

# Sharing the road with motorists

*"Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of a bike ride." – John F. Kennedy*

By **BOB BEANE**  
SPECIAL TO AFN

**Warning:** This will not be the fanatical response that Diane Markins is probably expecting (to her commentary, "Sharing the road with cyclists" *AFN*, June 18). Rather, I'd like to explain a different perspective (from a cyclist's view) and educate people like her who remain ignorant (not stupid...just unaware) of the laws of Arizona, overly motorist-centric and who seem to think that "Sharing the Road" means that everyone else must conform to their view of transportation.

One of my biggest pet peeves with many motorists is that they exercise selective memory. They see one cyclist (or a small group) doing something they don't like, or which slows them down for 5 seconds, and they instantly brand "cyclists" as a problem. I tend to remember motorists who are inattentive, dangerous and/or violating laws as well as cyclists I see doing similar things. As a driver, a cyclist and a bicycling advocate, I see examples every day of the best and worst of both flocks.

**Road hogs:** Many cyclists would be happy if bicycle lanes did not exist. They point out, as Markins' piece reveals, that motorists expect cyclists *ONLY* to ride in bike lanes (where they exist), despite the fact that the laws of most states (including Arizona) say the following: (1) ride to the right as far as is "practicable" (safely away from the pavement edge, able to ride a steady line, not subject to debris, nails, glass and other objects that could cause flat tires and/or injury, etc.), and (2) riders may ride two abreast (I don't support doing this in rush hour traffic, on busy roads, etc., based on my personal views of safety and sharing the road in a polite and civil manner, but it is legal).

There is no general legal requirement for cyclists to ride in a bike lane, and I think the main positive of bike lanes is that they indicate community recognition that bicyclists are entitled to their space on the road.

**Movement away from red lights:** Many cities are moving to the concept of a "bike box" at intersections that allows cyclists to congregate at the front of vehicles at a red light. Why? Because it has been proven to be a safer way for cyclists and vehicles to move away from a light change.

**Right turns:** I don't know how many times a motorist has passed me just before a light and made a right turn, typically without signaling, causing me to brake suddenly. That is illegal, by the way. If you are safely ahead of a cyclist while traffic is moving, with your right turn signal on, the cyclist should allow you to make your turn ahead of him/her. If you are stopped at a light, a cyclist may advance to the intersection in a bike lane whether you are turning or going straight.

**Cyclists don't pay their fair share:** As your friend, Jeff, said in his blog post on your website, "this is a non-starter." In addition to his comment that most of us drive cars, also (mine is a smaller, high-mileage vehicle), I'm sure the taxes you pay don't fully compensate for the air pollution, Gulf of Mexico pollution and long-term depletion of finite energy resources that you should be paying for. Frankly, I'm tired of 97 percent-plus of my transportation tax dollars going to such a motorist-centric transportation system rather than a more efficient public transit, biking and walking-oriented approach. The rest of the world looks at our 20 percent-plus use of energy resources for 5 percent of the population, and shakes their collective heads. I believe that you are way off base on this one, but I'll leave the "green," eco-politics, stealing from

our children's collective future debate to others and/or another day.

**Disregard of traffic signals:** Neither the CAzB nor me, personally, condone disregard of traffic signals. I see many more motorists who violate this, and I ask you who presents a greater danger to others when it happens.

**Educating motorists and seeking positive solutions:** I added this section, because I wanted to make then point that Arizona law (ARS 28-735) requires motorists to allow at least a 3-foot safe passing distance when overtaking and passing a bicyclist on the roads and streets of Arizona. Remember that a cyclist may move outside of a bike lane or farther out into the road to avoid hazards and unsafe conditions. An Arizona cyclist has a legal right to the road that is nearly equivalent to a motorist (main exceptions: Ride as far to the right as "practicable," certain urban freeway sections are off limits).

I think your point of (knowing and) following traffic laws and common courtesy would go a long way toward giving some real meaning to "Sharing the Road," rather than having that phrase followed by "as long as you don't inconvenience me...". The Coalition of Arizona Bicyclists is working to create an environment where that is what really happens. We advocate for safer roadways, Safe Routes to School for children and appropriate laws and enforcement. We also support infrastructure that allows all modes of transportation to function well and together (e.g. "Complete Streets" design concepts) and we'd like to see our nation become more healthy, in part by riding a bike.

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