



The Squeaky Wheel

Issue No. 32

Newsletter of the Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates

November 2005

From the President Why Safety Matters

By Lea Brooks

Why should you care about scofflaw bicyclists who run red lights and stop signs, ride on the wrong side of the road and generally ignore the rules of the road?

Gary Brustin, an attorney who specializes in bicycle crashes and serves on both the League of American Bicyclists' and California Bicycle Coalition's boards of directors, explained that decision-makers, including legislators, and jurors often paint with a wide brush assuming that all bicyclists violate the California Vehicle Code on a regular basis. Their impression is that cyclists "do whatever they want," he said.

Responsible bicyclists should be very concerned about this impression because it hampers legislative efforts to improve conditions for bicycling and the ability to find jurors who don't have a bad impression of bicyclists. Do you want a juror at your trial for a bicycle vs. vehicle crash who thinks bicyclists regularly ignore the law?

Responsible bicyclists, Brustin said, are not doing enough to hold irresponsible cyclists accountable. Brustin made his comments during SABA's quarterly membership meeting Oct. 26. He was on a panel that also included Sacramento City Police Sergeant Dave Valdez, chief of the Bike Unit, and bicycle Officer Gary McLaughlin. Their discussion of bicycle safety issues was lively and provocative:

Sgt. Valdez and Officer McLaughlin: If you are being harassed by a motorist, especially the same motorist on a regular basis, file a police report through the city's Web site. The motorist may also be harassing other bicyclists. Get as much documentation as possible, including license number, vehicle description, description of driver, time

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SABA is "Club of the Year"!

The League of American Bicyclists (LAB) named SABA as its Region 6 Club of the Year. The states of Alaska, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon and Washington comprise Region 6.

SABA was selected for its advocacy efforts, including "Complete Streets" language in Measure A, Sacramento County's half-cent sales tax for transportation that was passed in November 2004. As a result, all transportation projects funded by Measure A must

Tower Bridge Gets Space for Bikes

By Lea Brooks

In conjunction with resurfacing of the Tower Bridge roadway, the lane striping was changed in October. There are now 4-foot shoulders on each side of the bridge. While the shoulders don't meet bike lane standards, they are usable by cyclists and a considerable improvement over previous conditions on the bridge — although traffic speeds remain excessive. SABA played a significant role in Caltrans making this



New shoulder on Tower Bridge. Photo by Larry Robinson

routinely accommodate cyclists and pedestrians. SABA's work on conversion of one-way streets to two-way traffic (or from three lanes to two lanes plus bike lanes) in the city of Sacramento was also noted.

SABA has a long record of being recognized by outside groups, with earlier awards from the American Lung Association, League of Women Voters and the Sacramento Environmental Commission. ☸

inexpensive striping change — a change that provides immediate benefits to cyclists. Thanks to Caltrans for recognizing the needs of cyclists.

The Tower Bridge is virtually the only way for cyclists to go between Sacramento and West Sacramento. Cyclists are not allowed on the Highway 50 Pioneer Bridge over the Sacramento River. The ugly I Street

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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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Welcome New Members

Troy Allison	Steve McCurdy
Brad & Mary Jo Cooper	Jeff Mielke
Jeff Corbett	Matt Naranjo
David DeYoung	Kim & Russ Nash
Bob Ehardt	Jim & Leslie Sam
Mary Euretig	Lori & Jeff Scheel
Roland Freund	Mark Spring
John Grubbs	Clay Taft
Lucinda Hall	Steven Zdybel
Hagen Hammons	
Paul Maunder	

SABA Pizza Party — Pizza, Soda and Doin' Stuff

No pizza party in December!
Pizza and turkey don't go
together and the holidays are
busy enough. Thank you to all
the many SABA volunteers
who helped out —and ate pizza
— during the year.



SABActions

Meetings

SABA members attended these meetings:

- Sacramento Transportation and Air Quality Collaborative Environmental Group
- SACOG Bike/Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Bike Commute Week Planning
- SACOG staff
- CSUS bike facilities
- American River Parkway Plan Update Committee

Letters

SABA sent letters to:

- Cities and counties on putting *Share the Road* bumper stickers on government vehicles
- Owners of Meridian Plaza building on taking away locker privileges
- Roseville Transit, Folsom Stage Lines, Yolo County Transit, Yuba-Sutter Transit and El Dorado Transit on *Share the Road* driver training

Other

- Parked 950 bikes at the Salmon Festival



Guests at SABA potluck. From left: Gary Brustin, Sgt. David Valdez and Officer Gary McLaughlin. Photo by Lea Brooks

President, from page 1

of day and location.

Do not engage with a motorist who is harassing you. Get off the road and out of danger and let the motorist go. Look out for your own safety.

Depending on the circumstances, officers may or may not respond to a harassment call. The situation could be an assault with a deadly weapon since a vehicle can be considered a weapon. Such calls are prioritized.

Sgt. Valdez: Regarding scofflaw bicyclists, he encouraged SABA members to report “reckless” riders, especially those who have a pattern of disobeying rules of the road. The department’s traffic section may try “problem-oriented policing” to deal with these individuals.

Sgt. Valdez: In response to a question about the dangers of cycling on the narrow I Street Bridge between Sacramento and West Sacramento and what cyclists can do to make the crossing less harrowing, he recommended that cyclists avoid the I Street Bridge and take the safer Tower Bridge even though bicyclists have a right to take the full lane on the bridge. “You can be right or dead right,” he said. Focus on the long term to get the bridge “fixed” so it better accommodates cyclists.

Officer McLaughlin: He cited the “food chain” that consists of pedestrians, bicyclists, cars, trucks, buses and semi-trucks. “Does a semi-truck care about what it runs over? If you’re at bottom of the food chain, watch out.”

Officer McLaughlin: Cars are becoming rolling entertainment centers, especially for young people. Motorists are not paying attention.

Gary Brustin: Even when cyclists wear bright-colored clothing, motorists claim that they “never saw the cyclist.” “You are a ghost out there,” he said. “Imagine the damage they can do.”

He recommended that bicyclists always carry identification that includes emergency telephone contacts, health insurance information and primary care physician. Cyclists should wear

If you are ever in a crash...

Attorney Gary Brustin recommended the following if you are injured in a bicycle vs. vehicle crash:

Accept emergency care. You may not think you need to go to the hospital, but you may have an injury that’s not immediately apparent.

Cooperate with law enforcement. Tell them what you know about the crash. Don’t speculate about what happened. If you don’t know, say so. If you are not in good condition, tell officers that you are hurting and not thinking clearly and will give them your statement later at the hospital.

The more witnesses, the better. Get business cards or contact information of witnesses so you, your attorney and law enforcement can contact them later for their statements. Some of the witnesses may have taken pictures at the scene with their cell phones that could provide valuable evidence.

Do not repair your bicycle or helmet and do not wash your bike clothes. They could be valuable evidence.

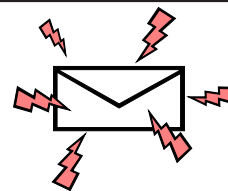
Take photos of your injuries. If your case goes to trial months later, these photos document your injuries.

If you do not agree with the accident report by the responsible law enforcement agency, file a supplemental report and state why you do not agree. Some officers do not interpret the California Vehicle Code properly when it comes to bicycles and their reports reflect their opinion rather than the law.

Draw a picture of the accident scene for the judge. If you receive a citation, go to court. Do your homework. Show what happened even if your drawings are simplistic. ☸



Letters to the Editor



We want to hear from you!

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

or mail it to: **SABA**

919 12th Street, Suite 114

Sacramento, CA 95814

Letters may be edited for length or clarity.

helmets, especially if they are with a child. “Be a role model,” he said. ☸

Tip of the Month

The Sound and the Fury

By David Takemoto-Weerts

With the growing proliferation of iPods, “walkmen,” CD players and cell phones, more of us are wearing some kind of earphones or headsets while pedaling.

The California Vehicle Code states: “A person operating a motor vehicle or bicycle may not wear a headset covering, or earplugs in, both ears.”

Exceptions are made for those who must wear ear protection or hearing aids. The rationale behind this law is that vehicle operators must be able to hear emergency vehicle sirens. Of course, this law was probably written decades ago when most “headsets” were the type that completely enveloped both ears, effectively shutting out nearly all ambient sounds.

Nowadays, most people use compact headsets or ear “buds” that allow one to hear much more than just what is emanating from the personal audio device. Still, it’s clear that the volume at which one is listening to the Academy of St. Martin in the Fields or the Beastie Boys affects one’s awareness of one’s audible surroundings.

The headset law does not seem to be commonly enforced by police, yet it may be used on occasion to initiate a “probable cause” stop. Ironically, there is no law that prohibits deaf people from driving or cycling. To avoid a ticket, use an ear bud in one ear only. Use a “twisty” to secure the unused bud to the cord and avoid any questions about whether you had them in both ears.

Some would argue that a motorist sealed up in a metal and glass box —radio blaring, air conditioner whooshing, surrounded by motor and wind noise — is much more shielded from an ambulance siren than a cyclist listening to 50 cent on his MP3 player.

In my experience, being able to hear traffic coming from behind is helpful; but on the few occasions I’ve biked while listening to NPR at a modest volume using one ear bud, I have not noticed any significant masking of those sounds.

Cyclist advocate John Allen has an excellent article on this subject at <http://www.bikexpert.com/bicycle/hearing.htm>. John, an advocate for the reform of such laws, does mention one good reason not to wear headphones: “Even if they are not playing, they may make it harder to collect on an insurance claim after a crash.” But, if you must have audio accompaniment, ride like Vincent Van Gogh —with only one ear compromised!⊗

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

Startling Stat

“The interstate system that Congress bought in the late 1950s was intended to enhance the evacuation potential of American cities during the threat of nuclear attack in the Cold War.”

— Douglas E. Morris, author of *It’s a Sprawl World After All*

Sacramento Northern Gateway

OK, we were considerably over-optimistic in July when we said the new landmark gateway arch would be in place imminently. The project ran into delays, all too typical of construction projects.

But now the gateway is in place and it looks great. Carl Bolin, owner of Bolin Fabricating, Inc., the gateway’s manufacturer, was at the controls of his firm’s crane as he lifted and eased the gateway into place on Oct. 23.

At press time, the gateway still needed final paint and auxiliary signs. SABA member Touchstone Bicycle Club at Sacramento Pipeworks Climbing Gym has volunteered to do the painting. Ian Oeser of Mogavero Notestine Associates is helping Greg Berger of Pomegranate Design create the four



Gateway in place.
Photo by Walt Seifert

auxiliary signs that will provide destination and trail information.

The gateway makes the Sacramento Northern trailhead a landmark instead of a mystery. Many thanks to SABA and other community members who devoted cash and effort to this project. The gateway is a monument to them and SABA’s efforts to improve cycling and the community.⊗



Getting Green Waste Out of the Way

By Walt Seifert

SABA has created a "Can the Trash! Coalition" to end the dumping of green waste on the streets in the cities of Davis, Sacramento and Woodland. The piles of grass clippings, leaves and pruned tree and shrub branches are both an irritant and a hazard to cyclists. The piles can force cyclists to stop, force them into traffic or cause serious crashes, especially at night when the piles are very difficult to see.

While the waste piles pose a real and significant threat to the safety of cyclists, there are many other important reasons to switch from loose pick up to "containerized" pick up. Chief among them are that containers are cheaper, cleaner, help reduce local flooding and result in improved storm water quality. For these reasons, the Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS) and Sacramento Earth Day Network support the coalition. SABA will be requesting Sacramento Environmental Commission support later this month.

Earlier this year, the Woodland City Council, facing \$1,000-a-day state fines, voted 4-1 to switch to green waste "toters" starting in 2006. A survey showed the switch was supported by 63 percent of the residents. However, over the summer many residents in the older parts of the city objected strongly, saying the containers wouldn't be big enough to hold all their yard debris. The council reversed itself and created an advisory committee to hash out a solution. SABA was able to get a cyclist on the committee.

We ask your support of the "Can the Trash!" campaign. Your neighbors may be convinced that they can't give up the convenience of dumping their trash in the streets. Let them know it's a safety problem for you and other cyclists. Let them know that containers might be as convenient as dumping trash on the street, and that the city will not end loose pick up when it is needed the most. Under the city's voluntary containerization program, pick up of piles are made twice a month in November and December and once a month in August, February, March and April. Check the SABA Web site for a fact sheet with more information.

If you see a large waste pile blocking a bike lane, please take a digital photo to send to saba@sacbike.org, noting the time and place. We can use photos to prove our point about the risks to cyclists.

Right now containerizing green waste is voluntary in the city of Sacramento. It would require a public vote to become mandatory.

We encourage SABA members living in the city of Sacramento to show their interest in the voluntary containerized green waste program by signing up at www.pwsacramento.com. ☺

Parkway Safety Event Receives TV Coverage

By Lea Brooks

On Oct. 27, SABA partnered with Sacramento County Regional Parks, Recreation and Open Space, Buffalo Chips running club and REI to promote safety on the American River Parkway trail in the early morning and evening hours when it's dark due to shorter days and the end of daylight-saving time.

The event at the Harrington access off American River Drive showcased cyclists and runners properly attired and equipped for the dark. Headlights, blinking lights, reflectors and light-colored reflective clothing provided great visuals for local TV stations KCRA and KMAX. Even Henna the dog, who accompanied her owner Pam Goodley of Buffalo Chips, had on a reflective coat and collar with blinking lights.

Thank you Skip Amerine, Steve Cimini and Dennis King for showing up so early in the morning to participate. You were the epitome of well-dressed and well-equipped winter cyclists. KMAX did a live feed at 5:30 a.m. KCRA did live feeds at 5:35 and 6:40 a.m., and aired a taped version of the event during the noon news. Chief Ranger Dave Lydick was interviewed later by KXJZ Radio.

Not bad coverage for an event that started at 5:30 a.m.! The event was so successful that County Parks is interested in making it an annual effort prior to the fall time change.

Here are rules and safety tips for cycling in the dark on the bike trail and roadways. These are also posted on SABA's Web site at www.sacbike.org.

- Bicyclists must have a white front light visible from 300 feet, a rear red reflector visible from 500 feet, side reflectors front and rear of center, and pedal reflectors visible from front and rear (California Vehicle Code Section 21202). Brighter lights

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Importance of lighting at night is demonstrated in this picture from the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center

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are advisable on the bike trail (vs. city and county streets with lighting) to better see other trail users, wildlife and debris. Make sure your headlight is fully recharged or carry a backup light. Tail lights and reflective tape on your bicycle will make you more visible.

- Travel at a speed safe for conditions, including fog.
- Wear light colored and reflective clothing.
- Ride single file and in the right lane, except when passing.
- Call out “passing on your left” in a courteous manner when passing.
- Avoid confrontations with other trail and roadway users who you perceive are behaving in an irresponsible manner. Report such incidents to the appropriate authorities.
- Stay alert and aware of what’s going on around you. The more aware you are, the less vulnerable you are.
- Beware of deer and other wildlife.
- Always carry identification, a pump and spare tube.
- Carry a cell phone or coins for a phone call and know the locations of call boxes and telephones along your regular route.
- Helmets are **required** for cyclists under age 18 and recommended for all cyclists.⊗

Tower, from page 1

Bridge is miserable for cyclists — lanes far too narrow to share and sidewalks difficult to use. As the two cities develop their riverfronts, the need for more and better river crossings will become evident and acute.

Work will continue on the \$9 million Tower Bridge sidewalk-widening project. Bridge sidewalks will be widened to 10 feet and both pedestrians and cyclists will be allowed to use them.⊗



Another photo of SABA’s fabulous valet bike parking team at the Salmon Festival Oct. 8-9 at the Fish Hatchery in Rancho Cordova. From left: Walt Seifert, Dennis King, Ed Cox, Skip Amerine, Marie Schelling and Lea Brooks

National “Rack & Ride” Challenge Award to Yuba-Sutter Transit

Recognized in 1995 as the first public transit operator in the Sacramento region to be fully accessible to bicycles, Yuba-Sutter Transit has won a national award following the first ever competition to determine which transit operator carries the most passengers with bikes. Yuba-Sutter Transit won for the highest percentage of passenger boardings with bicycles for small urban areas in the “Rack & Ride 2005 Transit Challenge.”

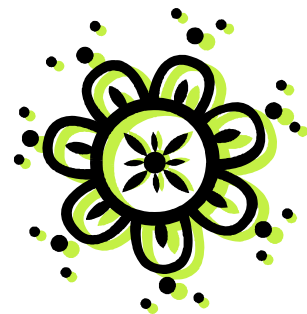


From May through August, twenty-one transit operators from around the country in areas ranging from Kauai, Hawaii to Charlotte, South Carolina recorded the number of bikes carried on their local fixed route buses. Winners were named in each of three population categories for the total number of bikes carried as well as the percentage of passengers boarding with bicycles. Yuba-Sutter Transit competed against

operators serving areas with populations between 50,000 and 200,000.

All of Yuba-Sutter Transit’s buses are equipped with two-position bike racks that are available to any passenger on a first-come, first-served basis. No permit is required and there is no additional charge to use the racks. These easy to use front-loading racks have proven to be very popular as 6,536 passengers boarded Yuba-Sutter Transit’s local fixed route buses with a bike this summer, representing 3.55 percent of all fixed route

boardings - second only to the 4.24 percent reported by overall winner Lee County Transit in Fort Myers, Florida. Valley Metro in Phoenix, Arizona topped all competitors in the number of bikes carried with 302,416 in the four-month period.⊗



Bicycling and Safety: Cleaner Air Partnership Survey Results

Reprinted from the Cleaner Air Partnership NEWS, Summer, 2005

Clean air advocates, like the American Lung Association, promote use of biking and walking to cut down on vehicle pollutions from neighborhood level trips. The 2004 Cleaner Air Partnership Public Opinion Survey looked closely at how comfortable and safe bicycling is for drivers.

Bike advocates have expressed concern that bicycle safety concerns act as a damper on participation in bicycling. They hypothesize that to grow the cycling population, and to cut back on use of motor vehicles, will require making bicycling more safe.

lowest in El Dorado County at 60 percent for adults and 51 percent for children, and highest in Yolo with 88 percent for adults and 79 percent for children. The biggest gap between adult and child safety for cycling was in the city of Sacramento, at 13 percent. Just 66 percent of the city's drivers believe cycling is safe for children in their neighborhood.

This data indicates that there are lower rates of cycling where safety is rated lower. However, most people consider it safe to cycle in their neighborhoods, but do not do so.⊗



Placer	Yolo	Solano	Sac City	Sac County	El Dorado
Safe for You					
80%	88%	84%	79%	81%	60%
Safe for Children					
73%	79%	76%	66%	70%	51%
Gap Between Adult and Child Safety					
7%	9%	8%	13%	11%	9%

...lower rates
...where
safety is
rated lower.
However,
most people
consider it
safe to cycle
in their
neighborhoods,
but do not.

Our survey found about 10 percent of the drivers reported cycling for practical (not recreational or exercise) reasons; about 34 percent of the drivers bicycled for recreational or exercise reasons. (There is overlap between these two groups; some bikers do both.) A total of 36 percent of all drivers in the region reported at least some cycling. People who live with children under 18 are significantly more likely to bike (45%) compared with those who do not live with children (31%).

Sixty-four percent of the region's drivers interviewed said they did not bicycle at all, either for practical, exercise, or recreational purposes; yet 80 percent said it was safe for

them to bike in their neighborhood. When drivers were asked how safe it was for them and how safe it was for children to bike in their neighborhood:

- 80% said it was safe for them to bike in their neighborhood
- 69% said it was safe for children to bike in their neighborhood

For those who do bike, 84% said it was safe in their neighborhood; for those who don't bike, 77 percent said it was safe in their neighborhood.

Regional differences: There are significant differences in propensity to bike. Almost half of all Yolo drivers bike, but less than a third of El Dorado drivers do. For other jurisdictions, it's about 36 percent.

Counties also varied in how safe drivers believed that their neighborhoods were for bicycling. Neighborhood safety was

The Cleaner Air Partnership is a joint project of the American Lung Association of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails and the Sacramento Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce to help the Sacramento region meet clean air standards that protect health and promote economic growth.

**What Can SABA Do?
Suggested actions SABA can take to improve bicycle safety:**

- Take bicycle rules and regulations to targeted populations. Sgt. Dave Valdez suggested posting key safety tips at bike racks, kiosks, and Loaves and Fishes.
- Support legislation that would require the Department of Motor Vehicles to include in vehicle registration renewals safety information regarding where vehicles are required to stop before crosswalk lines or advance stop bars. This information would be modeled after the information currently included in vehicle registration renewals regarding how much alcohol an individual must consume to be considered driving under the influence.
- Work with school districts to educate students about bicycle safety.
- Promote bicycle and motorist safety with public service announcements.

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*Safety Tips, plus new shoulders on
Tower Bridge*



*From left: Pascal Joly, Jim Haagen-Smit and Aimee Hagen check out the Jim Konopka Bridge
Photo Lea Brooks*

SACOG Group Tours Folsom

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments' Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee met Oct. 27 in Folsom to celebrate the opening of light rail from Sacramento to Folsom. Following the meeting, Folsom trails development coordinator Jim Konopka led a tour of the city's extensive network of off-street bicycle trails and other bicycle facilities. ☼