The following excerpts about bicyclists are from our book

Order from Amazon.com
Road Rage and Aggressive Driving:
Steering Clear of Highway Warfare

An elderly driver peeved that another driver honked at him hurled his prescription bottle at the honker, then smashed his knees with his car when the man got out.

An enraged bicyclist, after being knocked off his bike by a car, pulled out a handgun and shot the driver to death.

The expression "road rage" was introduced into the public vocabulary by the popular media. Though there has been no agreed-upon definition, people use the phrase to refer to an extreme state of anger that often precipitates aggressive behavior, sometimes restricted to words and gestures, sometimes as assault and battery. A variety of factors have been named to account for the increase in aggressiveness between drivers, such as traffic congestion, feeling endangered, being insulted, frustration, time pressure, fatigue, competitiveness, and lapses in attention.

An eyewitness description of New Delhi road users:

"When traveling in India a few years ago, I was blown away by the sort of highway travel that I experienced there. While traveling by bus on the highway from Dehra Dun to New Delhi, I quickly noticed that buses, trucks, bicycles, and all sorts of other vehicles were barreling down a narrow piece of pavement in both directions. When the bus I was on wanted to pass another, or if a truck approached from the other direction, the driver would honk the horn like hell until, miraculously to me, a path cleared for the bus to pass.

While this driving technique-the constant blasting of horns-was obnoxious and terrifying to me, it was acceptable and standard behavior in that country, or at least on that expanse of highway. In fact, most trucks had signs-decoratively painted on the tailgates-stating, "Horn Please," which I took to mean something like, "Honk with impunity to let me know you're behind me." There is no doubt that road rage and aggressive driving are worldwide phenomena, rooted in cultural ideology."

We personalize incidents to the point of confrontation:

"This wasn't rush hour, but there were quite a few cars on the road. Since there were no bike lanes designated, we rode along the right-hand lane as the law states that we are to do. All of a sudden this lady in her car right behind us starts honking. She didn't honk just once. No--she honked three or four times. This really pissed me off. I scowled and told my sister to just keep going. Then when we pulled off the main street to make a turn, I glared at the woman as she passed..."
Anger plus self righteousness is the classic recipe for road rage. However, it's important to recognize that road rage is expressed in different ways by different drivers. Our research over the years has yielded a number of distinct road rage personalities. They range from aggressive moralists, to those obsessed with defeating the clock, to the passive aggressive, and the outright murderous. The lesson to be drawn from these types is that through our shared culture, we each may harbor some of these irrational mental habits.  

Our research has uncovered three different types of road rage. Each type represents particular emotional challenges.

It's not only drivers who feel free to express their anger on the roads:

"A bicyclist enraged at being knocked off his bike by a car outside Washington DC. got up, pulled out a handgun and shot the driver to death, police said. The bicyclist killed 19-year-old college student, with a single shot in the head. He ran off on foot but was caught 10 minutes later."

The road rage legend suggests that it's mostly confined to men. Not so. In Ohio, a young mother of two was jockeying for position on a highway with a pregnant woman. She ended up slamming on her brakes on purpose to show her rage, and the pregnant woman hit a pole and went flying. She lost the baby. The mother of two was sentenced to over a year in prison for vehicular manslaughter of the fetus. (See the analysis of this road rage tragedy in Chapter 5)

A bicyclist bumped a car by mistake and avoided getting into a potential road rage incident by applying a successful de-escalating strategy

"I made a bone head mistake yesterday at a stop light, trying to squeeze between a Jeep and the curb. Caught my pedal on the curb and fell against the Jeep, just the handle bar end touched and I have plastic ends. So I thought no big deal. Light changed and I went on my way. Well the driver chased me down for a little "talk." I stayed calm and I went down for a little "talk." I stayed calm said him I was sorry, that I had made a mistake and agreed that yes there was a scuff on his door. Said I believed the scuff would buff out, said I would stay if he wanted to call the police, and fill out an accident report. Also informed him that I had no insurance. He calmed down said he wanted me to see what I had done. I said yes I see and I apologize. O.K., he drove off. Close one! I felt great and experienced a rush of success with the positive approach." (Young man)

This bicyclist made emotionally intelligent choices that neutralized a conflict, but another bicyclist sits in jail for being oppositional and giving in to his rage

A bicyclist enraged at being knocked off his bike by a car outside Washington D.C. got up, pulled out a handgun and shot the driver to death, police said. The bicyclist killed a 19-year-old woman, a college student, with a single shot in the head. He ran off on foot but was caught 10 minutes later, a Maryland police statement said. "It was senseless... He wasn't even hurt. He was just mad," said an eyewitness....Police said the suspect, a 26-year old man, had been charged with first degree murder and remanded in custody. The victim's father said his daughter had been headed for class when she was killed. "She was such a peaceable person,"..."I just want to say, my baby is an angel...It's unbelievable. Why, why, why?"

Middle School: Focus on Cognitive Driving Skills

Age-appropriate review of the affective skills and their extension to these cognitive skills with sensorimotor demonstrations. Students will learn:

**What principles are safest for children as passengers, pedestrians, and cyclists.**

1. To become more aware of habits of thinking while walking or riding.
2. To develop objective judgment about strangers' behavior.
3. To develop emotional intelligence as drivers, passengers, and pedestrians.
4. To critically analyze driving incidents (scenario analysis) by focusing on identifying choice-points (how to prevent or break the chain of errors that leads to catastrophe).
5. To acknowledge the human rights of all drivers.
6. To acknowledge passengers' rights (their convenience, comfort, and safety).
7. To acknowledge pedestrian rights (why they must have the right of way).
8. To acknowledge the rights of bicycle riders and how to behave near them.
9. To acknowledge the rights of truck drivers, the need for truck deliveries, and how to behave near them.
10. To practice group discussions on the importance of civility in public behavior (respecting mutual rights, inalienable rights,
11. To be able to defend the ideal of social responsibility in public places

12. To recognize the benefits and rewards of being supportive and positive.

13. To practice self-witnessing activities as passengers

14. To practice self-witnessing activities as pedestrians and other road uses

The Highway Safety Act of 1996 authorizes the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), through its separate agencies of the National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHA), to fund traffic improvement programs implemented by state and local governments, including funding safety improvements in the areas of occupant protection, emergency medical services, police traffic services, roadway safety, impaired driving, speed control, motorcycle safety, traffic records, and pedestrian and bicycle safety.6

Bicycle advocacy groups want more restrictions on the movement of cars, which drivers oppose. Controversy surrounding the issue is inevitable since the parties involved protect contrary interests, and because it is amounts to speed control, traffic calming tends to set opposing lines between neighborhood constituencies

- Motorists in transit vs. local residents
- Drivers vs. bicyclists · Drivers vs. pedestrians
- Bicyclists vs. pedestrians · Private vs. commercial drivers
- 4-wheel drivers vs. truckers

Authorities set speed limits according to traffic engineering studies. They find that the best way to ascertain the appropriate speed limit for a stretch of road, is to survey the speed of free flowing traffic, and to set the speed limit at the 85th percentile. This is the speed exceeded by 15 percent of the vehicles.8 This practice minimizes accident risk and maximizes motorist compliance. The NMA argues that instead of following this approach, current speed limits are based on political considerations (...).

Mr. Pavelka, I received a copy of Bicycling magazine containing your wonderful feature story on road rage. Thanks for putting in DrDriving's Web address!! I've already had some responses from people who read your story.

In case you are interested, I have written a review of your article--my impressions and comments on your topics, and it is available here (this file)

I'd be glad to hear your reactions.

Leon James
Take care and drive with Aloha spirit! **DrDriving**

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Bicycling Magazine’s Feature Article

May 1998 issue Reviewed by Dr. Leon James

Bicycling magazine’s May 1988 issue contains a major article on Road Rage, sub-titled: The Enemy Within by Ed Pavelka, and with awesome artwork by Cliff Nielsen. When Pavelka interviewed me back in January, I realized that I need to keep informing myself about driver-cyclists relations on the road. Here is how he described his assignment to me:

For an upcoming feature article I am researching Road Rage as it impacts bicycle riders. It seems that more and more cyclists are experiencing aggression and hostility from motorists. I have come across your name several times in my research, which has turned up plenty of information about motorist vs. motorist confrontations, but really nothing about motorist vs. cyclist confrontations.

I hope you can speak with me about how Road Rage puts cyclists at risk. Why might a cyclist or a group of cyclists light the fuse of susceptible drivers? What's the mindset of these drivers toward the vulnerable, easy mark that cyclists represent? What should cyclists do (or not do) to protect themselves against aggressive incidents that could escalate into something worse? From your understanding of Road Rage, is it becoming riskier to be out there on a bike?

Your thoughts on these issues are very important to this article.

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Cyclist Rage
As these sample comments indicate, there has developed a political division between drivers and cyclists sharing the same road. Each group identifies with itself and sees the other as the enemy. Ed Pavelka’s take in the road rage article is that “the enemy is within,” as he put it on the cover: “When road rage strikes you (p.76)” so we need to focus on both issues:

(1) aggressiveness and hostility between drivers and cyclists

(2) aggressiveness and hostility within drivers and within cyclists

The first issue is highly political and needs to be understood in terms of civic activism and social confrontation between user groups. The second issue is psychological and spiritual.

Ed Pavelka's article starts with this side bar comment:

“They hate you. You hate them. What drives ordinary people to mindless violence? The debate over who rules the road.”

"Motorized miscreants"--Pavelka's list:

- aggressive tactics
- speeding
- tailgating
- flashing headlights
- weaving through traffic
- passing on the right
- running stop signs
- running lights
- shouting threats
- flipping the bird
- laying on your horns
- cutting off ‘the enemy’
- perceiving others as getting in the way
- keeping up a confrontational attitude
- wild swervers threatening cyclists
- revving engines
- shouting insultiingly
- gesturing menacingly
- throwing beer cans or other objects

I love Pavelka's list above! Not the drivers behaving badly, but the descriptive and accurate list of their social crimes. It is a list of traits belonging to every driver's repertoire or inventory of driving habits. In many years of studying driver behavior, I have yet to find a driver who never experiences aggressiveness or hostility towards other road users such as cyclists, pedestrians, other drivers, or officials and regulations. Anger is no doubt the most common form of emotion we use to settle accounts with each other in our daily exchanges. The mini-relationships we experience with thousands of other road users every year, only last a few seconds or so, yet they are very significant, very important, influencing your fate, your future, your self-respect, your pocketbook, and your morality.

My wife Diane, known affectionately in the family as "Dr. Driving's doctor," and who rides with me every day, frequently has to tell me, "Fix your face, Leon" or "Wave to that man who let you in. Wave now. Go ahead, wave, Leon." What a simple, civilized request--yet Leon feels the resistance within him. "It's too late now" he says lamely, annoyed at her enthusiasm for this stranger who hardly took notice of him (he thought to himself), or who would block the left lane so he would have to get around him. Annoyance. That's the mood he was in. Finally he waves, convinced the other is no longer involved. Suddenly, Diane speaks out triumphantlly, "See, he waved back." Leon feels ashamed of his resistance. Against his own inclination, he feels an inner glow of happiness. He is surprised. Where did that come from? He is pleased. Now he tells himself that he's going to continue his efforts to reform his driving personality. Good: his Dr. Driving is back, and in command.

What are "a cyclist's visceral reaction" to a being sideswiped by a driver? Pavelka's list:

- fear
- anger
- frustration
Pavelka quotes me as saying that "Driving and habitual road rage have become virtually inseparable" (p.78) and backs me up with what Time magazine describes as "the most comprehensive national survey on driving behavior so far." This survey was done by EPIC_MRA, a Michigan based firm. Their data indicate that non-fatal road rage incidents have increased 51% in this decade and 80% of motorists report they are angry "most or all of the time" (figure summaries cited by Pavelka, p.78).

Pavelka further quotes me on the "negative psychology between drivers and cyclists." Certainly the evidence is there, as indicated by the postings I quote above. "Bad attitude turns into bad behavior," says Pavelka (p. 80). His theory is that stressed out people at work and home get into their anonymous cockpits, and vent their anger and insecurity against hapless strangers. Other causes, according to Pavelka:

- people think they own the road
- roads are congested
- drivers are in a rush all the time
- crazed drivers are willing to use the car as a weapon
- cyclists are easy targets
- attitude of drivers that cyclists don't belong on public roads
- false belief that cyclists are illegal nuisances

Pavelka quotes me on what to do when you get into one of these hostile exchanges--by mistake--and you realize your mistake and you just want to back out of it. Writes Pavelka (p.123):

"Apologizing is unfair when you didn't do anything wrong" says Dr. James. "But right and wrong is no longer applicable to the situation. There is an emergency going on. And during an emergency you must go by the priority of what can cause the greatest disaster."

O.K., I don't remember saying that, but I don't deny it. It sounds accurate to me now. Pavelka backs up my words with those of Dr. Nerenberg, a California road rage therapist who has been in the media this past year, usually alongside with me: "Indeed an apology is what 65% of road ragers say they want." I saw Dr. Nerenberg on Leeza the other day, and at one point he flashed a sign that said "Sorry." I asked my students in traffic psychology what they would do if a driver flashed the Sorry sign when they're mad at that driver. "It would make me more mad" was a common answer!! Well, perhaps it depends on what the signs say....

Now here is, in my opinion, Pavelka's deepest insight:

"Let's be honest--we can't divvy up the world neatly into motorists and cyclists. Most cyclists spend a lot of time behind the wheel of a car. Dispassionately examine your riding styles, and if you find yourself constantly itching to strike back in traffic, get some professional help."

OK, hold on just a minute Mr. Pavelka! Since all 177 million drivers are at risk in terms of falling for aggressiveness sometimes, and most of them pretty frequently, it would be hopeless if we all had to get professional help!! Millions of drivers and cyclists and pedestrians--millions every day--find themselves "constantly itching to strike back in traffic." And if not "constantly" then frequently. So we need a plan that is available now to all these millions who want to change themselves--that's when Dr. Driving comes into the picture, especially, the inner power tools you use on yourself: self-witnessing exercises and self-modification efforts.

I thank Mr. Pavelka for his generous article. His ending sentence is something we all need to take to heart:

"The onus of good citizenship rests squarely on the shoulders of anyone who uses the road--be it on two wheels or four."

(Or 8 and 16...not to forget the truckers perspective...)

Cliff Nielsen attempted to capture the essence of road rage as the enemy within. His full page painting, or creation, depicts a fiendish face surrounded by a dark halo with the words "steel belted radial." The background of the picture is the body made of hellish scenes with fiery smoke and dark monsters lurking about, a kind of spiritual geography of many infernal societies or cities, all coalescing together into the shape of this road warrior daemon. The foreground was the greenish cruel brain: a gun. Also in the foreground, the heart, depicted as a red bloody mountain spewing out fiery bellows and smoke.

So there you have it folks! The driver's Road Warrior within is not a pretty sight. Fortunately, we also possess a Dr. Driving who is well equipped with inner power tools to drive the daemon out, to bottle the genie of aggressiveness, to smash the hidden traps of retaliation, vengeance, and cynicism.

Dr. Leon James is again Interviewed for Bicycling Magazine by Doug Donaldson in 2000.

Dr. James -- I am a writer for BICYCLING Magazine at Rodale Press in Pennsylvania. BICYCLING is the world's largest cycling publication with about 1.8 million readers each month.
For an upcoming feature article I am researching Road Rage as it impacts bicycle riders. It seems that more and more cyclists are experiencing aggression and hostility from motorists. I have come across your name several times in my research, which has turned up plenty of information about motorist vs. motorist confrontations, but really nothing about motorist vs. cyclist confrontations.

I hope you can speak with me about how Road Rage puts cyclists at risk. Why might a cyclist or a group of cyclists light the fuse of susceptible drivers? What's the mindset of these drivers toward the vulnerable, easy mark that cyclists represent? What should cyclists do (or not do) to protect themselves against aggressive incidents that could escalate into something worse? From your understanding of Road Rage, is it becoming riskier to be out there on a bike?

Your thoughts on these issues are very important to this article. I'm on deadline (of course) so if you could call me at your convenience today or Friday I would record your comments and advice.

Here's a reader of that article who wrote to me this note:

Date: Fri, 20 Mar 1998 21:15:43 -1000
To: dyc@DrDriving.org
Subject: Comments on your site
Hello!

I read about your site in the May 1998 issue of Bicycling magazine and am impressed with its content. I am a 33 year old bicycle rider and driver from Massachusetts. I work at home and don't have to drive very often. For this I am thankful.

I, like at least one other respondent, find many drivers to be without manners. Rudeness and selfishness rule the road. Over my eighteen years behind the wheel I believe both have increased alarmingly.

One factor which I believe causes road rage and confrontations in general, is basic street design and layout of intersections. I live and grew up in Massachusetts but lived in the state of Washington for 5 years during my years in college. The street layouts for the 2 states are quite different in design.

In WA, the majority of streets meet at intersections at 90 degrees. Most busy stoplights have a separate lane and light cycle for left turns. Many of these intersections have multiple lanes, clearly marked by signs near the signals, which indicate left, straight or right. There are many 4 way stops, especially through residential neighborhoods.

This is not the case in MA. Many intersections in MA meet at angles which bring blind spots of various car models into play, and you rarely find a separate lane and/or light cycle for left turners. There are a high number of intersections where it is difficult to tell which street across the intersection is a continuation of the one you were on or if you are actually making a turn. There are fewer 4 way stops and multi lane intersections. Turning lanes are not clearly marked.

In my experience I found MA drivers to be much more rude and aggressive than the drivers of WA. One example I have seen increasing over the last few years in MA is left turners not yielding the right of way. This behavior is nearly universal in MA. At most intersections which have a signal, but no left turn light cycle, the first (and often second and third) driver will try to beat the oncoming traffic as soon as the light turns green. I cannot see how anyone could think they have the right of way in this situation, but this is becoming the norm. There are obviously other factors which differ between the states. There is a higher population per square mile in MA and the "East Coast" rat race effect on stress is quite evident. These obviously contribute to aggression as well, but I feel the road design in MA causes more confrontation and confusion then that of WA.

I mention this factor most in discussions about aggressive driving mainly because I feel this is the least noticed. Two other areas I feel need improvement are education and enforcement. Its too easy to get a license and the police need to enforce other traffic laws besides speeding, but both of those are discussions for another day.

Thank you for taking the time to read my lengthy post, and again, I complement you on your site and your efforts.

A similar issue was raised by an earlier correspondent:

Date: Thu, 7 Nov 1996 10:01:29 -1000
To: dyc@DrDriving.org
Subject: Driving Story
Hello Dr. Driving!

My story is bicycle related. I live in Madison, WI. So do about 100,000 bikers. I was headed to work, on a one way street, during a SNOWSTORM. I was cut off by someone who blew off a stop sign. That's right, someone was riding a BICYCLE IN THE SNOWSTORM. I beeped to let them know that I was having trouble stopping in time, sure that I was going to hit them. They flipped ME off, cut off the driver in the next lane, who came within 2 INCHES of hitting ME (always better to hit a car than a bike, right?). The other driver also beeped, and got the same treatment I did. The biker then scooted down a different street. Scariest part was HE WAS NOT WEARING A HELMET!
I have come to the conclusion that the major problem with traffic (re: Pedestrians, drivers, bikers) is that no one HAS ANY MANNERS ANYMORE. Also, I am taking on a lifetime project - I want bikes accountable for their actions since, especially here in Madtown, bikes are being used more and more for daily commuting (they are VEHICLES, TOO). I WANT THEM PLATED. They come zooming up from behind ON THE SIDEWALK and don't bother to say "on your left", though that is partly irrelevant as it is ILLEGAL TO RIDE A BIKE IN A BUSINESS AREA: DOWNTOWN MADISON. The way I see it is that I would rather be pissed at a stupid car driver. At least if they screw up and there is an accident, you hit car first, not stupid biker.

Thanks for letting me vent. Keep up the good work!

Roaming around in electronic discussion groups gave me some idea of the magnitude of the problem and its seriousness. Here's a selection that I found on Dr. Driving's site. Read these over, following which you'll find my discussion of the road rage article in Bicycling magazine.

Did you know that...
more than 46,000 pedalcyclists have died in traffic crashes in the United States since 1932 — the first year in which estimates of pedalcyclist fatalities were recorded.

Bicycle Advocacy || Cycling Resources
See more government statistics below.

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Bike Rage

by Charles Montgomery

This is from: http://www.momentumplanet.com/bike-rage

(...) I was “bike rage” incarnate.

You've been there, too; admit it. Bike rage is a common occurrence, and quite predictable, according to road rage guru Leon James. The University of Hawaii professor of psychology has spent decades examining how commuting on city roads is so efficient at producing tension, anxiety, and anger – in drivers as well as cyclists. James' theories should be enough to turn the most self-righteous door-smackers among us into pavement pacifists, for our own good. For starters, the driving experience primes car drivers for meltdowns.

They are conditioned by popular culture to see cars as symbols of freedom, yet city driving is a slow-motion trap that subjects drivers to constant restrictions on their movement. Drivers are thwarted from enjoying the promise of motion by traffic lights, by congestion – and yes, by cyclists – and they suffer the natural but impossible desire to escape and move forward. All this while being strapped to their seats! That's where the frustration begins. But drivers carry with them a load of cultural baggage that gets them even more cranked.

"The symbolic portrayal of the car has tied it to individual freedom and self-esteem, promoting a mental attitude of defensiveness and territoriality," James wrote in his seminal essay, "Why Driving Is Stressful." The car is an extension of self, he goes on to explain, so drivers take threats to the integrity of their vehicles personally. This renders the commute exhausting since the threat of accidents, scratches, or bumps is constant. Drivers may be encased in reinforced metal, but they never lose that sense of danger.

This potent cocktail of physiological stress and negative emotions – from fear and helplessness to resentment – needs only the trigger of confrontation to be transformed into outright rage.

Road rage is nothing new. But it seems rage between cyclists and drivers is increasingly common. Reports pepper nightly newscasts across the continent. One shocking case erupted in Portland last summer. After a cyclist allegedly kicked the side of his car, a 46-year-old driver then pursued him around a corner and ran him down. The cyclist bounced onto the hood and smashed into the windshield. The driver wasn't finished. He struck two cars and then another cyclist before stopping. He later told police that he was frustrated that the cyclist wasn't "sharing the road."

Bike rage can be just as ugly: last November, after being cut off by a driver just after morning rush hour in Toronto, a cyclist caught up to the car, reached inside the window, and stabbed the driver in the face and neck with a screwdriver.

These scenes may be horrific but they feel strangely familiar. James insists that it is common for drivers to imagine scenes of violence and retribution during the course of their commutes. It makes sense for the same to be true of cyclists, whose sense of vulnerability goes beyond the threat of scratched paint. We risk life and limb at every encounter. Who can blame us for harbouring revenge fantasies?

Our speed and manoeuvrability enables us to lash out and retreat – think of the classic U-lock bash-and-run. Some cyclists consider such attacks acts of driver education. That's how I explained it in an email to James, anyway. He warned me to take a chill pill.
He pointed out that road confrontations usually don’t produce anything but heightened anger – coupled with escalating retribution – in both parties. I suppose my Pathfinder showdown proved as much. I spent the morning quivering with adrenaline, unable to get work done, imagining what could have been.

This kind of road rage is a symptom of the corrosive effect that modern commuting has on urban culture. Aggressive streets are not just dangerous, they change the way we feel and the way we treat each other, even when we’re not commuting.

(...)

Some cyclists – myself included – bemoan the fact that so many fools, asses, and daydreamers are operating cars in North American cities. We personalize the problem. James, however, reminded me to blame the road, not the drivers. On another day, that jerk driver is a timid cyclist, and vice-versa. It’s the experience of driving that turned my Pathfinder foe into a monster – and yes, it was the experience of cycling surrounded by thousands of pounds of metal that did the same to me.

What drivers need, James says, is a lifelong program of education that would start in grade one; educating kids about human rights and community spirit. And what about us cyclists? We need to keep in mind that drivers are vulnerable people who happen to have a deadly weapon at their disposal. Then we need to change the streets. “Use political methods to gain what you want,” he counselled.

James may be an incurable driver, but I know he’s right. If I want real change, I’ve got to ease up on the outrage and channel my frustration into urban design activism. Call the city’s traffic department, paint a bike lane, write a letter, vote, keep riding, breathe, feel the sheer joy of movement in every commute. And let that joy flow out through an open smile.

If you’re out there, Pathfinder guy, I really don’t think you are fat. I feel your pain. And I’m sorry.

To read more of Dr. Leon James’ ideas, visit www.drdriving.org

The above is from: http://www.momentumplanet.com/bike-rage

http://www.velonews.com/print.php?article=82470

Legally Speaking with Bob Mionske - Summer of rage
By Bob Mionske

In my last Legally Speaking column, “Bikes vs. Cars,” I recounted some of this summer’s more egregious road rage incidents between motorists and cyclists, all of which happened in rapid-fire succession over a period of several weeks. As I noted in conclusion, although these stories may have seemed like “a new kind of road rage,” as Newsweek put it, for seasoned cyclists, the stories were more an indication that the daily violence cyclists encounter had finally managed to capture the attention of the public-at-large.

But more importantly, I observed that the larger questions remained unasked, and unanswered in the media: Why are cyclists the daily targets of road violence, and what can cyclists do to change that reality? This week, we’re going to look for some answers as to why these road rage incidents occurred, and next week, we’ll continue with a discussion of how anger becomes road rage, and strategies for changing the cycling environment for the better.

As I observed in the last column, it would be tempting to say it’s just the summer heat, but we know that isn’t true. For example, recall that in “Attack of the abominable snow (plow) man,” cyclist Jeff Frings wrote in to describe his battle with Milwaukee officialdom after a snow plow operator buzzed him on December 15. Nevertheless, there are additional factors that come into play in the summer, which may have made road rage — especially road rage involving cyclists — manifest more frequently this summer.

First, as the weather turns fair, more fair-weather cyclists come out to ride. Add in record gas prices this summer, and even more people than usual are dusting off the bikes hanging in their garages, with a thought to putting less of their hard-earned money in the gas tank. Those two factors mean that there are more people riding bikes this summer, and thus, more opportunities for the negative encounters we’re all aware of. Throw in the usual alcohol consumption when the temperatures rise, and the roads are ripe for conflict.
But why does it seem that that conflict so often directed at cyclists? There’s no simple, single answer to that question; it’s a complex issue. Still, there are answers to the question. One answer is that we notice the conflict because we’re on our bikes. If we were driving, we’d probably still notice aggression against us, but it wouldn’t be anti-cyclist aggression; it would just be some jerk being aggressive. But when we’re on our bikes, the aggression directed at us becomes anti-cyclist. That’s because, according to Social Identity theory, drivers see other drivers as part of their “in-group,” and see cyclists as an “out-group,” to be discriminated against. And in order to justify that discrimination, the in-group will catalog the negative, anti-social behavior of members of the out-group as stereotypical behavior of the out-group; this “stereotypical” anti-social behavior is then identified as the reason that the out-group is discriminated against. In the case of anti-cyclist rhetoric, this means that “scofflaw cyclists” are presented as the reason underlying the discrimination against all cyclists.

Of course, most, perhaps even all, motorists are also scofflaws; no anti-cyclist motorist has ever proposed, however, that motorists be discriminated against as a class until the scofflaws amongst them are brought into line. This is classic social identity behavior; the anti-social transgressions of the out-group are viewed as “more serious” than the anti-social transgressions of the in-group, and therefore, the discrimination against the out-group is justified. Note, however, that social identity theory cuts both ways — cyclists view other cyclists as the in-group, and view the anti-social transgressions of motorists — the out-group — as more serious, and therefore, more deserving of societal attention.

Another facet of that problem — noticing the aggression because we’re on our bikes — is that we tend to remember the negative encounters. As with virtually everything in life, our experiences in the road environment can be graphed as a bell curve, with the vast majority of road encounters falling in the middle of the curve — not overtly positive, but not overtly negative, either. At the ends of that bell curve are the relatively few positive encounters, where one traveler goes out of their way to be nice to us, and the relatively few negative encounters, in which another traveler goes out of their way to be aggressive towards us.

Human psychology being what it is, we tend to remember the relatively few negative encounters more than we remember the vast majority of neutral encounters. Think about it for a moment — you’re out on a ride, most drivers are neutral to your presence on the road, one driver goes out of her way to accommodate your presence on the road, and one driver goes out of his way to be a jerk to you (yes, most aggressive drivers are male). When your ride is over, which driver[s] do you tell other people about?

But if, according to bell curve dynamics, most encounters will be neutral, why does it seem that there are so many unpleasant encounters? One reason is that as more people are crowding onto the road, both on bikes and in cars, there are more opportunities for negative encounters. However, not taking any other factors into account, the overall distribution of the curve should remain the same. It’s possible, however, that as more people are crowding onto the roadway, the collective level of stress rises, and that skews the distribution of the curve towards the negative end of the curve. It’s also possible that regional cultural differences will affect the distribution of the curve, with regions that are more culturally accepting of bicycles seeing more positive than negative encounters, and regions that are not culturally accepting of bicycles seeing more negative than positive encounters.

Another reason that aggression is directed towards cyclists is because we’re all competing for a limited resource — space on the road. Ecologists tell us that when two species compete for the same limited resource, one species will always out-compete the other species, and exclude it from the resource. We can see something similar to this competitive exclusion principle on the roadway, with motorists and cyclists competing for the same limited (and shrinking) resource. Where motorists and cyclists must compete with each other for the same space, conflict often erupts, as the more aggressive amongst the motorists attempt to use force to exclude us.
And as in nature, we also see attempts to share the resource through partitioning of the resource — motorists are allocated one part of the roadway, and cyclists are allocated another part of the roadway. But why is the competition for a limited resource one between cyclists and motorists, rather than between motorists, or one against all? As any student of road rage can tell you, it isn’t; competition for space does occur between all users of the road. But to the extent that the competition is between motorists and cyclists, the in-group/out-group nature of the competition stems from both social identity theory and something akin to the competitive exclusion principle.

But is that really all that road rage is — in-groups and out-groups behaving badly towards each other? No. According to Dr. Leon James, author of "Road Rage and Aggressive Driving," road rage is principally about anger. What's more, road rage is far more extensive a phenomenon than we often realize — we all recognize the July incidents as road rage incidents, but road rage isn't limited to the type of violent encounters — what Dr. James terms "epic road rage" incidents — we read about this summer. It also includes some of the negative types of interactions many, perhaps most of us, have participated in, including interactions that we may not even recognize as road rage. One thing that’s striking about Dr. James’ research is that while he's writing principally about motorist-on-motorist interactions, it’s obvious to anybody familiar with “bikes vs. cars” road rage incidents that his observations on the various types of road rage apply equally to cyclists as well as motorists.

What drives that anger? In his article "Bike Rage," Charles Montgomery writes [T]he driving experience primes car drivers for meltdowns. They are conditioned by popular culture to see cars as symbols of freedom, yet city driving is a slow-motion trap that subjects drivers to constant restrictions on their movement. Drivers are thwarted from enjoying the promise of motion by traffic lights, by congestion – and yes, by cyclists – and they suffer the natural but impossible desire to escape and move forward. All this while being strapped to their seats! Tethered to their freedom machines, their escape being thwarted at every turn, drivers daily suffer through this grueling feeling of inescapable restriction.

And who is to blame? Everybody else who is blocking their escape. Mostly, that means other drivers, but increasingly, it means cyclists. You know, the out-group. Frustratingly slow-moving, and yet paradoxically, traveling faster than any “freedom machine” trapped in urban traffic. And worst of all, piloted by cyclists: Smug. Self-righteous. Arrogant, even, as they blast through red lights while everybody else waits their turn. The only thing worse than watching one of these scofflaws flippantly ignoring the rules everybody else is bound by is being stuck behind one of them when — or rather, if — the road ever opens up. Surely, drivers complain, is it any wonder that their wrath is turned upon cyclists?

In fact, there are numerous factors influencing driver anger; Dr. James identifies fifteen sources of driver anger, including:

- **Restriction**: “Being prevented from moving forward when you expect to arouses frustration, and along with it anxiety and an intense desire to escape the restriction. This anxiety prompts drivers to perform risky or aggressive maneuvers to get away or get ahead.”

- **Regulation**: Regulation of driving “feels like an imposition and arouses a rebellious streak in many, which then prompts them to disregard whatever regulations seem wrong or inconvenient.”

- **Lack of personal control**: The “lack of personal control over traffic events is frustrating and often leads to venting anger on whoever is around.”

- **Being put in danger**: “Hair-raising close calls and hostile incidents” result in “physiological stress, along with many negative emotions — fear, resentment, rage, a sense of helplessness, and a depressed mood.”

- **Venting**: Vented anger “is felt as an energizing rush. This seductive feeling is short-lived, and is accompanied by a stream of anger-inspiring thoughts that impair judgment and tempt us into rash and dangerous actions.”
Although Dr. James is clearly discussing driver anger, it's obvious that these sources of anger are applicable to motorists and cyclists alike. But anger itself isn't road rage — it's when the anger is vented in one of several specific ways that it becomes transformed into road rage. And as we saw in July, road rage isn't a phenomenon limited to just motorists or just cyclists — it's a phenomenon that is often, but not always, an encounter between two road-ragers, who may be engaging in the same type of road rage with each other, or who may be engaging in completely different types of road rage with each other. Next column, we'll explore how anger becomes manifested as road rage, and what we can do to transform the cycling environment from confrontational to cooperative.

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Research Paper on Motorcyclists and Aggressiveness

By Shojiro Niwa

Abstract

This paper presents a survey of 52 motorcyclists, who were asked complete the flow questionnaire, the Driving Behaviour Questionnaire (DBQ) (Lawton et al, 1997), and the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss and Perry, 1992). The results show that motorcycling can be seen as a ‘flow’ experience, which might be inspired by speeding. Factor analysis revealed three factors; speeding and dangerous driving, interpersonally aggressive violations and highway code violations. There are numerous relationship between a driving behaviour of motorcyclists, the number of active accident and their personality characteristic, aggression. Younger riders were more aggressive than older riders, which contributes to more dangerous driving relative to aggressive violations on the road.

[continued here](#)
The US Department of Transportation has awarded the TEA-21 Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Grant (Section 1212 (o)) to the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center (HSRC). The Chapel Hill-based HSRC has established a team of subcontractors and consultants, including the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals, to work cooperatively with various agencies of the USDOT, bicycle and pedestrian coordinators, the advocacy community and others to provide a broad range of technical assistance resources (publications, fact sheets, training courses, web site etc.), and a clearinghouse. The contract started on June 1 and products (e.g. a toll-free phone number, web site etc.) are expected to be announced at the annual meeting of State Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinators, September 15-16 in Madison, Wisconsin.

original NHTSA newsletter here

DrDriving.

My story is bicycle related. I live in Madison, WI. So do about 100,000 bikers. I was headed to work, on a one way street, during a SNOWSTORM. I was cut off by someone who blew off a stop sign. That's right, someone was riding a BICYCLE IN THE SNOWSTORM. I beeped to let them know that I was having trouble stopping in time, sure that I was going to hit them. They flipped ME off, cut off the driver in the next lane, who came within 2 INCHES of hitting ME (always better to hit a car than a bike, right?). The other driver also beeped, and got the same treatment I did. The other then scooted down a different street. Scariest part was HE WAS NOT WEARING A HELMET!

I have come to the conclusion that the major problem with traffic (re: Pedestrians, drivers, bikers) is that no one HAS ANY MANNERS ANYMORE.

Also, I am taking on a life time project - I want bikes accountable for their actions since, especially here in Madtown, bikes are being used more and more for daily commuting (they are VEHICLES, TOO). I WANT THEM PLATED. They come zooming up from behind ON THE SIDEWALK and don't bother to say "on your left", though that is partly irrelevant as it is ILLEGAL TO RIDE A BIKE IN A BUSINESS AREA: DOWNTOWN MADISON.

The way I see it is that I would rather be pissed at a stupid car driver. At least if they screw up and there is an accident, you hit car first, not stupid biker.

Thanks for letting me vent. Keep up the good work!

Rage Toward Motorcyclists

those of you that are throwing pebbles, marbles and other stuff back at drivers are making a big mistake, IMHO. They may not catch up to you, but their rage toward motorcyclists in general may cause some innocent person to be hurt or killed at some future date. Just ignore them and hopefully they will go away. When I am riding my motorcycle I like to think of myself as an ambassador for motorcycling in general. And that's one reason why I do not plan to replace my stock muffler with an after-market muffler.

found it here

IT'S NOT ABOUT THE BIKE:

My Journey Back to Life
Lance Armstrong

From Booklist
It is such an all-American story. A lanky kid from Plano, Texas, is raised by a feisty, single parent who sacrifices for her son, who becomes one of our country's greatest athletes. Given that background, it is understandable why Armstrong was able to channel his boundless energy toward athletic endeavors. By his senior year in high school, he was already a professional triathlete and was training with the U.S. Olympic cycling developmental team. In 1993, Armstrong secured a position in the... read more

Order from Amazon.com
LANCE ARMSTRONG:
The Race of His Life
by Kristin Armstrong, Ken Call (Illustrator)
A truly inspirational story of Lance Armstrong, the 1999 and 2000 Tour de France champion from Austin, Texas who overcame cancer to become the number one cyclist in the world! The book follows his athletic career from childhood success at triathlons to the Tour de France.

Order from Amazon.com

THE COMPLETE BOOK OF LONG-DISTANCE CYCLING:
Build the Strength, Skills, and Confidence to Ride As Far As You Want
by Ed Burke, Ed Pavelka, Edmund R., Ph.D. Burke
A renowned expert on bicycling training joins a celebrated cycling writer to create the first book devoted to long-distance cycling. The century, or 100 mile bike race, is the most popular distance even with thousands of these races occurring in the country each year. And to date, nothing this extensive or practical has ever been published on cycling events from 30 to 3,000 miles. It includes the latest in cycling technology, bikes, clothing, accessories, components and shoes on the market for long-distance cycling.

Order from Amazon.com

December 6, 2000

Road Rage in Japan
Ananova
Driver admits killing of window-tapping cyclist
Police in Japan have arrested a delivery driver who they say has admitted to knocking down and killing a cyclist because he kept tapping on his window. Makoto Tsujianai, a university professor in Tokyo, is believed to have been cycling to work in heavy traffic when he was mown down. The suspect told police that each time he stopped his car, the academic rode by and tapped on his window before cycling off again. He told officers that he eventually lost his temper with Mr Tsujianai and had no option but to hurt him, reports the Mainichi Daily News.

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Research Paper on Motorcyclists and Aggressiveness
By Shojiro Niwa
shojironiwa@excite.co.uk

Abstract
This paper presents a survey of 52 motorcyclists, who were asked complete the flow questionnaire, the Driving Behaviour Questionnaire (DBQ) (Lawton et al, 1997), and the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss and Perry, 1992). The results show that motorcycling can be seen as a ‘flow’ experience, which might be inspired by speeding. Factor analysis revealed three factors; speeding and dangerous driving, interpersonally aggressive violations and highway code violations. There are numerous relationships between a driving behaviour of motorcyclists, the number of active accident and their personality characteristic, aggression. Younger riders were more aggressive than older riders, which contributes to more dangerous driving relative to aggressive violations on the road.

Flow experience

Table 1 shows that percentage of respondents who either agreed or strongly agreed for each items (see appendices) that motorcycling had. In terms of the balance between skill and challenge, motorcyclists preferred an equal relationship between skill and demand (81%), followed by a relationship between higher demand and lower skill (51%).

A relationship between lower demand and higher skill (46%) is the least preference.

Discussion

The results of the present study have shown that motorcycling can be explained as

pleasure as 96% of the subjects stated. The study tried to find out motorcycling as a ‘flow’ experience in terms of 8 dimensions. The most important characteristics of ‘flow’ experience (the equal relationship between skill and demand, and intrinsically rewarding experience) were confirmed by over 80% of the subjects. For the most characteristics in various conditions, over 50% of the motorcyclists confirmed the statement of ‘flow’ experience, however, one of the unique characteristics for ‘flow’ experience, lack of self-consciousness, could not be confirmed. This might be an indication that motorcyclists need to keep self-consciousness to enjoy motorcycling. 64% of the subjects answered that they pursued ‘speed’ in motorcycling. This factor should be taken into account for additional dimension of ‘flow’ experience in motorcycling. If ‘speed’ factor were not important, majority of the subjects (80%) would not have racer or sport type motorcycles.

The results of the Driving Behaviour Questionnaire have revealed that, as expected, speeding on the motorway or country road is the most common violation among motorcyclists. In addition, 64% of the motorcyclists stated that they pursued ‘speed’ as fast as they could go. Five of the top six violations were categorised as speeding and aggressive driving behaviour.

References


Flow Questionnaire

The following statements concern your ways of acting in different situations. Please express your agreement or disagreement with the following statements.

1 - Strongly disagree 2 - disagree 3 - Neither agree or disagree 4 - Agree 5 - Strongly agree

1. I feel enjoyment when I ride on the motor in a traffic jam.

1 2 3 4 5

2. I feel enjoyment when I ride on the motor on the road, where the demands are above my skills.

1 2 3 4 5

see entire paper here
Facts from government agencies

Pedalcyclists
The first automobile crash in the United States occurred in New York City in 1896, when a motor vehicle collided with a pedalcycle rider (Famous First Facts, by Joseph Kane).

More than 46,000 pedalcyclists have died in traffic crashes in the United States since 1932 — the first year in which estimates of pedalcyclist fatalities were recorded. zzz

The 350 pedalcyclists killed in 1932 accounted for 1.3 percent of the 27,979 persons who died in traffic crashes that year. In 1999, 750 pedalcyclists were killed and an additional 51,000 were injured in traffic crashes.

Pedalcyclist deaths accounted for 2 percent of all traffic fatalities, and pedalcyclists made up 2 percent of all the people injured in traffic crashes during the year.

The 350 pedalcyclists killed in 1932 accounted for 1.3 percent of the 27,979 persons who died in traffic crashes that year. In 1999, 750 pedalcyclists were killed and an additional 51,000 were injured in traffic crashes.

Pedalcyclist deaths accounted for 2 percent of all traffic fatalities, and pedalcyclists made up 2 percent of all the people injured in traffic crashes during the year.

The number of pedalcyclist fatalities in 1999 was 10 percent lower than the 832 fatalities reported in 1989. The highest number of pedalcyclist fatalities ever recorded in the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) was 1,003 in 1975.

In 1989, the average age of pedalcyclists killed in traffic crashes was 24.4 years; in 1999 the average age of those killed was 32.4 years, and the average age of those injured was 23.5 years.

Pedalcyclists accounted for 13 percent of all nonmotorist traffic fatalities in 1999. Pedestrians accounted for 85 percent, and the remaining 3 percent were skateboard riders, roller skaters, etc. “The 750 pedalcyclist deaths in 1999 accounted for 2 percent of all traffic fatalities during the year.”

Figure 1. Trends in Pedalcyclist and Total Traffic Fatalities, 1989-1999

Motorcyclists
In 1999, 2,472 motorcyclists were killed and an additional 50,000 were injured in traffic crashes in the United States — 8 percent more than the 2,294 motorcyclist fatalities and 2 percent more than the 49,000 motorcyclist injuries reported in 1998.

More than 100,000 motorcyclists have died in traffic crashes since the enactment of the Highway Safety and National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966.

Table 1. Motorcyclist Fatalities and Injuries and Fatality and Injury Rates, 1989-1999

Tuesday, Sep 2nd 1997

Subject: A Topic for Psychology

Hello DrDriving:
For the last few years I have been fascinated with what has now been coined “road rage.” I am a bicyclists and without knowing am probably the focus of many a rageful driver. I am very interested in the personality differences acquired when a person goes inside of a car. They change, they aren’t as responsible for their actions. I begin to wonder if it isn’t something to be investigated by both phsychologists and sociologists. Please keep me informed of any new information on this topic. I work for a university press.

Sincerely, Julia

September 8, 1997
Pennsylvania Man Kills Dirt Biker Over Noise

Mike Bucsko

The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reports that John Bereznak of Beaverdale, Pennsylvania on Saturday shot and killed a young dirt biker who was biking on the mounds of coal from an abandoned strip mine about 200 yards from Bereznak's house. Bereznak had complained about noise from the dirt bikers for several years, and once had thrown a shovel at a dirt biker while ranting about noise. He also was suspected by the town's dirt bikers of installing tar paper seeded with nails around the abandoned mine area. Bereznak later killed himself.

The article reports that the shooting occurred at the old No. 4 Logan Co. Mine, which has been abandoned for about 40 years and is now owned by Cooney Brothers Inc. The company owns thousands of acres of mines in the area. For about five years, the article says, dirt bikers have used the irregular mounds of coal at the mine for dirt bike tracks and jumps.

According to the article, Bereznak was a 70-year-old retired miner. On Saturday shortly after 4 p.m., Bereznak took his .380-caliber semiautomatic pistol from his Jefferson Avenue home to confront the dirt bikers. There were seven teen-agers at the abandoned mine, the article says, six of whom later told police that Bereznak watched the bikers silently for a few minutes before walking towards them. Robert Custer, age 17, was sitting on his dirt bike about to ride up a mound of coal the teens call "KTM" after the make of the first dirt bike that made it to the top, the article reports. Bereznak stopped about eight feet from Custer, pulled out his gun from behind his shirt, and fired at Custer's chest. After the teen fell, Bereznak fired two more shots at the biker. He then returned to his home and shot himself.

The article reports that people in this village of 1,000 residents still were numb yesterday from the violence of the previous day. Custer's family and two teens who witnessed the shooting would not comment, the article says.

According to Paul Bonfanti, police chief in Summerhill, which includes Beaverdale, "I guess he [Bereznak] just flipped." Bonfanti said that Bereznak and a few other residents who lived near the mine had complained occasionally about the noise from the bikes. A few years ago, after receiving several complaints, a police officer cited a dirt biker for disorderly conduct, but the citation was tossed out by a district justice when the residents who had complained refused to testify. Subsequently, the teen's parents sued the township and won. Since then there haven't been any more citations issued, Bonfanti said, and police tend to ignore the dirt bikers.

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December 2000 From Reader's Digest The Magazine in England
PAVEMENT RAGE

A rage for every taste

You can forget road rage. Road rage is for amateurs. When people swerve in front of me at roundabouts or race away at traffic lights, I merely give an aloof but withering glance, which they never see because their eyes are peering towards that distant horizon which they plan to reach at least three seconds before I do. Anyone who is prepared to risk their life, or even their wing mirror, to achieve that goal deserves our pity rather than our rage.

But I do suffer from other kinds of rage. I get a serious attack of pavement rage whenever I encounter a cyclist, helmet thrust forward, charging down the pavement at ramming speed, scattering schoolchildren and little old ladies. Cyclists are always telling us how non-polluting and healthful is their chosen mode of transport. So why do they willingly risk maiming the rest of us?

Pavement rage also occurs when I'm walking the children to school along a road where the traffic moves very slowly. Some people, usually young men, like to wind down the window, crank up the music and send heavy metal reverberating at a volume which would make even Liam Gallagher murmur: "I say, old man, steady on!" In my ideal fantasy world, I'd approach the offending car, reach inside my jacket and pull out a magnet so powerful that the music on the tape would be permanently erased.

Even the most humdrum activities can increase the potential for rage. I was waiting to buy a railway ticket in the traditional queue of around 20 people, idly wondering whether they would all be served before my train left, and why 50 per cent of customers ask, "Can you tell me what platform it is?" so the clerk has to look it up, even though the electric destination indicators above the concourse list everything they could possibly need to know. Suddenly a woman with a bossy upper-class voice swept past us all, announcing, "Do you mind? I have a train to catch!"

(...) There are an awful lot of thoughtless people about. On a train I once boldly asked some young neanderthal to take his muddy boots off the seat in front. He didn't demur, but gave me a long and mystified look. For what purpose, you could almost see him wonder, would the railway company have put a padded bench there except as a footrest?

Smokers can be another source of rage. Before I quit smoking, I promised myself I'd never become an anti-smoking bore. If anyone wants to light up in our house, we don't complain—we bring them matches, ashtrays, roller machines...But that doesn't mean I'm happy sharing my anniversary dinner in a fancy restaurant with people who think it's fine to puff away and let the smoke drift over the food which the chef has spent hours cooking (and I'll have to spend hours working to pay for).

(...) Yes, the reasons for rage are everywhere. You just have to know where to look.

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Date: 10 Sep 1997 15:53:57 -0700
Newsgroups: misc.activism.progressive, misc.transport.urban-transit, rec.bicycles.soc, alt.activism, ba.transportation, ba.bicycles
Subject: ACTION: "Free The Bay Bridge Six" Flyer
Followup-To:
misc.transport.urban-transit, rec.bicycles.soc, ba.transportation, ba.bicycles

Free The Bay Bridge Six!

EMERGENCY ACTION
CYCLISTS ARRESTED ON THE BAY BRIDGE

REPOST TO ALL LISTS
6 cyclists were arrested at 10AM this morning on the Bay Bridge. What would normally be a citation for a misdemeanor traffic infraction has now been trumped up to FELONY CONSPIRACY CHARGES for blocking traffic. They were actually moving for the entire ride across the bridge. Bail for all 6 cyclists is many thousands of dollars.

Cyclists are being singled out and persecuted for their political beliefs for what are in actuality legal actions, or minor vehicle code violations.

Please help these cyclists now. We need every phone call, fax, and email possible as soon as you can help.

1. Call the following and complain about the illegal arrest of the cyclists, the bogus charges against them, and the harassment of ALL cyclists in San Francisco following July 25th's Critical Mass ride.
Free The Bay Bridge Six!

How is riding a bike on the freeway, which is illegal according to the California Vehicle Code, a "legal action"?

When it comes right down to it, these 6 cyclists broke the law, and by doing it en masse, they conspired to break the law (maybe not to block traffic, but they were practicing civil disobedience, which is by definition against the law).

Please help these cyclists now. We need every phone call, fax, and email possible as soon as you can help.

1. Call the following and complain about the illegal arrest of the cyclists, the bogus charges against them, and the harassment of ALL cyclists in San Francisco following July 25th's Critical Mass ride.

I haven't been harrassed since the July Critical Mass. Yes, we should support the cyclists who were arrested ... but, their arrest isn't illegal, the charges are not completely bogus, and harassment is not as widespread as you would make it seem.

2. Support your fellow cyclists by meeting at 6:00 PM, Justin Herman Plaza, San Francisco, for a legal, law abiding ride to the Hall of (In) Justice, 850 Bryant Street, San Francisco TONIGHT 9/10/97 in support of the Bay Bridge cyclists who have been unfairly charged, and to protest the harassment of cyclists by the CHP and the San Francisco Police Department. Call your friends and encourage them to come.

Of course we need access to the Bay Bridge, and hopefully this case will bring enough attention to the cause so that our needs are addressed in the redesigned/retrofitted/rebuilt Bay Bridge.

I haven't been harrassed since the July Critical Mass. Yes, we should support the cyclists who were arrested ... but, their arrest isn't illegal, the charges are not completely bogus, and harassment is not as widespread as you would make it seem.

If the cyclists were going at the same speed as, or faster than, automobile traffic on the bridge, then they cannot possibly be "blocking traffic".

Actually, IMO, if they were travelling (on a road where bicycles were otherwise allowed) at a speed slower than that of the rest of traffic, and if there is more than one lane in the direction of travel, then they are not blocking traffic, but are traffic.

The problem here is, that they are NOT considered traffic because under the law, they are not permitted there in the first place.

Cyclists should be "encouraged" to use the Bay Bridge, until such time as the BART strike is over.

And that IS legally possible... but not without the proper legal actions occuring first. A quick grep of an old copy of the CVC brings up one section bearing relevance. I do believe there are further sections of relevance in the Streets and Highways code.
=23330. Except where a special permit has been obtained from the
Department of Transportation under the provisions of Article 6
(commencing with Section 35780) of Chapter 5 of Division 15, none of
the following shall be permitted on any vehicular crossing:
= (a) Animals while being led or driven, even though tethered or
harnessed.
= (b) Bicycles or motorized bicycles, unless the department by signs
indicates that either bicycles or motorized bicycles, or both, are
permitted upon all or any portion of the vehicular crossing.
= (c) Vehicles having a total width of vehicle or load exceeding 102
inches.
= (d) Vehicles carrying items prohibited by regulations promulgated
by the Department of Transportation.

The relevant portion being:

(b) Bicycles or motorized bicycles, unless the department by signs indicates that either bicycles or motorized bicycles, or both, are
permitted upon all or any portion of the vehicular crossing.

(Unless one wants to try for an individual permit mentioned in the main part of this section, and detailed in section 35780.)

Date: Thu, 11 Sep 1997 13:32:04 -0700
Newsgroups: misc.transport.urban-transit, rec.bicycles.soc, ba.transportation, ba.bicycles
Subject: Re: ACTION: “Free The Bay Bridge Six” Flyer

Cyclists should be "encouraged" to use the Bay Bridge, until such time as the BART strike is over.

Cyclists should stay off the freeway -- pedestrians should stay off the freeway. This is dangerous, however fast it's going. Do the cyclists really think biking on the freeway nonsense is getting them any sympathy? It's just irresponsible.

Date: 12 Sep 1997 05:15:05 GMT
Newsgroups: misc.transport.urban-transit, rec.bicycles.soc, ba.transportation, ba.bicycles
Subject: Re: ACTION: “Free The Bay Bridge Six” Flyer

CVC 21960 states that bicyclists can only be prohibited from a freeway, or portion thereof, by order, ordinance, or resolution for that particular freeway. For the prohibition to be effective there must appropriate signs on the freeway and the approaches thereto.

Bicyclists are allowed on all freeways in California except where appropriate signs prohibit them.

The fact that the highway department in California has a policy to prohibit bicyclists from all freeways unless there is no alternate route is another matter. It certainly has NO basis in law or safety considerations.

CVC 23330 prohibits bicyclists from vehicular crossings unless they are signed to permit bicycling.

Perhaps you sould be more careful in your research next time.

A worse problem is law enforcement personnel who don't know the law and refuse to learn it.

Date: 1997/07/25
Newsgroups:
talk.politics.misc,alt.politics.democrats.d,alt.fan.dan-quayle,
alt.society.liberalism,alt.fan.rush-limbaugh,alt.politics.usa.republican,
alt.politics.economics,alt.rush-limbaugh,alt.politics.usa.newt-gingrich,
alt.politics.usa.congress,alt.politics.libertarian,talk.politics.libertarian,
rec.autos.misc,ba.bicycle,rec.bicycles.misc,rec.bicycles.rides,
alt.fan.ronald-reagan,aus.bicycle,alt.pave.the.earth

Today in the Chicago Tribune, I saw a newspaper article about a planned bicycle ride in downtown San Francisco organised by "Critical Mass", a group of bicyclists who deliberately snarl traffic.

What these people do is they ride bicycles en masse during rush hour and the goal is "create frustration for motorists and give them a
taste of what cyclists say they experience every day”.

What the bicyclists are complaining about is how they have to compete with cars for the use of the road, and the dangers they face. Now, here’s a question I have to ask: If it's so bloody dangerous, why do they still ride bicycles? Some cyclists have scars from their lost encounters with cars. Well, if the buggers weren't in the street with such flimsy bikes, maybe they wouldn't get hurt! Can it be that these idiots are showing the “logic” so many conservatives describe liberals as having? Common sense dictates that if something is too dangerous, you don’t do it!!!! (Sounds like “personal responsibility”!)

What this boils down to is that bicyclists know BLOODY (more ways than one!) well that the odds don't favour them. Yet, they keep the riding up. It's like the case of a skydiver who, after surviving a fall where the chute didn’t open complaining about losing an argument with the planet... and getting in a plane to jump again.

If these people can’t afford to drive - a legitimate reason - then they should take the Bus. That's what public transport is for. Does anyone moan and whinge when they are driving and lose an argument with a truck? No. Trucks are bigger. It's a fact of life. Cars are bigger than a flimsy bicycle. Deal with it or get off the street. If I had it my way, the bicycle would be outlawed on busy streets in the first place. Bicycles have no place on a street with 2-tonne vehicles going 30 MPH or faster.

If these “critical mass” idiots ever drop their bicycle in front of my car, I'll get out and throw the piece of shit onto the sidewalk where it belongs.

If you grep up "critical mass" and "bicyclists" and read rec.bicycles.*, you'll discover discussions of violence toward drivers. For example, some of these cretins advocate carrying spray paint to use on the windshields to ruin the driver's ability to see where he's going! Others advocate packing heat.

What we need are "fighter cars" to deal with these cretins. How about new options for 1998? How about "Ben Hur" hub caps, a PA microphone, dual "Red Baron" machine guns, and heat-seeking missiles? Don't forget the SuperJoltTM outside door handles to shock the shit out of skitching bicycle messengers? Don't forget the bulletproof glass and Kevlar lining in the doors.

The National Bicycling and Walking Study

The National Bicycling and Walking Study report discusses numerous benefits that can result from increasing bicycling and walking in our society in place of motorized transportation. Such benefits include improved personal health and fitness, a cleaner environment from reduced auto emissions, reduced congestion, reduced dependence on foreign oil, and many others. However, U.S. society has primarily focused on providing roadways to accommodate more and faster motor vehicle traffic, and many improvements are needed for bicyclists and pedestrians.

ROAD RAGE AGAINST BICYLISTS

In an increasingly congested county that is a magnet for bicycle enthusiasts and promotes bikes as an alternative mode of transportation, most agree there needs to be a dialogue on safety.

While police statistics would suggest that Marin County has become a slightly safer place for cyclists over the past five years, bicyclists nevertheless are concerned.

Joe Louis of Mill Valley has been riding for 15 years in Marin. He senses there is a new, dangerous climate on the streets and roads in Marin.

“Statistics can tell you only so much; there is road rage out there,” he said. “There is a lot of hostility, more than ever. Drivers think that the road is only for them and they are annoyed when we are driving. They are driving lethal weapons.”

original article here

Date: Mon, 4 Dec 2000 23:15:42 -1000
From: Judy DeMocker <jdemocker@sprynet.com>
To: Leon James <leon@hawaii.edu>
Subject: Re: San Francisco Examiner Interview

So any theories on why bicyclists get targeted for hostile or aggressive behavior more than, say, pedestrians do? As a cyclist, I've
It's not easy, but it can be done, and by doing it we strengthen community and society, supportive bicyclists, supportive pedestrians?

For motorists, what happens in them that they cannot recognize their bad behavior or the consequences of it? Clearly some cognitive functions are being suspended, and for quite some time. Apparently the driver of the semi truck was entirely unremorseful that he ran Chris over and killed him, and was still challenging people to a fight.

And, what are the triggers for this sort of rage? You say it's learned behavior from childhood-- What activates it? And it's hard to believe that it's not redirected rage, or that the source of it is monkey see, monkey do. Is road rage just a socially sanctioned way of dumping repressed emotions?

Judy

Date: Tue, 5 Dec 2000 09:32:58 -1000
From: Leon James <leon@hawaii.edu>
To: Judy DeMocker jdemocker@sprynet.com
Subject: more answers for you

Regarding motorists vs. bicyclists. We discuss this opposition in our book. What's amazing is that this opposition is purely role bound rather than person bound since the majority of cyclists who are victims of drivers' aggressiveness are themselves regular drivers when they drive, that is, pretty hostile and aggressive against cyclists. We have no statistics on this unfortunately, but you can take it as our prediction if such data were available.

There is here a role conflict between how we act and feel when driving a car and how we act and feel when riding a bicycle.

Our analysis of the behavior of drivers and bicycle riders shows that (a) they are the same people (at different times), and (b) they are naturally aggressive in both roles. What, you say, aggressive bicyclists? Yes, we say, if you define aggressive in the sense that we think it's important, which is that being aggressive on public roads is to impose on others your own level of preferred risk or danger. For instance, the driver who side swipes a bicyclist is being aggressive by deliberately exposing the cyclist to additional danger and annoyance. Similarly, that same aggressive driver a few hours later will ride the bike and act aggressively against drivers. How? Just observe them and you'll see. They don't act as if they're aware of the driver's needs, perhaps impatience and emotional disturbance. So many, but don't many don't. Some do sometimes, but not at other times. Etc.

All of this goes back to childhood, as we said, both for how culture teaches us to drive or to ride a bicycle. The warfare going on between motorists and cyclists is set up for us by society. For example there are citizen groups that oppose each other across driver-cyclist role conflicts (like your famous Critical Mass movement that spread across the world--see our site for bicycling issues--http://DrDriving.org/bicycling.html

> For motorists, what happens in them that they cannot recognize their bad
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> truck was entirely unremorseful that he ran Chris over and killed him, and
> was still challenging people to a fight.

This is a process we call "cognitive dissonance" in our field of social psychology. In order to defend and protect his own self-esteem, the perpetrator has to inhibit feelings of remorse and instead, reinforces the self-serving explanations about how he is not to blame for what happened. So denying guilt or remorse for these horrendous actions are ways our culture teaches us to protect ourselves from excessive guilt and anxiety. But we must point out that our culture also teaches us the opposite, namely that we should feel remorse and guilt and that we should repent and apologize and try to make restitutions, and above all, try to prevent it from happening again.

And in this respect our book is a kind of a call to consciousness for our society, just as it happened to us as a couple, being recovered road ragers ourselves (though in different ways for Leon and Diane--see our book). And so it's important for all of us 177 million licensed US drivers to monitor our thoughts and emotions behind the wheel, or as bicyclicle riders, and as pedestrians and passengers. We are the same people who use the public roads, alternating roles.

One way to go as a society is to keep increasing and strengthening the warfare, politically and physically, meanwhile pretending that we are not the same people (our book also deals with traffic calming, and how it sets up warfare situations--literally, with pedestrians barricading the streets!). But another way is to heed the wake up call and let's all start self-witnessing ourselves as road users--What our thoughts and emotions are, and do we approve, or should we start reconditioning ourselves and become supportive drivers, supportive bicyclists, supportive pedestrians?

It's not easy, but it can be done, and by doing it we strengthen community and society, and mutually make our lives better. Our book

Subject: more answers for you

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From: Leon James <leon@hawaii.edu>
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It's not easy, but it can be done, and by doing it we strengthen community and society, and mutually make our lives better. Our book
goes into the exercises we can all do, day by day, like keeping a Road Diary about what makes us mad or how we think of others, whether cruelly or with compassion, and how we act. For instance, Diane often has to tell Leon, Fix your face! Drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists need to remember that their face is a signboard on which they communicate friendship or hostility. The way we drive is contagious—and also the way we ride a bicycle, or walk across the street, or wait in a bank line. We can act like we ignore people, or we can act like we despise them, or we can act like we respect and like them. We do this with our facial expression, our body movements, our accommodating acts, or else by our facial hostility and oppositional acts (like closing the gap so the car can’t enter your lane, or following a bicyclist too close, or approaching pedestrians too fast, or slowing down in the pedestrian lane when walking, ignoring the waiting driver).

> And, what are the triggers for this sort of rage? You say it's learned

> behavior from childhood-- What activates it? And it's hard to believe that

> it's not redirected rage, or that the source of it is monkey see, monkey

> do. Is road rage just a socially sanctioned way of dumping repressed emotions?

Yes. When we visited Florida some time ago we witnessed shopping cart rage—people ramming each other when they felt their way was blocked due to inattention or lack of consideration. People sue each other all the time. Neighbors kill each other or do other mischief to each other. Workplace rage has become a huge problem. So it’s the age of rage for sure. We think this offers a tremendous opportunity to unite as a community by overcoming these culturally transmitted divisive methods of relating. Each of us must decide whether we want to act with civility or with scowls.

Aloha,
Leon James and Diane Nahl
DrDriving.org

San Francisco Examiner * 11-Dec-2000 * Page C1

This article quotes Leon James

When good drivers go bad
For bicyclists and pedestrians, hitting the road can be a deadly experience

By Judy DeMocker
Special to the _Examiner_

On the night of Nov. 17, Christopher Robertson was riding his bicycle on 4th Street in the South of Market area of San Francisco. He was riding with 15 friends in a funeral procession for bike messener Joseph Woods, who was shot and killed in his Mission Street apartment earlier in November. According to the traditions of S.F. bicycle messenger community, when a messenger dies, his fellows take the bike on a ceremonial ride to Mission Rock and throw it in San Francisco Bay. That night, however, Chris Robertson never made it to the water's edge.

According to eyewitness Ron Salkin, it all happened very quickly.

A tractor-trailer came up behind the procession. Enraged that the group was occupying the lane, Salkin said, the driver began weaving from one side of the road to the other, blowing his horn repeatedly. Then the driver pulled alongside the group, shouting at them. He threw a wooden block at the cyclists, trying to hit them. He swerved into the group, crushing Chris under the right front wheel of his rig, Salkin said. Robertson died.

¨You didn't even have to turn around; you could feel that this guy was going off -- laying on his horn, gunning his engine,¨ said Salkin, who works as a bicycle messenger at the Black Dog Delivery Service. ¨If he had been trying to get around us, I presume he would have sped up. There was no oncoming traffic. He could easily have passed us.¨

The truck driver was traveling to Casey's Office Moving and Services Inc., two blocks from the scene of the accident. So far no charges have been filed against the truck driver, who was released on $15,000 bail. The District Attorney's office is investigating the incident and plans to announce the results of its findings in the next week or two, according to Fred Gardner, public information officer for the D.A.’s office. Gardner declined to comment on how the investigation was going, or what charges the DA's office is considering.
The death of Robertson has sparked widespread concern in the city, from bicycle activists, Department of Parking and Traffic officials, and the mayor's office. And it's brought to the fore public safety issues for bicyclists and pedestrians alike: mainly, that they're tired of being on the losing end of the battle for San Francisco's streets. At a rally last week at the Hall of Justice building, bicycle commuters, activists, and messengers aired their complaints about careless drivers and an unsympathetic police force.

``I'm sick and tired of getting harassed by motorists, and feeling like I'm not allowed to be on the streets. Drivers don't understand that bicyclists have the same rights as cars to use the roads,'' said Ginger Williamson, a bicycle commuter who was also a friend of Robertson's.  

"I'm tired of having drivers cut in front of me, shake their fists at me, honk at me, when I'm not doing anything wrong."

Others voiced complaints of being harassed by police and threatened with citations, even when they were following rules of safe riding set out in the California Drivers' Handbook. According to that pamphlet, bicyclists may occupy the lane, they may move into the road to avoid debris or to make a left-hand turn.

"I got pulled over by a police car that told me I was weaving from lane to lane. I wasn't. Then they told me that 70 to 80 percent of the time, injury accidents are the bicyclist's fault." said another speaker at Friday's rally.  

"So basically they're blaming bicyclists for what is happening to them on the streets."

Playing the who's to blame game

Too often, activist groups claim, the police do not take bicycle injuries and fatalities seriously. There is only one case on the books this year in which a driver was charged with a crime, attempted murder. That case was a Nov. 4 incident in which a motorist forced a cyclist into a parked car on Mission Street, seriously injuring her.

"We're aware of the problem," said Lt. Lawrence Minasian of the S.F. Police Department.  "It's especially bad in the South of Market area."

Criminal charges are hard to bring against automobile drivers, however, because proving intent is much more difficult than when a gun or knife is used as a deadly weapon.

"It's very hard to establish intent in these cases. One person's going to say, 'he did it on purpose,' and the other's going to say, 'no I didn't,'" said Inspector Mike Mahoney of the Hit and Run Division of the San Francisco Police Department.  

"Unless you can somehow show that some sort of altercation happened beforehand, or that there was a relationship between the people involved, it's very difficult to prove intent. People don't usually get in their cars and say, 'I'm going to go run someone down today.'"

But some members of the police force have already made up their minds as to who was at fault on the night of Nov. 17, weeks before the investigation was completed.

"Do you mean the case where the bicyclist swerved in front of the truck and got run over?" said Sgt. Bosch, also of the Hit and Run division.  "What about the road rage of bicycle drivers? I can't tell you how many cases I've seen of pedestrians getting knocked down by bicyclists, and the number of broken hips when they hit the ground. The problem is there's no licensing of management of particularly bicycle messengers."

According to the Hit and Run Division database, which tracks pedestrian fatalities and criminal cases involving traffic accidents, there has been only one case reported this year of a cyclist hitting a pedestrian.

This 'Blame the Victim' attitude is often heard in the police department. According to one officer at the Hall of Justice rally, it is bicyclists, not drivers, who cause accidents on city streets. Bike messengers in particular don't have much credibility with police, since they are often seen as riding aggressively and flaunting traffic rules.  

"Bike messengers, with the way they conduct themselves, not obeying traffic lights and pulling out in front of people, are causing a lot of accidents," said Minasian.  

"There's another side to this story."

It's true that cyclists, like pedestrians, sometimes cause the accident that injures them. More often, though, it's the driver's mistake that leaves a bicyclist or pedestrian lying on the pavement. According to statistics kept by the California Highway Patrol over the last five years, automobile drivers were at fault an average of 55 percent of the time in injury accidents involving a bicycle.

The police department's blame-the-biker attitude has bicycle activists seeing red. By stigmatizing the community of bicycle messengers, police are overlooking the estimated 25,000 people who ride their bicycles to work each year, and the even greater number of cycling enthusiasts who ride on evenings and weekends for pleasure. The entire spectrum of the city's bicyclists is getting shortchanged, according to one bicycle advocate.

"We have encountered that attitude, and it's more than an attitude. It's prejudice. And it affects the quality of the police work," said Dave Snyder, executive director of the S.F. Bicycle Coalition.  

"Whenever they get into a situation where they didn't see what happened, police officers assume the bicycle rider was at fault."

Bicycle Coalition frustrated
But for bicycle advocates, something is better than nothing, and they'll take what they jail time for participants.

Brown supported the arrest of more than 250 cyclists during a Critical Mass public awareness of bicycle safety bicyclist rights through signs and advertising. Under the program, the Department of safety. The mayor's office announced Dec. 1

Bicycle activists are hoping for a similar level of commitment from government agencies when

member of the Pedestrian Safety Task Force.

``San Francisco is off the charts on pedestrian injury,'' said Michael Radetsky, health educator at the Public Health Department and co-author of Road Rage and

confrontations
congestion, construction, and gridlock traffic do. More stress

James also publishes the Web site www.DrDriving.org. According to James, the holiday season increases stress on drivers, much as congestion, construction, and gridlock traffic do. More stress can raise the level of hostility and create additional opportunities for confrontations and violence.

Civility as a civic response

The city has done a good deal to raise awareness of pedestrian safety. It has installed cameras to catch red-light runners. It has implemented traffic-calming measures in Duboce Triangle and other neighborhoods to slow traffic down and make fat turns more difficult. And it's established a Pedestrian Safety Task Force that facilitates communication between government agencies and senior citizen, disabled, and environmental groups.

But even with educationa advertising campaigns, city officials say that the problem is not going to go away.

``San Francisco is off the charts on pedestrian injury,'' said Michael Radetsky, health educator at the Public Health Department and member of the Pedestrian Safety Task Force. ``What we're trying to do is get people to associate human frailty with what happens when you race through the intersection."

Bicycle activists are hoping for a similar level of commitment from government agencies and City Hall to address issues of bicyclist safety. The mayor's office announced Dec. 1 its "Share the Road" public education campaign to help raise driver awareness of bicyclist rights through signs and advertising. Under the program, the Department of Parking and Traffic will spend $230,000 to raise public awareness of bicycle safety issues. The mayor's office is not known for siding with bicyclists, however. In July 1997, Mayor Brown supported the arrest of more than 250 cyclists during a Critical Mass demonstration, calling for convictions that would lead to jail time for participants.

But for bicycle advocates, something is better than nothing, and they'll take what they can get.
``Of course it's not enough,'' said cyclist Murphy, ``but it's a step in the right direction.''

Cyclists fear drivers with road rage

By IRA DREYFUSS

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) -- There was the driver who pulled a gun on him, and the driver who ran a pickup truck onto a sidewalk after him, Christopher Scott recalled.

And this was only while Scott, a bicycle commuter in Washington, was doing his four miles between his home and his job.

''Things do get a little hairy,'' said Scott, 25, who works in the membership department at the League of American Bicyclists.

Things are too hairy, say officials of the bikers' organization. Road rage isn't simply driver against driver -- it's driver against cyclist, too. And the bike group officials want government officials, as well as drivers, to pay more attention to the risks that cyclists face.

The association cited the fatal shooting May 5 of a 32-year-old Lakewood, Colo., cyclist by the driver of a pickup truck in what Denver police describe as a case of road rage.

''It's an almost weekly occurrence'' to get some kind of abuse, Scott said. A driver pulled a gun last summer after being unable to pass him on a crowded street, he said. And in the same area, another man drove his pickup onto the sidewalk and started to chase him, Scott said. In both cases, ''I clicked into full gear and got out,'' he said.

''Road rage is a growing and dangerous phenomenon,'' the league's executive director, Elissa Margolin, said in a statement. Drivers and cyclists as well must learn to share the road, she said.

The federal government also is concerned, but has no data on how large the problem may be or whether it is growing, said Rosalyn G. Millman, acting director of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Being out of emotional control is not regularly singled out on police accident reports, she said.

For now, the agency is trying to distinguish between road rage and ''aggressive driving,'' Millman said. The safety administration considers aggressive driving to be a combination of unsafe driving behaviors, such as speeding and weaving in and out of traffic, she said. That's less violent than road rage, which would mean ''criminal behavior -- using the car as a weapon -- or using a weapon from a vehicle,'' Millman said.

Although the agency has been concerned primarily with driver-against-driver activity, ''clearly someone on a bike is very exposed. They don't have the protection of the metal, like someone in a car would,'' Millman said.

Stopping road rage is up to both the driver and the cyclist, because the activity is an interaction, said psychologist Leon James of the University of Hawaii. ''Both have traffic emotions that they cannot keep under control because they are not trained to do so,'' he said.

For the cyclist, this involves not demanding a share of the road when the driver refuses to give it, said James, who has interviewed drivers and had them carry tape recorders to capture their emotional reactions to traffic.

''The prime directive is to retain control over the situation,'' James said. Once the cyclist shows anger, the situation is out of the cyclist's control, because ''the cyclist doesn't know how the driver will respond,'' he said.

Drivers must realize that ''there are roadway bullies, and any of us can turn into a bully,'' James said. "All of us drivers have a bias to feel we have priority over the road. It's a territorial competition where the driver feels that the cyclist should not be there, in the way of the car.''

Drivers should acknowledge when their emotions become a problem, figure out exactly what triggers their outbursts and start to put locks on those triggers, James said.

The safety administration advises those who are confronted by aggressive drivers to make every attempt to get out of their way, to avoid challenging them, to avoid eye contact and not to return any gestures. Later, report the driver's vehicle description and license plate number to police, the agency said. The agency is working with state and local officials to develop programs against aggressive driving.

And cyclists should always wear helmets. ''That's the most effective safety device we have,'' Millman said.

Web posted Wednesday, May 17, 2000

original here
DISTRACTION OR ROAD RAGE AGAINST BICYCLISTS?

A 17-year-old motorist driving home from the gym slammed into a group of bicyclists, killing one and injuring four others, authorities said.

The driver, identified by sheriff's deputies as Jordan Lampos, was making a right turn off Lakeview Canyon Road about 8:30 a.m. Saturday when he became distracted, and his full-size Chevy pickup truck crashed into bicyclists who had stopped on a sidewalk, said Deputy Wayne Encinas, a Los Angeles County sheriff's spokesman.

Mehran Delaveri, who was changing a flat tire on his bike, was killed, Encinas said.

Four other bicyclists were injured. Two were taken to Los Robles Regional Medical Center in Thousand Oaks. One who suffered spinal injuries was in serious condition, and the other was treated for minor injuries and released.

Another victim was airlifted to UCLA Medical Center with a broken leg, and the fourth was treated at the scene for minor injuries.

Lampos, who was not arrested, was released into his parents' custody. The case was under investigation, said Detective Robert Evans.

Delavari, 35, of Los Angeles' West Hills area, was a researcher at the pharmaceutical company Amgen. He was married and had two small children, a boy and a girl.

Westlake Village is about 40 miles northwest of downtown Los Angeles.

Body Language Induced Tickets
Police may also interpret body language to your advantage or disadvantage.

Corrective Body Language (the second signal)

Use assertive re-positioning to correct a body-language-signal when needed. For example, you're looking to the right with your helmet also turned to the right. You then look forward and see a car planning to pull out of a side street on the right. Understanding body language on the motorcycle, you realize you've sent a signal indicating you will be turning right (by turning your helmet to the right). Correct the initial signal by assertively moving into the helmet straight ahead, torso leaned forward, and elbows spread position to indicate you are going straight.

PEDNET DISCUSSION ON AGGRESSIVE DRIVERS

To: pednet@llora.ottawa.on.ca
Subject: Re: pednet: Raving, insane bureaucrat
From: john@montana.com (John Williams)
Date: Fri, 18 Jul 1997

I watched that hearing last night on C-Span [Congressional Hearings on aggressive Driving] but this comment must have come before I tuned in. Interestingly enough, in response to questions from Rep. Sue Kelly (R, NY), whose son bicycles 10 miles to work each day, Martinez said that encouraging alternative transportation modes (specifically mentioning walking and bicycling) could help reduce the problem and he discussed some of the things the administration supports in that arena. He suggested it would help if we didn't "force everyone into a car".

When Kelly asked if he thought congestion was the cause of road rage, he suggested it was one of three causes, the others being an increase in bad behavior among drivers (my notes say "an escalating situation" but I think that was his point), and a decrease in enforcement of traffic laws.

There were a number of other interesting points brought out in various people's testimony. Dr. Allan Williams of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety advocated for increased use of red light cameras, showing some photos of violators and, in one case, a crash as it happened; he also alluded to a survey that showed widespread support for the use of such technology among the public. He mentioned studies from Australia suggesting a 1/3 reduction in either red-light running or red-light running related crashes (my notes on this point, alas, are unclear). He also made the point, with respect to increased congestion, that we've got 50% more vehicles on the road than we had 20 years ago.

David Snyder, Asst. General counsel of the American Insurance Institute, suggested support for increased safety funding and for Senate Bill 708, the "Deadly Driver Reduction Act," which sounds intriguing (!) although I don't have any info on it.

Davis Willis, prez of the AAA Fdn. for Traffic Safety, mentioned a study on the topic by Meisel (?) consultants that they had funded. Robert Read (?) can't read my own writing!), traffic division commander for Fairfax Co. (VA) P.D., mentioned a new "vehicular maiming" offense on their books that they are just starting to ticket people for; he also mentioned a "smooth operator" program they're conducting to encourage less aggressive behavior.

Dr. Arnold Nerenberg of Whittier Mental Health Services distinguished between road rage and aggressive driving. Discussing the latter, he said that someone could be driving fast, weaving back and forth from lane to lane but not be in a rage at all. However, some of the lawful drivers that such a person would pass or cut off might well end up in such a state of mind.

Dr. Leon James, a psychology prof from Univ. of Hawaii, mentioned that he's got a web site on the subject of road rage (he didn't give the address!). He said he'd either started or was proposing the start of an organization called Children Against Road Rage, which he suggested would be patterned after the SADD group. He also mentioned a "New Driver's Ed" program that he was promoting that would focus on instilling what he called "emotional intelligence" in new drivers so they wouldn't go wild behind the wheel. He advocated encouraging an "attitude of latitude."

There were also some folks from the "Citizens Against Speed and Aggressive Driving" who advocated, among other things, slowing down traffic. One recounted the experience of driving into D.C. with her mom and being hit head on by an out-of-control driver who had been speeding and weaving and came over a raised median. Her mom died and the driver got off with a minimal penalty.

Steve Horn (R, Calif.) made an interesting comment about car companies that advertise their products showing aggressive driving and speed. He said he boycotts such companies.

While some folks suggested a link between road rage and congestion, I don't remember that being the main point, by any means. They tended to focus on behavior, attitudes, and the like.

Interesting hearing and I found myself taking lots of notes...
Hi there,

I appreciate that the Chronicle did a story on bicycles, and perhaps some of the bias in that article stems from how unfamiliar drivers are with bicycles. I would suggest using a reporter who bicycles for transportation, uses transit, and drives, for the most fair perspective.

Again and again, we see that because motor vehicles have recently risen to dominance, many people do not see the big picture. True long-term planning principles elude even some of those who are supposed to be experts, so a newspaper columnist banging out a story (basically for entertainment, or for some other political gain, since the primary audience, motorists, generally doesn't understand and really wants some entertainment rather than the truth) is not likely to bother with rigorously addressing the issues. Scapegoating bicyclists and assuming the role of the special interests which pay your salaries and brought us all these traffic nightmares is much easier. Obviously, that's paltry consolation! The article, like many other inaccurate articles about bicycle transportation in the Chronicle over the past 2 years (especially since July 25th 1997), was damaging and incites more animosity towards us on the roads, and serves corrupt interests. I don't know if you think you're being "conservative" by sabotaging bicycle transportation (how ironic!), or if you get a kick out of the increased motorist violence we experience when people are led to resent bicyclists. It's already bad enough out there. But whatever the reason, it's inexcusable and unacceptable. I have repeatedly written you detailed analyses of your articles and invited you to contact me before doing the same again. At least you contacted me this time...

So again, I'll let you know what you did wrong. Next time, how about run the article by a second expert? Here is a fairly comprehensive list of things that were incorrect in your article. Again, some of them you may have missed through your lack of understanding and ignorance. Some of them you may have missed because you believed the authorities you interviewed who abuse their power, and you weren't capable of seeing or investigating beyond their power (fallacy of authority). But all of them are inexcusably wrong and part of a pattern of misinformation and bias. And overall I would perchance a guess that your advertising lifeblood is the car-only industry, and that like the San Jose Mercury News, you are unable or unwilling to tell the truth in the face of their disapproval.

But here goes. Pieces of your article are in double-quotes. In the order of the article:

1) The title.

"Caltrans Laments High Cost of Bike Lanes on Bridges Million-dollar paths used only by a handful of Bay Area commuters" How can you ascribe a feeling to an agency? Is this because they like money so much, that they lament that no one would give them an overpriced job to do? Sounds more like you're personalizing a vicious and discriminatory agency out of control, to build public sympathy for them.

2) The comparison with the Dumbarton Bridge.

"When the Dumbarton Bridge was built in 1982, Caltrans added a bicycle lane at a cost of $9 million." It would be helpful to have percentages here. What was the cost of the entire bridge? What fraction of the bridge was the bicycle access? Did anyone contest their figures then? Did you get a second opinion on this number? Would a different design have been significantly less expensive (most likely!). Did you research the fact that Caltrans has recently illegally removed the most direct bicycle access to the bridge on the east end? And that it's rather difficult for new riders to find the bridge? And that the Dumbarton Express bus is frequently full and bumping bicyclists? Why not? "On an average weekday, 55 people pedal along it." Where did this figure come from? The last Caltrans figure I heard of was over 100. I've been told this number was counted on a rainy day in February, just for anti-bicycle misinformation articles like yours. How can that figure possibly indicate the true value to society of equal access? And what about when 100's of riders cross in group rides? Why was there no comparison in the article to the Golden Gate Bridge which YOUR PAPER reported has been counted with 3500 riders in a single a day? What about in ten years, twenty years, or the 150-year life of the bridge? Why no mention of the rapidly accelerating rate of bicycle use correlated with better equipment, better support, and slowly connecting bike routes (of which a bridge is a major obstacle)? Why no discussion of when there's better land use in the future, so people live closer? I guarantee you that will happen at this rate. What about if gas prices go through the roof? Why no discussion of bicycle access as an investment in the future?

"The Benicia Bridge will get a $3 million bike lane when a new span opens in 2003." Ditto. Also, they're bike >>paths<< not lanes. Bike lanes have a stripe, not a wall, separating them from motor traffic. For your information, it costs about $300/mile to stripe a bike lane, cute little pictures included. (In case Caltrans told you it was $300 Billion, for instance).

3) Bicycle shuttles.
"Right now, 20 people a day use the bicycle shuttle bus that runs [on the Benicia]." Where does it pick up? Does it bump riders like the Bay Bridge shuttle does? Does anyone know about it? How convenient is it to destinations? Do they move the pick-up point without notice like they do the Bay Bridge shuttle? How much does it cost? How many cyclists live in that area compared to the San Mateo area? What is the comparison of distance between population centers? What is the comparison of routes to get to the shuttle? Did Caltrans cut the service drastically without notice like they did on the Bay Bridge? Again, it's an auto-only world, so bike usage is complex and special to each case. The MTC admits they have no way to study bicycle usage (see below).

4) Bay Bridge east span.

"The cost will be $50 million, and while no one knows how many cyclists will use it, none of them will be commuting to San Francisco because the bike lane will end mid-Bay." Gee, that's forward-thinking. Access to the west span is essentially a given -- we're meeting with CT about the design at this time, and Governor Wilson signed AB2038 which found the funds for it. It's actually all but a done deal. Everyone agrees that a path which goes only halfway across is stupid. And the west span is so bike-friendly you couldn't keep us off the roadway without building a path."Restripe it, cover the grates, change the signs, and LET US ON!" Note that the west span used to have six car lanes on top. There's certainly ample room for five car lanes and a small bike lane (see elsewhere for more on this idea).

3) Bias in a nutshell: "Bicycle commuters: the few, the proud, the expensive."

a) THE FEW. Have you taken a look at Market Street during the rush hours anytime recently? Or are your smog-covered glasses acting up again? There's practically a critical mass there every day, continuously, during evening and morning rush hours -- more bikes than cars at many times! But enough of that, how many people use it is inconsequential. Would you build a building without a fire escape? Yet how many people use it most days of the year? How many people use it during a crisis? Similarly, how many people would use a path during a crisis (e.g., BART strike, earthquake, projected severe congestion, etc.). How will usage change over the next 150 years of the bridge's life? Do you also argue that there should be head counts before installing wheelchair ramps and elevators?

b) THE PROUD. Damn straight! But also humble, and sacrificing and suffering for trying to do the sensible, sustainable, humane, environmentally sound, and healthy thing in the face of a very harsh car-only culture which has been allowed to take over like the cancer it causes.

c) THE EXPENSIVE. That's a joke! First off, we get only 0.5% of the Regional Transportation Plan funds, and that's for both bikes *and* pedestrians. Yet we make up (by low estimates) 11% of trips -- while other more civilized countries have up to 60% bicycle rates. And on top of that, we suffer 25% of the traffic fatalities. Don't talk to us about who's expensive!!! Think of how much we save society by bicycling instead of driving. Think of the enormous subsidy and suffering for the automobile. A Vietnam war in American casualties each year, and then again from the air pollution. Congestion. Lost time. Destruction of families and neighborhoods. Expensive road upkeep. Hundreds of billions to subsidize oil interests in the Persian Gulf. Lowered life expectancy. I could go on and on. A recent major study showed that the cost of gasoline should be at least $6-$16 by conservative estimates (the range is because some costs are variable or have a range of estimates). This doesn't count many priceless losses caused by motor vehicle use. Did your paper cover this fact? Gee, I thought not!

4) "kids on pogo sticks" -- No comment. Maybe Wildermuth read the BCLU ordinance when he was poking around at http://www.xinet.com/bike/, and that's great -- the point was to show the breadth of people who are nonmotorized travelers and inject a little humor and humanity. But here in this hostile, biased context, it serves to ridicule the legitimacy of bicycle transportation.

5) Caltrans promotes alternative transportation!? "But for the state Department of Transportation, it is not that easy. Despite years of promoting mass transit, ride-sharing and a hodgepodge of other plans designed to ease the crush of traffic on California highways, most commuters still want to use their own cars to get to work." THAT'S A LAUGH! Caltrans (Cartrance) claims to be the DOT but the "O" stands for "Opposing". Witness the recent wrangle over the Transbay Terminal ramps. CT wanted to cripple the bus service and get out of running the Terminal, which they keep in the shoddiest shape possible.

Look at the way they treated the hordes of bicycle commuters using their Bay Bridge shuttle when they cut service by more than half without notice, jeopardizing people's jobs and leaving them stuck in the East Bay, late to work. They did the same thing with tow service to the Richmond-San Rafael bridge, a service that is free to motorists and, like so many other things, subsidized by bicycle riders.

6) Biased, outdated census: ""About 1 percent of the people bike to work, according to the last census," said Steve Heminger ... "So the amount we spend on bikes is still rather small compared to what we spend on cars and mass transit"." Steve "Highway to Hell" Heminger should know better than to use the Census "figures" -- he's been corrected enough times! The Census was inaccurate in describing usage for multiple reasons:

a) It only measured work trips. Many people live far away and use cars, bus, or BART to get to work. But around town, they use bikes. Many people are students, or unemployed, or moms (which really is a big job!) or otherwise didn't consider themselves "employed" yet they use bicycles a great deal. So a vast percentage of bicycle trips didn't get counted.

b) It only measured "most-miles mode" work trips. In short, if you bike two miles to BART and then ride 5 miles to San Francisco for work, you didn't bike to work by the census. That trip disappears. You took BART.

c) It was conducted during one of the rainiest weeks of the year. Many people bike to work when it's a nice day, and take other
It would cost about $160 million for a bicycle path across the entire Bay Bridge, 10) BAY BRIDGE COSTS.

no one bicycles.

There has been a TREMENDOUS increase in the number of trips by bicycle and this trend is not likely to reverse. Even the Chronicle has noted that there's just a damned lot of bicycle stuff going on these days -- be consistent!

7) Funds should be spent on projected use and basic needs, not on catch-22 existing usage "figures". For instance, if we suffer 25% of fatalities, shouldn't something be done for "basic safety" after 40-plus years of subsidizing car-only facilities which endanger our lives? Fair is fair! And if we don't have basic access (e.g., to bridges, or BART, or office buildings) which would help make a complete and reliable system -- and allow many more people to choose bicycling, as it becomes more reliable -- isn't it worth the relatively tiny cost, if it precipitates more bicycling all around?

MTC admits that they have "NO" way to project bicycle usage. They have no bicycle models. They have no bicycle coordinator. Neither does Caltrans. We're being cut out of the picture. While more enlightened cities around the world have very high rates of bicycling, all they can say is "no one bicycles so we don't provide for bicycling". Well some cities in the Bay Area are better than others. Berkeley, Albany and Palo Alto, for instance, have relatively high numbers of bicycle commuters (5, 7, and 45%) by the 1990 census, despite how inaccurate that document was (see above). There are cities in Europe which have up to 60% of trips by bicycle -- this came after they revamped their cities during the oil shortage of the early 70's. So if we provide the infrastructure we will get the bicycle trips. Most of those trips would have been car trips. Most car trips are under 5 miles. A third are under one mile!!! The potential is enormous. We have bicycle advocates and regular riders in their 70's and 80's so don't say it's "only for the young" -- au contraire, it keeps one young! And for those with special needs, personalized bicycles are very available now. People who are worried about falling down can ride very fast tricycles. People with back problems may prefer upright handlebars, or a sit-down recumbent. People now have many seats to choose from which makes the ride much more comfortable for men and women both. Bicycle technology keeps getting better and better, more easy, more pleasant, more reliable.

We should be encouraging rather than discouraging bicycle use. Kind of like, if you want to eat, plant seeds in your garden. Right now there's a "Safe Routes to School Bill" which Carole Migden needs to support. It used to be that a "majority" of kids biked to schools. But as our neighborhoods become congested, spread-out suburbs, parents no longer feel safe letting their kids bike to school. So kids are deprived of that critical independence and ability to get to events, resources, etc. Their development is being severely damaged -- not to mention that their parents are stuck in traffic more hours out of the day and have even less time to spend with them.

Another problem is that there isn't training for use of bicycles. 80% of bicycle theft is easily prevented. And 20% of people who's bikes are stolen never try again. Most serious accidents happen in the first 3 months of learning to ride -- we teach driving education why not bicycling education? It's a life skill! If you don't learn when you're young, most people won't pick it up again later in life. (However, there is a group in Berkeley which teaches elderly folks to ride).

8) RULES AND LOOPHOLES: I'm not sure what attorney you contacted who gave you the opinion that "various state rules call for paths for bikes and pedestrians to be included in any plans for bridge construction" but the idea that "there is a loophole big enough to drive a tractor-trailer through: Those paths only have to be built if they are "economically and physically feasible"" is quite remarkable. There is no such "loophole" in the following "law":

888.2. The department shall also incorporate nonmotorized transportation facilities in the design of freeways on the state highway system along corridors where nonmotorized facilities do not exist, upon a finding that the facilities would conform to the California Recreational Trails System Plan specified in Section 5070.7 of the Public Resources Code or upon a finding, following a public hearing, that the facilities would conform to the master plans of local agencies for the development of nonmotorized facilities and would not duplicate existing or proposed routes, and that community interests would be enhanced by the construction of the facilities.

I suppose you would argue that community interests would not be enhanced? If you got your "legal" knowledge from MTC then it's no surprise that you were wrong -- they've been misrepresenting the facts for some time. If your article had dealt with the truly big issues of congestion, you might have been able to talk about how this illegal bridge betrays the voters by not providing congestion relief.

9) MONEY MATTERS TO CALTRANS?

"It is the money that matters for Caltrans officials, who believe bridge bike paths take too much of it for use by too few people."

It is true that Caltrans may not understand bicycles to be legitimate transportation. But they have repeatedly stated for years, and have for this bridge, that, "We will build as much bridge as the Bay Area will pay for." Caltrans wants money. There is another issue here, however, one which may be difficult to prove, but it's that of the lucrative car-only interests which want everyone to be forced to drive. When a bicyclist is freed from owning a motorcar, that's an average $6500/year that isn't going into their industry. Given the way the car-only interests bought up and destroyed our wonderful public resource, the cable car networks from all over this country (which allowed the Bay Bridge to carry twice as many people per day back in the 1940's), and given the way Caltrans/MTC continues to say no one bicycles when the proof is everywhere that they're wrong, it's clear that there is an ongoing campaign to make sure that no one bicycles.

10) BAY BRIDGE COSTS.

"It would cost about $160 million for a bicycle path across the entire Bay Bridge, said Caltrans spokesman Greg Bayol." Caltrans'
may be because of the erroneous and misleading misinformation you are perpetuating to make it sound like *WE* are holding up the process. I bet that's a very incorrect figure.

12) CARQUINEZ:

"The bike lane that will be built on the new Carquinez Bridge will cost $60 million". That's absolutely inconceivable. I'm not familiar with the project but I bet that's a very incorrect figure.

13) CAN EXISTING BRIDGES ALLOW BICYCLES ON THE DECK?

"That is not going to happen, said Bayol. Like every other part of a bridge or freeway, bicycle lanes have to be engineered for maximum safety, and that takes time and costs money.

This is false on its face. If motor roadways had to be engineered for maximum safety, they wouldn't be built at all. All over the Bay Area there are design exceptions granted. And all over the Bay Area bicycles are allowed on portions of freeway, in particular when it concurs with Caltrans policy calling for the consideration of bicycle access whenever there is no reasonable alternate route. The Highway Design Manual, Caltrans' bible, specifically call for that. The Antioch toll bridge has 5-feet of shoulder on a freeway toll crossing. It allows bicycles and pedestrians. What's the difference? Other shoulders are even wider! Freeway shoulders are safer to bike on than city streets! This was proven conclusively by a recent study hosted by Caltrans. So there's no excuse to keep us off -- and that's why we feel so justified when we say they are corrupt. Are you with them in that corruption, or on the side of truth and the public interest?

14) "Caltrans' stand on bike lanes has the backing of business groups, government agencies and commuters who would rather see the pavement reserved for cars, especially if disputes with cyclists are going to slow new road construction."

Well, Caltrans resisted us for more than two years on this bridge and now that they want everyone to jump on their poorly designed project, they're using the same misinformation you are perpetuating to make it sound like "WE" are holding up the process. "Too expensive" -- "No one would use it"

"We desperately need that lane for safety and congestion relief". All lies!

15) The lone angry driver-man from the public: "I have had it with the folks who are pushing the bike lane agenda that dominates and stalls every road building project in the state," Robert Vicari of San Francisco said in a letter to the development commission. "I own two bicycles, enjoy recreational biking, . . . am 66 years old and still hold a job. I also commute 34 miles a day and you can bet your sweet a -- I don't intend to use a bike to get there." While admittedly he writes a compelling personal statement, I have to wonder who put him up to it. He's so selfish. No one is asking him to commute by bicycle, just to allow others to do so. He clearly indicates that even at 66 years of age he can do it. I guess he's also fed up with the Americans with Disabilities Act? How about with building codes that force people to make buildings safe and complete and "in compliance with law"? I guess he's against fire extinguishers and fire escapes since "nobody's building burns down"?

More importantly, this (again, misled by Caltrans misinformation) is just one letter. BCDC received over 1,000 letters and cards in support of bicycle access to the San Mateo Bridge!! Only when CT got desperate to get their permit (after about ten years of slowly working on this project) did the Johnny-come-lately naysayers show up to back them.

16) FEW FRIENDS FROM CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE:

"Bicycle advocates' efforts at civil disobedience have won them few friends. When Meggs and 16 other cyclists were arrested last September for pedaling across the bridge and tying up traffic during the morning commute, not many of the hands waving outside the cars were giving signs of solidarity."

Gee, it sounds like you were there! Well we have the video showing lots of support. To the extent that anyone wasn't supportive, it may be because of the erroneous and hate-instigating false reporting in the mass media!! How can you claim that the group tied up
traffic? The CHP tied up traffic when they falsely arrested us. How can you claim that it was civil disobedience? What law do you claim we broke? I'm willing to bet it's unconstitutional! Why not complain about the CHP, who failed in their duty to facilitate efficient traffic flow? IN THE BIG PICTURE:

1) SCOPE OF THE ISSUE!

This is supposed to be a commuter chronicle, right? Well the commuters are losing here. Their new lane is not about congestion relief. They're still going to be stuck in traffic, even Caltrans admits that. More people will try driving because of the extra lane, and switch back from transit -- just what the car-only lobby wants. Neighborhoods and offramps can't handle the increased throughput so we'll be seeing more and more congestion on surface streets and at exit points. Air pollution will increase and it's right upwind from the primary EPA non-attainment zone. The only bus service is being cut in August. No HOV lane. No comprehensive study of rail as demanded by law. We all lose with this new car-only bridge.

2) THE REAL MONEY WASTE.

The Cypress (un)freeway was also shoved through by Caltrans. At $1.375 BILLION dollars it was the most expensive freeway ever built. You could buy more than 13.75 MILLION bicycles for that and give them to people throughout California. Which would be more in the public interest? You could build a dandy rail system throughout the East Bay, to replace the ones destroyed for the car-only monopoly. You could fund schools, house homeless, train people for jobs, clean up the environment, and revitalize business districts and neighborhoods instead of tearing them out and cutting them to pieces (the Cypress razed a big strip of classic redwood victorian houses). The HOV lanes from Hercules to the Bay Bridge cost $355 Million and Caltrans went back on their deal to keep them open maximally, hurting car pooling and bus use. And how many people use them per hour? BART's proposed extension to Warm Springs has been shown to be a $170/ride subsidy. You could buy those Warm Springsiens a nice house and a Mercedes Benz for that..get some perspective on what projects are "really" costing these days and what their "real" long-term benefit is before assuming the position of the jerks who brought us all this congestion.

For once, I'm going to follow up on you folks until you issue a SIGNIFICANT correction.

Thanks!
--Jason Meggs

Dear DrDriving,

The Motorcycling Safety Foundation advocates a formula for safe following distance that works for any speed: The Two-second Rule Under normal, dry and sunlit road conditions, pass a landmark like a sign or pole two seconds or more after the vehicle immediately in front of you has passed this same landmark. Increase time for inclement road conditions. The driver doesn't have to try to calculate car lengths with this method. Keep up the good work! I really appreciate the information that your page provides that goes beyond the technical aspects of the art of driving.

Aloha, Claude
Website Temporarily Unavailable

Our website is currently unavailable while we make some improvements to our service. We'll be open for business again soon, please come back shortly to try again.

Thank you for your patience.
On streets
On streets and roads with bike lanes: People riding bikes must use the bike lane. However, they can leave the bike lane and ride in the traffic lane when: 
- traveling the same speed as vehicle traffic
- making a left turn
- passing (e.g., a double-parked car, another bike-rider)
- making a left turn
- avoiding hazards in the road (e.g., broken glass, an open car door)
- avoiding a place where a right turn is authorized, such as.

Motorized bicycles: Motorized bicycles (mopeds) may not be used on trails, bike paths or lanes unless allowed by local authorities. CVC 21207.5. Electric bicycles: State law defines three classes of e-bikes and specifies where and how each can be ridden. Also, be aware that large trucks, bicyclists, and small-underpowered cars lose speed on long or steep hills and take longer to get up to speed when entering traffic. Other types of slow-moving motorized vehicles, such as wheelchairs, scooters, neighborhood electric vehicles (NEVs), and golf carts may legally operate on public roads. Adjust your speed accordingly to accommodate them.

Horse-drawn vehicles and riders of horses or other animals are entitled to share the road with motor vehicles. It is a traffic offense to
scare horses or stampede livestock. Slow down or stop, if necessary, or when requested to do so by the riders or herdsmen.