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Bike crossings inconvenient for users

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A bicycle crossing was recently added in Insa-dong, central Seoul, in this June 2 photo. But such special crossings are drawing complaints from bikers as there are no ramps from the curbs. / Yonhap

By Lee Kyung-min

Seoul City has recently expanded crossings for cyclists by drawing special lanes along pedestrian crossings.

Despite the city's good intentions to make streets bike-friendly and encourage cycling as a method of eco-friendly transportation, it is being criticized for its "desk plan" that is not really helpful to cyclists.

Seoul Metropolitan Government (SMG) has been adding the crossings for cyclists to cross the road on their bikes without dismounting, because, according to traffic regulations, cyclists must dismount at regular pedestrian crossings.

While many pedestrian crossings have ramps for wheelchairs or strollers, ironically many of the special bike crossings meet a high curb with no ramp, forcing riders to dismount and lift their bikes back onto the sidewalks.

Nikola Medimorec, a German national living in Seoul, said he is greatly inconvenienced by the absence of the ramps.

"I ride bikes often, to work and to go to the nearest supermarket. But every time I reach the end of the crosswalk, I have to get off and lift it and get back on. It's a hassle," said Medimorec, a co-author of urban studies website Kojects.com.

"I used to live in Trier, Germany, and the bike lane infrastructure is better than this."

Medimorec said he is not the only one with this complaint.

"This issue has been raised quite a few times among many of my friends who also like cycling," he added.

"I would hope that the city government promptly set up the connecting ramps as soon as possible."






However, the SMG does not plan to make such ramps any time soon, citing a budget shortage.

"We are aware of the problem, but we do not have an immediate plan to allocate additional budget

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to build the ramps," an SMG official said, adding that making one ramp costs up to 10 million won.

Cyclists criticized the reaction from the city government.

"I think the SMG is prioritizing showing off that it did something," said a cyclist who refused to be named.

"But their top concern should be whether or not the policy is actually safe and usable for the public."

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