still being used at that time. Another recommendation was to only issue a new license plate once every four years and to issue a small sticker with the year on it for each of the intervening three years. This probably set the stage for the four year renewal cycle when license plates were discontinued.

2) 1976/77 City Ordinance amendment

- Raised fee from \$1 per year to \$5 for 4 years
- Changed the registration cycle from annual to once every four years
- Maintained the renewal date as July 1 (implemented in 1972)

3) 1983 Budget and follow-up

The 1983 budget called for an increase in the bicycle registration fee from \$5 to \$10 and change in the renewal cycle from 4 years to 5 years in order to increase bicycle registration revenues by \$100,000. Subsequently, the Pedestrian-Bicycle Committee recommended the creation of an Ad Hoc Committee to study various issues involving bicycle registration. The Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Bicycle Licensing, June 1983, made the following recommendations

The committee feels that four years is a good compromise and sees no need to change it - that that is the maximum time in which to maintain accurate records. However, we suggest a change in the expiration date to May 15 instead of July 1. We suggest that any registration during the calendar year expire on May 15 of the fourth following calendar year (e.g. license on 3/1/83 would expire 5/5/87 and a license on 11/1/83 would expire on 5/15/87).

Use of Stickers Instead of, or With License Plates

The committee recommends changing to decals. We believe the use of decals will reduce the cost and serve as an incentive to licensing.

Raise the fee to \$6 (for four years)

The recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee were adopted by the Common Council.

4) 1991 City Ordinance amendment

- increased the bicycle registration fee from \$6 to \$8 for a four year registration
- introduced the family plan pricing structure, the fee is \$8 for the first two bicycles in a family, then \$5 for the third and subsequent bicycles registered.
- required point of sale bicycle registration by bicycle dealers and allowed dealers to retain \$1 from the sale of each registration to cover their costs of administration of the registration program

5) 1997 City Ordinance Amendment

Allows UW-Wisconsin to register bicycles and to retain one-half of the fees collected

6) 2004 City Ordinance Amendment

Raised the fee for a four year registration to \$10, and the family plan to \$8 for the third and subsequent bicycles registered.