

Recommended Language for Use in Discussing Active Transportation Issues

Language shapes our understanding of transportation. The vocabulary used in discussions about traffic safety affects how people view improvements to the transportation system. The following are terms to use to help communicate more clearly and accurately about active transportation issues.

Use in state law, administrative code, documents, and media communications:	Instead of:
<p>“crash” or “collision”</p> <p>These terms are consistent with recommendations from NHTSA, public health practitioners, Associated Press, and others. Crashes and collisions are preventable and their severity can be reduced.</p>	<p>“accident”</p>
<p>“driver,” “motorist,” or “person driving”</p> <p>Particularly with the emergence of connected and autonomous vehicles, media coverage official reports should be clear and specific in labeling the actions of the driver rather than the vehicle.</p>	<p>Do not refer to the vehicle as taking actions on its own, e.g., “the car then turned right and proceeded down the road.”</p>
<p>Use in state law, administrative code, documents, and media communications:</p>	
<p>“roadway users”</p> <p>Using the term “roadway user” purposefully avoids assuming that driving is the norm and all other modes of transportation are alternatives to driving.</p>	<p>“non-motorist”</p>
<p>“bicycling,” “walking,” or “active transportation”</p> <p>The term “active transportation” includes walking, bicycling, using a mobility assist device like a wheelchair or walker, or using a small-wheeled device such</p>	<p>“non-motorized transportation” or “alternative transportation”</p>

<p>as a skateboard, foot scooter/e-scooter, or inline skates. Using the term “non-motorized transportation” reinforces the current system priority for use of motorized vehicles.</p>	
<p>“people walking” or “people who walk”</p> <p>Using “people walking” is people-first language and establishes that it is a person doing an action. Pedestrian defines the person by the action. There are, however, all kinds of walking. Where a one-word term better suits the structure of the sentence or discussion, the word “walker” is preferred.</p>	<p>“pedestrians”</p>
<p>“people biking,” “people using bicycles,” or “people who bike”</p> <p>Using “people biking” is people-first language and establishes that it is a person doing an action. “Bicyclist,” like “pedestrian,” defines the person by the action; “cyclist” carries this a step further to suggest certain stereotypes about who bicycles and why. Where a one-word term better suits the sentence or discussion, the word “bicyclist” is preferred.</p>	<p>“bicyclist” or “cyclist”</p>
<p>“people who walk, bike, or roll” or “people who walk or roll”</p> <p>Using “people who walk, bike, or roll” is people-first language and establishes that it is a person doing an action. Additionally, it is inclusive not only of people who walk or people who bicycle, but also of people who use wheelchairs or other mobility-assist devices, and people who use scooters, skateboards, or skates to move from one place to another. Where a slightly shorter phrase is needed, “people who walk or roll” is preferred.</p>	<p>“non-drivers” or “users of alternative transportation”</p>