

## **FAQ – Common questions regarding cycling by non-cyclists in Blue, with responses in black italic.**

### **I'm curious why cyclists are allowed to ride on roads with speed limits of 45-50 mph and virtually no emergency lane?**

*In most states bicycles are classified as a vehicle and have the same rights as any other vehicle. As such they are allowed to use the regular traffic lane, and use the entire lane if the lane is too narrow for a motor vehicle and a bicycle to share the lane safely.*

### **Why are cyclist allowed to ride in the car lane when the emergency lane disappears?**

*Cyclists are actually not "required" to use the shoulder.*

### **Why are cyclist allowed to cross car lanes, move into the left turn lane, and turn with cars?**

*Cyclists are treated as a vehicle and may move to the left and use the left turn lane just as any other vehicle.*

### **Why do cyclists ride on the white emergency lane line or left of the emergency lane line?**

*Cyclists are allowed to ride in the traffic lane, even if there is a shoulder. Furthermore, the white line is generally the smoothest place to ride and debris are easier to see on the line. Many factors place a cyclist close to the fog line with a wide shoulder including: parked cars including the door zone (bikes are safer keeping a straight line rather than weaving in and out), pebbles and other road debris, garbage cans, potholes, un-even pavement or cracks parallel to the direction of travel, drainage grates, and vehicles from side streets and driveways.*

### **Why are cyclist allowed to ride two or more abreast?**

*Cyclists can ride two abreast as long as they are not "impeding the normal and reasonable flow of traffic." So in light traffic where it is easy to pass, or more than two lanes, they are generally not impeding the "normal and reasonable" flow. Also, in a narrow lane where it is not safe to pass anyway, a cyclist may ride in the center of the lane, so having two bikes is not impeding a driver any more than they would riding by themselves (Colorado recently passed laws clarifying this issue)*

### **Do cyclists pay a yearly tax on the bikes, as I do on my vehicle to use the roads?**

*Most cyclists also own motor vehicles and pay the same licensing fees as others. As many cyclists commute by work, those also owning vehicles are actually paying more per mile on their car than others who don't ride for the same vehicle. A bicycle causes an un-measurable amount of wear to a roadway compared to motor vehicles. Roadway repair dollars come from many sources, not just gas taxes, but from property and income taxes as well which we all pay. In all fairness, a cyclist generally pays a greater share given the amount of wear-and-tear and usage they require.*

### **Are cyclists going to be allowed to ride their bikes on the freeways?**

*Actually, cyclists are allowed to use the shoulder on limited access roadways, except in urban areas where there are reasonable alternatives.*

### **Why do cyclists disregard stop signs and red lights?**

*Why do drivers not stop at stop signs and do other distracting things while driving (eating/cell phones) while operating at 4,000# vehicle? Sometimes a bicycle does not trigger the magnetic sensors designed for cars for the lights.*

### **Are there laws and regulations for cyclists?**

*Yes, there are a few specific to cyclists, but in general they have the same rights and duties as operators of any other vehicle.*

### **Do cyclists take a test regarding the laws and regulations?**

*No, but we are working on getting more of this curriculum into the schools. There are bicycle traffic safety education classes available in most communities.*

### **Are the laws and regulations enforced?**

*Yes, law enforcement does give tickets when appropriate to cyclists. Even though the action of the cyclist has less of a public danger when they disobey the traffic laws, they get the same fines as motorists.*

**I have come close to side swiping other cars when a cyclist moves into the car lane. Doesn't it make sense to restrict cyclists to roads with adequate emergency lanes, on roads where the speed limit is 40 mph or lower? A residential road, where the speed limit is 25 mph, is a perfect example of a street where cars and bikes can share.**

*Most destinations which cyclists are travelling to cannot be completed solely on these types of roadways. In a perfect world we would have bike lanes on every roadway like in Amsterdam, but we don't. Unless the cyclist unexpectedly merged into your lane, you must change lanes and/or wait your turn just as you would passing any other vehicle, and pass at a safe distance of 3' or greater.*

### **Why do some cyclists ride in the middle on the lane?**

*A motorist needs to give a cyclist at least three feet clearance (from right mirror to the left arm). On many roadways, the right lane is only 11-12' wide. The cyclist takes up about 3' of space and generally rides 2' from the shoulder/edge. A typical mid-sized car takes up over 6' including the mirrors. That comes to 14', more for large trucks and SUV's.*

*Many times if the cyclist is riding too far in the lane to the right (or even just over the fog line) motorists either don't see the cyclist or miss-judge the passing distance and try squeezing by. Also when the cyclist is closer to parked cars, and other obstacles, it is harder for them to see and be seen by drivers coming out of side streets and driveways.*

*A cyclist who is riding in the middle of a narrow lane is more likely to be seen by motorists further back, this allows them to signal and merge into the next lane without slowing or more time to adjust to pick a gap in opposing traffic.*

### **More on Licensing**

The bicycles right to use the roadway is the same as it is for anyone else to use the roadway. The US Supreme Court has ruled that freedom of travel upon the public roadways is a right given to everyone. The Court further states that the "right of free movement" of its citizenship is protected against discriminatory State action. The argument in this case is that specifying the mode of travel upon our roadways would in effect "curtail the right of free movement of those who are poor or destitute." *Edwards v. People of State of California*.

As for licensing of bicycles vs. motor vehicles or commercial vehicles, in various cases where the driver was cited with a revoked license, the defense repeatedly fails because the courts judged motoring to be inherently dangerous to other road users, thus requiring regulation and sometimes revocation of privileges, and that other, common means of travel such as walking and cycling were sufficient to preserve the right to travel for those who could not drive.

In my view in summary, the right to use the public roadway is a freedom we ALL enjoy. Not licensing cyclists is concurrent with both statements herein in that the threat to public safety is not generally endangered by a cyclist's improper operation in the same way of someone operating a 4,000-6,000# vehicle, and freedom of movement is a fundamental right. (The cases where a cyclist was proven to be the significant cause of injury of someone in a motor vehicle are extremely rare.)

Both Cyclists and Motorists have duties when using and sharing roadways. Just because some don't obey the traffic laws, does not dismiss either group's right to use the roadways. We must all remember however, inattentive actions by a motor vehicle driver have FAR greater consequences than that of a cyclist and have a greater duty to operate that vehicle in a safe manner; however, it still does not excuse poor driving/riding habits of either group.