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English 1010

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More Funding, More Benefits

An uneducated commuter is a dangerous commuter, when 4 billion american took a trip on a bike in 2009, its clear bicycle licensing needs to be federal law, and with the sudden rise in cycling many states can not keep up with building infrastructures to keep these people safe, and cycling participation is expected to continue to rise which is going to add to the problem of how to make the streets safer and efficient for everyone. Alot of progress has been made in recent years to encourage sharing the road, but we have a long way to go.

Many states do not seem overly concern with safety, and seem to think of cycling laws as an afterthought, as many states ban cyclists on the sidewalk, but offer no ruling on what to do when no lane for them to use, so many inexperienced cyclists to get confused. picture yourself as a cyclist, you decide to head down the road a couple miles from your house, but on the way you need to travel through an intersection or make a left turn, how do you do that? You know about the same amount as every new cyclist.

The problems continues with the education of drivers. Drivers are educated on what to do around other drivers extensively just not what to do around cyclists on the road. Situations come up that neither the cyclists or the motorist have been properly trained on what to do and good innocent people just trying to get somewhere get hurt or scared emotionally, and not enough states see this as a problem, as Tom Jackman from the Washington Post discusses dooring in

virginia. dooring is when a driver opens a door on a cyclist and luckily this is illegal in a lot of states but recently a virginia house blocked a bill to make it illegal, and even introduced a bill that lowered the fine. He puts forth logical criticism “Petersen said he found the bill’s defeat “bewildering” because no one testified against it, and even a state police official testified that there was a gap in the law because no one could be held at fault after a cyclist-door accident.” (jackman), clearly showing how much the state cares about the issue, even after a police official testified for the bill.

This is a problem for obvious reasons, and many organizations like the League of American Bicyclists are trying to do something about it. In an email conversation with Nicole Wynards from the League of American Bicyclists said about their mission “We help secure federal, state, and local funding for bicycling infrastructure that provides safe options for bicyclists. Every year roughly \$800 million in federal funding is made available to cities and states for bicycling and walking infrastructure through the federal Transportation Alternatives Program. Our Bicycle Friendly America programs provide technical assistance and awards to communities, businesses, and universities so that these organizations have the capacity and expertise to use public funding to improve conditions for bicyclists.”(Wynards)

The league operates around the country but puts a major emphasis on getting changes to the federal level, trying to spread the message of a cycling education to the public and hopefully members of the government where real change can happen. I personally agree that education is essential as the number of commuters grow, but think that better education on the automobile side is needed as well. Many motorists do not encounter a bike on the road frequently so they are not sure how to act around them, leaving the potential for a dangerous situation to occur.

Anthony Foxx, the current US Department of Transportation Secretary, has implemented the Safer People, Safe Streets initiative. One excerpt from the official initiative that really shows his focus says “Our roads should be safe; they should be easy places to travel no matter how were traveling on them” (Foxx) showing his very agreeable views on making the roads equal for all users. Something I think is a very important step, which is to change the way we think of the roads as just for cars to for people in any mode. His initiative introduces plans to rate cities, to increase cycling infrastructure, and spread cycling as a healthy alternative to driving, all of which I agree with i just believe this doesnt go far enough, cyclists need a legal right to the road.

Requiring cyclists to get road training, and licensing them is what I would add. Cyclists do have simply terrible habits, putting cars and themselves in dangerous situations. Many cyclists run red lights and stop signs and across all lanes of traffic as well as dangerously weaving through slower moving cars. Others simply get confused on how to safely make a left turn in an intersections. Situation training will greatly improve cyclist safety. Just like the training motorists should receive cyclists should receive exact guidelines on how to behave in certain situations.

Even tho i know many cyclists who would argue against this, cyclists who wish to ride as a part of traffic should receive training. The training should be a requirement, and should be governed by the federal government. It should also be treated as a license, with registration fees and strict guidelines. Many cyclists want to be treated equally to a car but they do not want to deal with everything that goes along with being a motorist. It is time for true equality and how we do that is by licensing cyclists ensures that every cyclists on the road has in fact gone through specific road training which included specifically dangerous situations and has demonstrated a

debatable level of competency required to be on the road with traffic. This would be not required for children and public recreational trails. Licensing and training cyclists offer many benefits specifically to cyclists that may not be apparent at first. Firstly safety will go up, states who put an emphasis on cycling awareness do in fact have less fatalities.

When you help fund an infrastructure, take tests and courses to safely interact on said infrastructure, display a level of required mandated competency all to travel on the infrastructure, you now have far greater legal leverage to demand safer clearer laws to be passed for cyclists. Integration in the established system and then demanding obtuse laws like the sidewalk law be cleared up, and demanding more public officials to pay attention to a growing number of americans who choose to commute on a bike will only increase the safety of all cyclists at every level.

Many would argue that bicycles should not be allowed on the roads at all, that roads were created for cars alone. They do not see bicycling as a legitimate form of commuting only at best as a hobby. In an article by bob shanteau called “the marginalization of bicyclists” bob discusses the public and legal opinions against bicyclists sharing the roads with cars “That guy stated in a profane way the world view of most people today: If you can’t keep up, stay out of the way. My being in the right-hand lane and therefore “in his way” violated his sense that roads in general and travel lanes in particular are only for cars, a viewpoint that I call the car lane paradigm”. He continues to compare the various ways automobiles are legally supposed to handle slow moving vehicles, roads where no clear lanes exists and other issues that motorists easily navigate with each other but offers the questions how does changing the way the vehicle is powered change the perspective of how it should be handled and what rights the vehicle has.

If it were just simply a slow moving truck you would not think too much about it, or even an elderly driver being too cautious, you may be annoyed sure, but to verbally abuse them and to legally ban them from the road any rational adult would not do. You would simply be slightly annoyed and simply pass them when the next opportunity arose. So the way cyclists are being treated is an double standard then. bicycles are vehicles and rightfully so. Some cyclists can average 25 miles an hour with hardly a sweat and bikes are getting faster all the time. a bicycle moving 25 miles and hour would hospitalize a pedestrian but offers no such threat to cars other then possibly going 10 miles an hour slower.

Making bicycle awareness mandatory in all states as a part of drivers training will prepare motorists to deal with the slower cyclists. It will do the same that requiring cyclists to do riding training, show them difficult situations and show them the correct way to handle way the situation. Motorists becoming familiar with cyclists on the roads is the most effective way to build harmony between commuters. Knowledge on both sides is essential to really make a change, better training is the key to reducing cycling fatalities. The training that cyclists will have to go through will build funds for road works, which everyone could agree with is a good thing, and adding bicycle awareness to drivers training would be a negligible cost since it doesn't aim to rework the curriculum just add to it.

Required training has other benefits, like in order to pass the training you have to demonstrate you know the laws of the road and how to be apart of traffic safely. This also separates the cyclists from the people on a bike. Road bikes with a average rider can easily reach speeds of 25 even 30 miles an hour, those speeds are dangerous to pedestrians on the sidewalk, but an occasional rider or a low speed rider moving at 8 miles an hour offers very little more

danger than a jogger, so they would be exempt from the current sidewalk laws. Requiring slower riders to be on the road just creates unsafe situations, so the law just adds confusion, but fast cyclists should be required to ride on the road with faster moving traffic.

Building funds from training also helps the motorists, it moves the ones who are paying for the cycling infrastructure from the motorists, as it currently exists, to the cyclists, the ones who are actually use the bike lanes. This is an unpopular belief in the biking community, but we benefit from roads and the roads are maintained solely with the gas tax and as commuting continues to change and evolve throughout the time we need to change and evolve the way we fund the roads. This system would help the split the costs among the parties who are using the roads and give each party equal legal representation.

While the european countries are enjoying a lower fatality rate, faster, easier commutes, and a healthier population, our cyclists are being marginalized and even completely forgotten about completely. They only want to enjoy their hobby and get to work safely, and its becoming strikingly obvious that we need to act and give them a voice and say about what roads should be like. These are tax paying citizens and they deserve to enjoy their hobbies safely and the government should protect these citizens, and the citizens to better fund better infrastructure.

Works Cited

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