



The Squeaky Wheel

Issue No. 26

Newsletter of the Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates

May 2005

From the President **National Bike Month, Traffic Calming, Etc.**

By Lea Brooks

By the time you read this newsletter, the celebration of National Bike Month and efforts to encourage commuters to try pedal power for work and to run errands will be well under way.

Although Bike Commute Week festivities scheduled in the Sacramento area May 16-22 may be history, this column is a reminder that you can register to log your cycling miles until the end of the month to help the six-county region served by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) reach its goal of collectively riding one million miles. The counties are Sacramento, El Dorado, Placer, Yolo, Sutter and Yuba.

The first 4,000 cyclists who register and pledge to cycle at least 50 miles during May will be eligible to pick up a free Bike Commute Week T-shirt at selected bike shops. Bicycling to work, school, for errands and recreation all count! Sign up online and get additional information about National Bike Month at www.bikecommuteweek.com.

The balance of this column will update you on several issues affecting SABA:

- Thanks to all of you who were able to attend the April 27 quarterly membership meeting and potluck for a lively discussion on traffic calming devices. Our guest speakers, Kate Binning, program specialist for the city of Sacramento, and Lupe Rodriguez, a project engineer for Sacramento County, heard a range of comments about the devices

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SABA Wins Award

The Sacramento Environmental Commission presented SABA with its Environmental Recognition Award “for providing leadership toward the protection and enhancement of the environment in the greater Sacramento community.”

SABA’s award was bestowed at the commission’s April 25 meeting and acknowledged the following day during the Sacra-



*Sacramento Environmental Commissioner Marjorie Namba presents award to SABA Executive Director Walt Seifert
Photo by Linda Jimenez*

mento City Council meeting.

The commission is a joint body appointed by Sacramento County and cities of Sacramento, Folsom, Isleton and Galt. The commission was created by the County Board of Supervisors and city councils in 1988 with a broad charter to provide information, analysis and advice to the elected officials on environmental issues, as well as assistance and advice to the Environmental Management Department on environmental programs. ☼

Survey Results

By Walt Seifert

We very much appreciate everyone who took the time to respond to our survey. We now know more about our members, what they want, and what they like and don’t like about cycling in the Sacramento area. The responses provide valuable guidance as we plan for the future.

That said, and while trying not to be defensive, some survey responses indicated members might not be fully aware of what SABA is and what SABA does.

Membership and visibility. A number of comments were that SABA should grow its membership, seek media attention and be more visible in the community. SABA devotes considerable attention to membership recruitment and has grown from 100 to 900 members over the last seven years. It would be great to have a thousand (or multiple thousands) of members and we continue to work on membership growth. We hope you encourage others to join as well. We do try to engage the media — but so does everyone else.

When bikes are in the news, because of our reputation and level of involvement, the media often does come to us for comments. Being even more visible in the community is a function of money, staffing and choosing the most efficient ways to get attention.

Advocacy. Other comments were that SABA should encourage the city of Sacramento to making cycling more convenient, engage in grassroots advocacy and have representatives attend planning commission and council meetings. I like to think SABA is the epitome of a grassroots organization.

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SABA Mission

*SABA represents bicyclists.
Our aim is more and safer trips by bike.*

SABA Vision

*Bicycling for everyday transportation is common
because it is safe, convenient and desirable.*

SABA's Folsom Chapter, the Folsom Area Bicycle Advocates (FABA), meets at 7 p.m. the third Thursday of the month. For more information, call Chapter Chair Tony Powers at (916) 353-1745 or you may e-mail FABA at faba_info@sacbike.com.

The Squeaky Wheel

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SABA Board Members and Officers

Lea Brooks, President
Tony Powers, Vice-President
John Whelan, Secretary
Aron Livingston, Treasurer
Skip Amerine

SABA Staff

Executive Director: Walt Seifert (saba@sacbike.org)
Volunteer Coordinator: Larry Robinson
(volunteer@sacbike.org)

Contacting SABA

Phone: (916) 444-6600
E-mail: saba@sacbike.org
Web site: <http://www.sacbike.org>
Listserv: To sign up, send blank message to
saba-subscribe@topica.com



Sacramento River Trail Complete

At deadline, the long-awaited Sacramento River Trail from Front and R streets to Broadway in Sacramento had been paved. By the time you read this, the bikeway will probably be striped and ready for use. More on this project, 15 years in the making, in the June newsletter. ☉

Welcome new members!

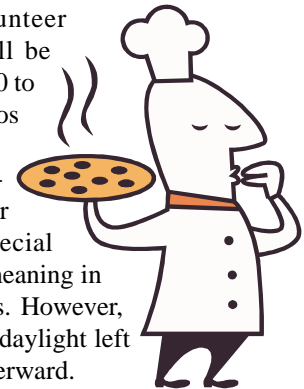
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SABA Pizza Party — Pizza, Soda and Doin' Stuff

The monthly SABA Volunteer Work and Pizza Party will be Thursday, June 16 from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at SABA Dos Rios HQ, 909 12th Street.

This meeting will be incredibly close to the Summer Solstice. No need for special garb, or trying to find the meaning in the shadows of tall structures. However, there will still be plenty of daylight left for a relaxing ride home afterward.



SABActions

Meetings

SABA members attended these meetings:

- Sacramento Transportation and Air Quality Collaborative Working Group and Plenary
- American River Parkway Plan Update Citizens Advisory Committee
- SACOG Bike/Pedestrian Advisory Committee Bike Commute Week Planning
- City of Sacramento Central City Parking Master Plan
- Sacramento County Neighborhood Traffic Management Plan advisory group
- West End Project workshop

Letters

SABA sent a letter to: The Hoyt Co. on the Central City Parking Master Plan

Other

- American River Parkway and Mile 8 clean up
- Conducted Smart Cycling clinics at Hewlett Packard, city of Roseville, SACOG, Caltrans, Mercy San Juan, and SMUD
- Health Fair at State Capitol

President, from page 1

already installed and ideas regarding how to make these devices more bicycle-friendly.

Kate explained that the goal of traffic calming devices on neighborhood streets is to provide safe and pleasant conditions for all users. Neighborhoods seeking relief from speeding and reckless motorists often wait several years for assistance from the city because of a backlog for the popular program.

Lupe noted that Sacramento County is in the process of developing a traffic calming program similar to the city's that calls for a combination of speed humps, stop signs, speed limits and a "toolkit" of other traffic calming devices. A workshop on the draft plan is tentatively scheduled for before the Board of Supervisors meet on Aug. 9. The draft is available for viewing at www.sacdot.com.

SABA has developed a draft issues and interests paper on traffic calming devices that states devices should not jeopardize cyclists' safety and should be effective in slowing motor vehicles; also that cyclists should be able to maintain a straight line without being forced to the right or left by a traffic calming device or its associated gutter pan.

Suggestions offered at the meeting to improve traffic calming efforts included a public education campaign so cyclists and motorists know how to deal with the devices, better visibility of the devices both day and night, signage, consistency, landscaping with low vegetation and targeted law enforcement, including crosswalk "sting" operations that cite motorists who fail to stop for decoys.

- Congratulations to new SABA board members Kevin Regan and Jennifer Finton. On April 23, the SABA Board of Directors named them to the two vacancies on the seven-member board, effective July 1. Both Kevin and Jennifer live in Sacramento.

Kevin recently retired after 22 years as a senior writ attorney at the California State Court of Appeal, Third District, and is now self-employed as a part-time attorney. He is vice president of the Sacramento Bike Hikers, serves on the Save the American River Association's Board of Directors and volunteers at Loaves and Fishes Friendship Park.

Jennifer has done nonprofit work, including fundraising, administration and advocacy, in the Sacramento region for nearly 10 years. She currently volunteers for the Native Plant Society, Tree Foundation and American River Parkway Foundation. Welcome Kevin and Jennifer!

- Also on April 23, the SABA Board expanded the board to 11 members, effective January 2006. The board will fill these additional four positions by the end of the year.

- The Folsom Area Bicycle Advocates (FABA) has selected officers: Tony Powers, chair; Dan Winkelman, treasurer; and Rob Johnson, secretary. ☼



Member Profile Michael Baass

By Rachel Showstack

This month SABA would like to recognize the work of our Webmaster Michael Baass. For the past three years, Michael has been updating SABA's Web site on a monthly basis and adding new Web pages to the site when needed. Thanks to Michael, Sacramento cyclists can find out about the county's bicycle resources and advocacy just by going to www.sacbike.org.

Michael grew up in the Chicago/Milwaukee area and moved to Sacramento with his wife three and a half years ago. He enjoys long rides on the American River Parkway bike trail and has been riding regularly to prepare for "America's Most Beautiful Bicycle Ride," an annual 72-mile ride around Lake Tahoe that takes place in June.



When he's not cycling or volunteering for SABA, Michael likes to run, hike, ski, play golf, travel and do small projects around the house. He currently works as an underwriter for Allied Insurance, but will soon be starting a new job.

Michael commutes by bike when possible, but says he will have to drive to his new job in Natomas because there is not a safe route to get to his workplace. He pointed out that commuting across town could be easier with some improvements in infrastructure.

"I'd like to see more dedicated bike trails and connectivity between trails," he said. "More bike lanes on roads are [also] important ... the newer areas with their wide streets and enormous intersections are intimidating to bikers and pedestrians." ☼

Tips for Motorists

By Walt Seifert

As mentioned in last month's Squeaky Wheel, SABA agreed to provide Sacramento's Clear Channel Radio with safety tips for motorists. The tips are now posted on the SABA and local Clear Channel Web sites (for example, www.talk650kste.com).

As mitigation for remarks made by some of its local radio hosts suggesting it's OK for motorists to threaten cyclists, Clear Channel had previously linked its Web site to the state Department of Motor Vehicles' safety tips. However the tips were aimed at cyclists, not the motorists who are often a source of danger to cyclists.

The 10 tips SABA developed follow. Details for each can be found on the Web site. You might want to share the complete tips with drivers who are willing to listen and learn. It's all part of sharing the road.

- **Pass cyclists at a safe distance.**

Give them at least 3 feet. Allow more distance the faster you are driving. (CVC21750)

- **Open car doors carefully.**

Always see if it is safe to open your door by checking your mirrors or turning to look for approaching cyclists. Cyclists don't have time to react when a car door is suddenly opened in front of them. Motorists "dooring" cyclists is all too common even though motorists are responsible for insuring opening a door won't interfere with traffic. (CVC22517)

- **Merge right into bike lanes and close to the curb before making a right turn.**

When preparing to make a right turn where a bike lane is present, merge into the bike lane when it is safe to do so, within 200 feet of an intersection. Drivers should not overtake a cyclist just before making a right turn. They should safely merge toward the curb or bike lane, then turn. Near intersections bike lane stripes change from solid white lines to dashed lines. That's the indication right-turners should be in the bike lane. Always use your turn signals before turning. (CVC21209)

- **Otherwise, don't drive or stop in bike lanes.**

Drivers should enter bike lanes before intersections when making a right turn. Drivers may need to cross bike lanes to park, or enter or leave driveways. Otherwise, drivers should not enter bike lanes, such as to avoid waiting behind cars making a left turn. Drivers must not stop or park in bike lanes—cars blocking bike lanes force cyclists into traffic lanes. (CVC21209)

- **Look for cyclists when making left turns.**

Motorists may only look for large vehicles. Cyclists are smaller and sometimes hidden by the clutter of signs, pedestrians and parked cars near curbs. Yield to oncoming cyclists just as you would to oncoming motorists. Always use your turn signals before turning.

- **Don't speed.**

You have more time to react at lower speeds and can avoid crashes. Low speed crashes are far more survivable than high speed crashes. A safe speed is lower than the speed limit when visibility, weather, road and traffic conditions dictate. (CVC22350)

Bicycle best invention

From BBC news

Bicycle chosen as best invention

The humble bicycle has won a UK national survey of people's favorite inventions.

Listeners to BBC Radio 4's You and Yours program were invited to vote in an online poll looking at the most significant innovations since 1800.

It was an easy victory for the bicycle which won more than half of the vote.

- The transistor came second with 8% of the vote, and the electro-magnetic induction ring - the means to harness electricity - came third.
- Interplanetary travel
- Despite their ubiquity, computers gained just 6% of the vote and the internet trailed behind with only 4% of all votes cast. There were more than 4,500 votes cast in total.
- People chose the bicycle for its simplicity of design, universal use, and because it is an ecologically sound means of transport. ☼



- **Stop at red lights and stop signs.**

Red light runners endanger everyone on the road. Obey red lights and stop signs. Don't pull out in front of cyclists—yield the right of way as you would to motorists. (CVC21461)

- **Use caution at interchanges.**

Interchanges can be scary places for cyclists. Slow-moving cyclists have to merge with vehicles accelerating too early to freeway speeds or slowing down too late from freeway speeds. Where there are two lane freeway on- or off-ramps, cyclists may have to pick their way across multiple lanes of heavy, high-speed traffic. Don't drive at freeway speeds unless you are on a freeway.

- **Concentrate on driving and be alert.**

Don't drive distracted. Someone's life may depend on your driving. Give it the attention it deserves. Using a cell phone or eating while driving can result in inattention and tragedy. Even when you are concentrating on driving, cyclists can be hard to see, day or night. Young cyclists may be unpredictable and lack road sense. Any cyclist may need to swerve to avoid road hazards such as potholes or debris. Don't drink and drive. If you have been drinking, your judgment will be impaired and you will be less alert. Many drugs cause drowsiness and don't mix with driving.

- **Be considerate and patient.**

Don't honk. Cyclists can hear your vehicle. It's not necessary to alert them of your presence. Honking can startle a cyclist and cause them to swerve. Don't yell, throw things, drive aggressively or harass cyclists. Respect your fellow road users. They may be a neighbor, colleague, family member or friend. When in doubt, yield to cyclists. Waiting until it is safe to pass a cyclist usually takes only a few seconds. ☼

Survey, from page 1

Advocacy is part of our name. We do attend lots of meetings. Unfortunately, one of the drawbacks of more open government (and the new cities in Sacramento County) is that there is a plethora of public meetings. SABA staff and board members — a total of seven people until last month — are hard pressed to cover all the meetings and other obligations. More blades of grass with “grass roots” and advocacy skills, that is, more active members, would help.

Hazards. A couple of people suggested that SABA should do more to rectify hazardous conditions and be more responsive to inquiries regarding riding conditions and safety. SABA has a bicycle hazard reporting system online at sacbike.org. It's quick and easy to use. We send the hazard report to the responsible agency for correction.

Purpose. According to SABA's bylaws, its purpose is “...to improve the health and quality of life of residents of the greater Sacramento area by promoting bicycling for transportation and promoting more and safer bicycle trips through education, community service and charitable acts.” SABA is not really about recreational cycling, though certainly our efforts increase recreational opportunities and improve safety for everyone who rides on the roads and paved trails.

Anti-car? One response suggested that being so anti-car marks SABA as a fringe group. SABA is not anti-car. SABA supports a balanced transportation system that provides safe, convenient and desirable travel choices — including cycling, of course. SABA does oppose overuse of cars and the various policy decisions that have encouraged auto overuse. SABA also opposes dangerous drivers, dangerous vehicles and dangerous road conditions.

Elitist. Another enigmatic response was that SABA should try to represent the “ordinary” man and woman with the suggestion that SABA is elitist and only concerned about year-round, five-day a week, pannier-equipped commuters. It is hard to know the basis for this charge. SABA wants more trips by bike — by busboys and big shots and everyone in between. Those trips can range from around the block to a friend's house; from visiting a neighborhood store to a long commute. The bike can be a K-Mart special or a custom titanium. We want everyone to be able to ride everywhere, but we know cycling is not suitable for every trip.

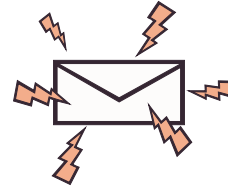
Education of cyclists and motorists. Adult motorists and cyclists are difficult audiences to reach. Our Share the Road campaign is an attempt to get acceptance from motorists, to educate all road users and to improve enforcement as well. BikeEd classes, posted on our Web site, are a way to reach cyclists.

Events. Some people asked for more events. Bike to Work Day has traditionally been SABA's single big event of the year. We'll have a socially-oriented picnic in July this year. Expect to see at least one fundraising event in 2006.

Doing it all. Unless Bill Gates and his foundation decide SABA is a worthy recipient, in the foreseeable future there will be many more things to work on than we have money and time to deal with. We will scramble, push and cajole. We need to set priorities smartly, focus on what we can and continue to ask our members to volunteer their time and efforts.

We will pursue our mission until we realize our vision, “Bicycling for everyday transportation is common because it is safe, convenient and desirable.” ☸

Letters to the Editor



We want to hear from you!

Preferably e-mail your letter to: saba@sacbike.org

or mail it to: **SABA**

P.O. Box 1295

Sacramento, CA 95812-1295

Letters may be edited for length or clarity.

Regular Road Cycling Courses Come to Sacramento

By Owen Howlett

Back when I asked Walt Seifert whether SABA would support the Road cycling courses I was planning, he replied “Education is advocacy.” I saw his point: educated, skillful and confident cyclists make great role models and advocates, strengthening the whole cycling community — not least because a road cycling course boosts their enjoyment and motivation.

These are the reasons why colleague Erin Reschke and I have scheduled regular road cycling courses around the Sacramento area. The courses follow the curriculum of the League of American Bicyclists — “Road I” courses for adults, and “Kids II” courses for cyclists aged 10-15.

The eight-hour courses cover topics including bike maintenance, the law as it relates to cyclists, biking accessories, and cycling statistics, but most importantly course time is spent on the road, where we by-step through traffic situations to develop new skills and enhance confidence. Because the heart of good cycling, they're both beginners and experienced riders.

These courses build on the efforts of many SABA members who've organized, hosted, promoted and most importantly attended road cycling courses over the past several years. We hope that by scheduling a series of courses we can reach many more people, and build momentum — if you enjoyed the course, you can let your friends know about the next one! More information is at www.safercyclingsac.org. ☸

Owen Howlett is a League of American Bicyclists' League Certified Instructor and trained as a professional instructor in London with Cycle Training Ltd.



The Need for More Cyclists

Remarks of Charles Komanoff

Bicycle Education Leadership Conference / League of American Bicyclists — New York City • May 3, 2005

There is nothing ailing the world that can't be helped by more bicycling. Name your favorite, or unfavorable malady, and I'll tell you how more cycling will help.

- Global warming (climate havoc)?
- Peak oil / oil depletion?
- U.S. collaboration with despotic regimes that spawn terror?
- Traffic gridlock?
- Urban decay and community disintegration?
- Disease and disability?
- Exploding medical costs?
- Youth alienation?

The world needs more bicycling. Bicycling needs more bicycling, as I explain later. My point now — my hope in our time together today — is to broaden your mission; to expand it from *safe* cycling and *effective* cycling to *more* cycling. Because more cycling is not only good for your town and our planet; it's the best way to get to safe cycling and effective cycling.

Let's begin with a few key questions.

What is safe cycling?

What is safety?

Is safety not part of something larger, called health?

My pole star for these questions is the noted policy analyst Mayer Hillman. In a landmark study for the British Medical Association, Hillman found that the health benefits of regular cycling, in terms of life years gained, far outweighed the actuarial loss of life from road accidents.

Even in Britain's anti-cycling road environment, Hillman found, each minute of lost life-expectancy from the increased probability of crash injury or death to some cyclists was offset 10-fold by the increased longevity from improved cardiovascular health of other cyclists.

Let me put this a different way: Hillman demonstrated the risk of not cycling.

This is not just a rhetorical point — though it's very effective rhetoric, as I find in conversations with non-cyclists here. "How can you ride a bike in New York City?" they ask, and I say, "I couldn't live here if I didn't ride a bike." "Isn't it dangerous?" they say, and I say, "It's dangerous not to," and then I tell them about Hillman.

There's a further point, just as important — for us — as Hillman's. It's the benefit to cyclist safety when more people cycle.

Cyclists like having other cyclists around. Not just to lend a wrench or help fix a flat, but for a far bigger reason: *our larger presence on the road compels drivers to take notice of us.*

Researchers in several countries are documenting, and quantifying, this safety-in-numbers effect: they're observing a "power law" relationship of approximately 0.6 between cyclist numbers and cyclist safety.

What does that mean? It means that the probability that an individual cyclist on a particular road or in a city or region will be struck by a motorist declines with the 0.6 power of the number of cyclists on that road or in that region.

Maybe I should give an example. Say the number of cyclists

triples. Since three raised to the negative 0.6 power is roughly one-half, each tripling in cycling volume brings about a halving of each cyclist's crash risk.

Now say the number of cyclists increases nine-fold, that is, triples twice. Then each cyclist's crash risk is halved twice, i.e., it falls by three-fourths.

Safety-in-numbers means that none of the things we talk about for individual safety — helmets, blinkies, Effective Cycling^{TR} — will improve the safety of the individual cyclist as much as increasing the number of cyclists on our roads.

That's why I say that what bicycling mostly needs is... more bicycling.

For those of you who regard rider skills as paramount, consider this striking, and disturbing, finding from our Killed By Automobile study of road fatalities in New York City.

First, remember that most driving in the five boroughs is by men — we estimated 75%, taking account of taxis, buses, trucks, and other male/female employment differences.

So, all things equal, 75% of cyclist fatalities here would have come from bike crashes with motor vehicles driven by men, and 25% from crashes with vehicles driven by women, right?

Not even close.

Over the four-year period we studied, with 71 bicyclist fatalities, and the driver identified for 63 of them, 61 of the drivers who killed bicyclists were male and 2 were female. That's a 97% / 3% gender split, rather than the expected 75 / 25.

Per mile driven, male drivers killed bicyclists at 10 times the rate of female drivers.

The grossly disproportionate number of male cyclist-killers strongly suggests that driver aggression (and not just cyclist impulsiveness or incompetence) plays a significant role in killing bicycle-riders in New York City — a finding confirmed in a later report showing that the foremost behavior that's killing cyclists is aggressive passing *by drivers.*

Short of mandating sex-change operations for motorists, how do we make cycling safer?

I'll mention two ways.

One is to achieve the "numbers" part of safety-in-numbers quickly, by promoting and participating in the worldwide monthly cycling event known as Critical Mass.

Raise your hand if you've ever ridden in Critical Mass.

What makes Critical Mass so much fun?

Flipping off car drivers? No.

Blocking traffic? Well... not really.

What makes Critical Mass feel so good, even magical, is the chance it offers to ride a bike without being swamped by a sea of cars... the chance to enjoy the astonishing fact of navigating a city under your own power... the chance to transform the motorized craziness of the street into something gentler.

And it's all because of safety in numbers.

But safety in numbers works both ways: Critical Mass is generating new energy for cycling. Bringing in new riders. Providing training wheels, if you will, for cycling wannabes who find solo bike-riding too daunting. Creating a buzz for cycling. Pro-

More, next page

More, from previous page

viding a venue to dress up one's bike — a “pimp my ride” for cycling. Getting cycling out of its geek ghetto into some place more appealing to the 99% of people who don't consider themselves “cyclists.”

In this context, it's quite an irony that in the city where we are meeting today, the Mayor and the Police Department have recently undertaken the most brutal, expensive, and extravagant repression of Critical Mass ever, anywhere in this broad, and ever-broadening, land of ours.

Don't think for a minute that this is some crazy New York aberration. Today New York — tomorrow Austin, or Ann Arbor, or San Francisco. The hysterical persecution of Critical Mass that we're seeing here is not about cyclists running red lights or “blocking traffic” or inconveniencing motorists. It is nothing but a moral panic about cycling — the same demonization that occurs and recurs across America, whenever drivers feel entitled to imperil cyclists for taking up “their” space; when radio shock-jocks urge listeners to run cyclists off the road; when municipalities ban cycling in their central districts, as many towns in this state and elsewhere have done.

Why cyclists? A more harmless group would be hard to find. I suspect it's because of our harmlessness — we're the scapegoats for the bad conscience of a culture that knows, on some level, that it can't continue on its present path. We demonstrate the alternative — so we can't be tolerated. A society in denial simply can't stand to see us.

The real problem we face is not poor visibility or bad signage or insufficient skills or inadequate equipment. The problem we face is... hatred. We need to recognize that initiatives for individual safety can only go so far ... and must be complemented, every step of the way, by the political and cultural struggle for social recognition of cycling as a legitimate, valid and valorized way to get around.

So I'm happy to report the Bicycle Federation of America is incubating a new project aimed at transforming the prevailing paradigms of American traffic law and culture: at moving from individual safety to social safety, and from traffic safety to traffic justice.

In the coming months, you'll be hearing more about this Traffic Justice Project. For now, I urge you to go back to your communities with the knowledge that teaching people to be better cyclists, while helpful, isn't enough.

All of us need to work as well on getting more cyclists on the road, and simultaneously widening the discourse of cycling advocacy *and* safety to include justice.

The contemporary historian Benjamin DeMott tells us, “Great causes — they still exist — nourish themselves on firm, sharp awareness of the substance of injustice. The country's very foundations, indeed, lie in clearly defined understanding of injustices.”

Let's get to work. ☸

SABA is looking for a Judicial System monitor to track bicycle crash cases through the legal system. If you are interested in this or other volunteer opportunities, contact Larry Robinson at volunteer@sacbike.org.

Tip of the Month Dare To Be Different

By David Takemoto-Weerts

It's National Bike Month, which includes celebrating Bicycle Commute Week as well. If you're a regular Squeaky Wheel reader, chances are you're already an avid cyclist and likely at least an occasional bicycle commuter. The typical advice for “newbie” pedalers would be wasted on you. But what if you're such a regular rider that the daily ride, be it recreational or utilitarian, has become routine — even boring?

Liven up your two-wheel trip by daring to do something different. The most obvious change is to try a new route. Yes, your commute trip has probably been refined over the years to be the fastest, most convenient path. But how tedious is that? Leave a bit earlier and explore a different neighborhood, master a more challenging intersection, meet new fellow cyclists, stop somewhere new for coffee.

Mix shopping with your commute. This may work better on the return ride, but go somewhere that you might otherwise drive to: market, video store, library, etc. Combining trips will vary your excursion and could save gas, burn calories, reduce pollution and help realize other benefits.

Using the same old bike day in and day out? Try a different bike from your stable, even if it's not the most efficient choice. Or, if a friend has something really different that you've been curious about, e.g. a recumbent, fixed gear or ??? — ask if you can borrow it for a day or two. You may discover a whole new world of cycling.

Practice riding skills such as Bike Ed staples: “instant turns,” “rock dodges” or “quick stops.” Read how to do them on the “Education” page at www.bikeleague.org.

Or, try memorizing license plate numbers. Why do that? If you get harassed or endangered by a passing motorist, remembering the car's plates may be important. If you get in the habit of occasionally storing such info in your short-term memory, it will be easier to do if the need ever arises.

Combine another hobby with your trip. For example, get a basic guide to local birds and start a “life list” of avian species you see on your ride. Don't get too distracted, but this is a fun way to relieve boredom and improve your observational skills.

Use some imagination, and that same ol', same ol' ride can become at least an occasional adventure or a pathway to new discoveries about your neighborhood or yourself! ☸

David Takemoto-Weerts is the University of California, Davis bike coordinator and a League of American Bicyclists' certified instructor.

Startling Stat

Half of the United States' working population commutes five miles or less to work, a distance easily covered by bike. If the average person biked to work or shopping once every two weeks instead of driving, we could prevent the pollution of close to one billion gallons of gasoline from entering the atmosphere every year. ☸

SABA
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**SABA Wins Environmental
Recognition Award!**

SABA Business and Organization Members

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- Air Resources Board
- American Lung Association of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails
- American River Bicycle* (Florin Rd.)
- American Warp Drive
- The Bicycle Business
- Bicycle Chef Bicycles
- Bicycles Plus*
- Bob's Cycle Center
- Body Concepts
- California State University Sacramento
- City Bicycle Works*
- Cycle California! magazine
- Davis Bike Club
- Fehr & Peers Associates
- 50 Corridor TMA
- Leslie T. Fong, DDS
- Franchise Tax Board
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- Henry B. Starkes, MD
- The Hoyt Co.
- Hull & Honeycutt Marketing and Design
- Inside Publications
- Ken's Bike & Ski
- Mad Cat Bicycles*
- Matt Kuzins & Kumpany
- Law Offices of K. Greg Peterson
- Natomas Bike Shop*
- Norcal AIDS Challenge
- North Natomas TMA
- REI
- The Rest Stop*
- Rex Cycles
- Sacramento Air Quality Management District
- Sacramento Area Council of Governments
- Sacramento Bike Hikers
- Sacramento Natural Foods Co-op
- Sacramento TMA
- Sacramento Wheelmen
- Sierra Engineering
- SMUD
- South Natomas TMA
- Sports Rack
- Two Rivers Cider Company