

News, updates and tips for promoting Boulder's transportation options.

[December 12, 2014](#)

[The Way of the Path: Multi-Use Path Etiquette Campaign](#)



Summer/Fall 2014 Findings

The Way of the Path campaign is an initiative to improve the safety and flow of people using Boulder's multi-use paths. The campaign intends to raise awareness of multi-use path rules and etiquette and encourage people to pledge responsibility for how they ride, walk, and enjoy Boulder's paths.

Throughout fall 2014, Boulderites pledged to follow The Way of the Path by learning the rules, accepting their responsibilities, and being a part of The Boulder Way to GO. Read this blog to learn about some findings gathered from the fall 2014 campaign.



Statistical Findings

- **The top three reasons for using Boulder’s multi-use paths** were recreation/social, exercise, and shopping/errands
- Over 80% say respondents **knew the 15 mph speed limit** on Boulder’s multi-use paths.
- Of the people not currently **monitoring their speed** on the multi-use paths (that do find it important), 67% are interested in using a smart-phone app or a handlebar-mounted cyclometer. Other answers included less expensive options and pacing.
- Only 25% of respondents bring a **dog on the multi-use paths** a couple times a month or more.
- Respondents suggested that the number one way to increase compatibility of dogs and humans on the paths was owners having **better control of their dogs**.
- **89% of respondents use the multi-use paths after dark**. 92% of those people use safety precautions on the paths after dark. The other 8% are planning to start using them.
- 80% of respondents have been **startled by a bicyclist and/or pedestrian on the paths at night** because they couldn’t see them.
- Only 20% of respondents were sure that they had encountered an **e-bike** on the paths. 83% of respondents support e-bike usage on the paths, and the other 17% were unsure.
- 78% of respondents use an **audible alert** and 89% use **hand signals** to ensure that they’re predictable and visible on the paths
- 73% of respondents alert someone that they are about to pass them on the multi-use paths by **ringing a bell** or announcing **“On your left!”**
- 100% of respondents said they **alert people that they are passing** BEFORE they catch up to them.
- 92% of respondents have been **startled by somebody passing them unannounced** on the multi-use paths at least a few times.
- 100% of respondents said they notice and follow **pavement markings** on paths that separate bicyclists and pedestrians.
- 71% of respondents have had a **close call** on Boulder’s multi-use paths
- 100% of those who have had a close call have **almost collided with a bicyclist**. The second most common close calls on the path are related to larger groups of people **blocking the path**.
- Respondents agree that the two most important rules to follow in order to ensure Boulder’s multi-use paths are safe and enjoyable for all are **“Be aware and courteous”** and **“Be predictable and visible”**.



Qualitative Findings

- One respondent ensures they are predictable and visible on the paths by generally acting as though they are driving a car.
- Safety precautions used at night on the paths by respondents include reflective clothing, light colored clothing, headlamp/flashlight, light on bike helmet, lights on front and back of bike, reflectors on bike body and spokes, and blinking light on purse or backpack.
- One respondent alerts someone that they are about to pass by saying “good morning” rather than the more common phrase “on your left”.



What We've Learned

- Those who have pledged to follow The Way of the Path (over 330 people) may use the path for a variety of different reasons, but it seems that almost everyone learned something from the fall 2014 blog posts and surveys. Many people voiced appreciation for the campaign.
- Boulder Revised Code states that headphones are not permitted when operating a vehicle. The definition of a vehicle includes bikes, and the definition of headphones

only applies if they are covering all or part of both ears. It is legal for pedestrians to wear headphones in both ears. Perhaps a revision only allowing pedestrians on the multi-use paths to wear headphones in one ear should be considered.

- It may be a good idea to consider enforcing lower speeds at frequently congested areas of the path and locations with limited sight distance.
- Most survey respondents were those who use the paths often and are aware of the etiquette required to make the paths flow smoothly and safely. Others who aren't as aware may require another approach to engage, such as increased signage stating the rules on the paths. All respondents stated that they notice and adhere to pavement markings. Creating pavement markings on the path that explain the rules would be one signage option.

What's Next

GO Boulder plans to pursue next steps based on what we have learned through feedback received during this campaign. Look for another round in 2015, and continue to follow The Way of the Path! Any further questions or comments can be sent to Marni Ratzel at RatzelM@bouldercolorado.gov.