

Increasing Road Safety for Bicyclists

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Columbus, Ohio has more than 110 miles of bike trails¹. Even with this vast network of options, cyclists must often share the road with vehicles throughout the city on their way to work or school. My own classmates often ride their bikes to the university and have shared numerous dangerous encounters on the road. When I was young, I myself was almost hit by a vehicle while riding my bike through a cross walk. Some of the chief problems faced by bicyclists are drivers speeding by in close proximity, cars following too closely or honking, and few roads in the area with designated bike lanes. All of these dangers stem from either a lack of understanding about bicyclists rights on the road or a lack of concern for bicyclists safety.

Nearly 1,500 bicycle-related crashes happened in Ohio in 2017, and Ohio's bicycle deaths rose to 19³. In a city with almost no public transportation to speak of and nearly 1 million people expected to move into the region by 2050², cycling will become an increasing viable method of transportation and even more people will be at risk of becoming one of these statistics. While knowledge of the laws associated with bicycles should be relatively easy in Ohio, bicycles are considered vehicles and have the same obligations as motorists, almost all the anecdotal data I've obtained suggests otherwise.

In my region specifically, Columbus hosts one of the largest cycling events in the country, Pelotonia, with over 8,000 riders last year. In ten years, the three-day cycling event has raised over \$184 million for cancer research⁴. Before going to school, I worked for the marketing and advertising agency that handles public relations for Pelotonia. I could leverage these connections to ensure that one of the largest cycling events the city hosts is also a platform for spreading awareness about rider safety year-round. While the website currently houses safety

information, press releases surrounding the event, volunteer gift packages, and event signage could all be utilized to improve road safety for bicyclists.

Beyond that, it's also a matter of individuals like myself standing up in their day-to-day lives when they see ignorance or unsafe driving practices. I can speak to my connections and see how aware they are of bicyclists' safety and laws, as I have done throughout my research for this essay, and share what I've learned. I can also report unsafe drivers and drive cautiously myself to lead by example. Ohio also has a "Share the Road" license plate which helps pay for free booklets that provide the Ohio laws regarding cycling. I can purchase and encourage others to purchase these license plates to generate additional awareness for bicyclist safety which is so vital in my region and state.

Works Cited

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