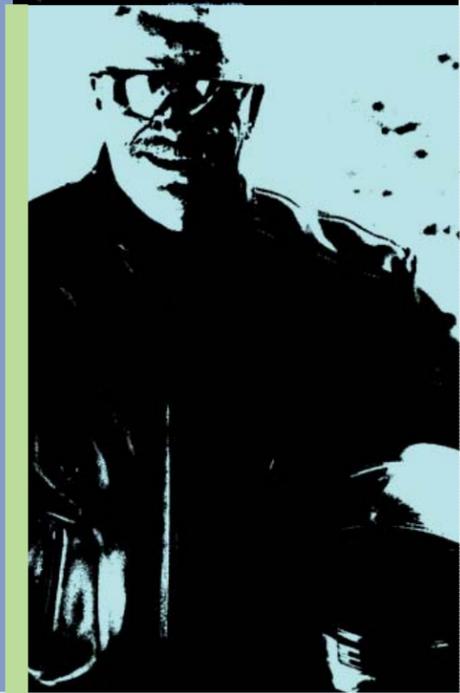# GETTING the GREEN

A Cyclists Guide to Getting Traffic Signals to Turn Green

You've been sitting at a traffic signal on your bicycle or motorcycle **FOREVER** waiting for the light to turn green — but it doesn't.

Let's talk about Loop Detection

Ada County has approximately 270 intersections with traffic signals set to respond to waiting vehicles (about 85 intersections in downtown Boise operate on fixed timing patterns). At most intersections a 6-foot-by-6-foot square of coiled wire, known as loop detection is under the pavement. It's connected to an amplifier in the signal controller that detects a vehicle's metal — not its weight. Most of the time, loop detection works well for bikes and motorcycles. But you may have noticed long waits or no signal change at a few places in the county. If you are riding a newer bicycle made from carbon fiber or composite materials, the loop detection will not work for you. More commonly, your bike is in the wrong place to be picked up by the loop or the loop needs an adjustment.

The Fix

If you experience problems at a traffic signal in Ada County, please report them to ACHD's Traffic Department by calling 387-6190. ACHD will apply yellow markings on the pavement where the front wheel of your bike should be positioned to trigger detection. ACHD cannot simply turn up the sensitivity of the detector because it will sense vehicles in the next lane over, needlessly triggering changes in the traffic pattern. To ensure a quick and effective response, we ask cyclists to limit their requests to the most heavily used routes or problem intersections.

In some cases, you will see cuts in the pavement where a saw was used to install loop detectors. Position your wheels directly over the
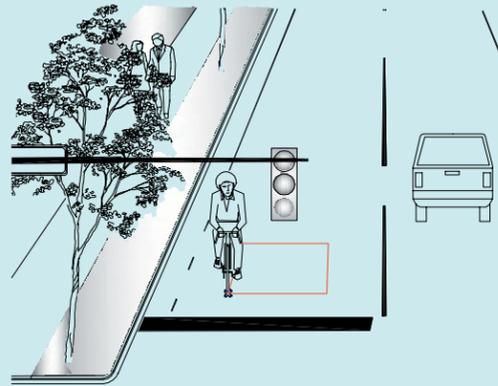
saw mark, parallel to the direction you are going. If your bike is not made of metal, you may have to push the pedestrian cross button or wait for a motor vehicle to change the signal.
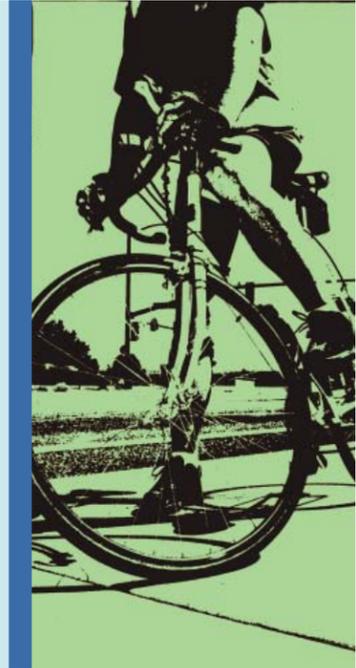
Looking Toward The Future

The good news is that loop detection will no longer cause frustrations for Ada County cyclists and motorcyclists in the future. Within the next few years, ACHD will install video camera detection at intersections, replacing loop detection. Although video detection is currently available and used on some newer signals, ACHD is waiting for this technology to improve before making its use widespread. Currently, video detection is less effective than loop detection because the cameras can easily be fooled by darkness, rapidly changing light conditions and very bright sun.

Report problem intersections to ACHD's Traffic Department @ 387-6190