

It's the Season

Let's have a little empathy drivers and cyclists

by Bruce Wyncoop, May 7, 2020

It's cycling season again, and there are things that cyclists and drivers can do to make each other more comfortable. First is to have empathy for each other.

Cyclists, when passing pedestrians (or another bike) on a walking/biking path, give them some warning that you are going to pass. "On your left" would do but I prefer a polite, "I'm going to come by on your left." And announce yourself far enough behind to give the pedestrian time to react; saying it while you're already passing defeats the purpose. As an older (70), slower rider I get passed from time-to-time by a speeding cyclist who doesn't say a thing. If I had dodged a pothole at that time we would have had a bad crash.

Pedestrians, remember that cyclists, by state law, can ride on sidewalks. BUT, cyclists, we have to ride slowly and yield to pedestrians. Most of us do not want to ride on sidewalks but sometimes are forced to do so by conditions.

Cyclists, if you are holding up traffic, try to find somewhere to get out of the way. A bike trail, parking lot, or just pulling off to the side if safe to do so. Keep in mind, when we are driving we get peeved at the driver who is going 10 miles under the speed limit in front of us.

Drivers, if we are on a shoulder we are not in your way. You can't drive on the shoulder anyway (even to pass someone turning left). Annoying you because you've had a bad day isn't the same as holding you up. And please remember that if we do hold you up or make you slow down it usually isn't for very long and we are not doing it purposely.

Cyclists, remember that while we have all the rights on the roads as drivers do we also have all the responsibilities. We have to obey all traffic laws.

Drivers, remember that also. They are not "your" roads, they are "our" roads.

Drivers and cyclists, watch for kids on bikes, they don't always follow the rules and should be forgiven — we were all kids on bikes at one time.

Drivers, keep in mind that everyone on a bike isn't a cyclist. Some of them don't know the rules of the road. Give them a break.

Bicyclists, if you are just starting to take up bicycling again take the time to learn the rules of the road and try to adhere to them.

Drivers, please keep in mind that there are good reasons cyclists don't use bike trails when riding more than "casually." It is safer for us to ride the roadway as bike trails often cross streets where drivers often don't stop behind the stop sign and don't look for bicycles on the trail, concentrating on motor vehicle traffic. If we are riding for exercise or to get somewhere, we don't want to stop at every intersection. Would you want to stop at every block on your way to work or your friend's house? Also, the trails are often poorly maintained, with potholes, cracks, dirt, sand and obstacles.

Cyclists, try not to use narrow roads with no shoulders when possible.

Drivers, keep in mind that there are times when the road with a nice wide shoulder turns into a road with no shoulder at all and we are forced to follow it until we can find another road.

This all comes down to empathy and common courtesy on both sides. Drivers, for crying out loud, have some empathy! Cyclists, for crying out loud, ride courteously! Some of my best friends are drivers, and some of their best friends are cyclists. We can all happily co-exist.

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