

Empowering Road Safety and Awareness for Bicyclists: A Call to Action

By Erin Clifford

Imagine the vibrant city streets, buzzing with activity as people carry out their daily routines. Sarah, an avid cyclist, begins her morning commute. As she merges with traffic, her heart races alongside the cars whizzing past her. Amidst blaring horns and exhaust fumes, she yearns for a safer route where she can ride freely, shielded from the constant risk of becoming an unnoticed statistic. Sarah's experience reflects that of countless urban bicyclists. While cycling has gained popularity as a sustainable mode of transportation, the challenges faced by cyclists on the roads often go unnoticed, putting their safety at significant risk.

Startling statistics highlight the dangers encountered by bicyclists. In 2020 alone, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reported a staggering 938 cyclist fatalities in the United States.¹ These numbers, sourced from the NHTSA, underscore the urgent need for comprehensive road safety measures to protect bicyclists. Beyond the loss of life, cyclists face numerous obstacles during their daily commutes. Insufficient infrastructure, with poorly designed or absent bike lanes, forces cyclists to share road space with motor vehicles. A study conducted by the League of American Bicyclists reveals that more than 50% of people killed while biking in the United States are killed in just the top five states: Florida, California, Texas, New York, and Arizona.² These findings from the League of American Bicyclists emphasize the importance of enhancing infrastructure to safeguard the lives of cyclists.

However, infrastructure alone is insufficient to create a safe and inclusive environment for cyclists. While the development of dedicated cycling lanes and improved road conditions is crucial, a fundamental shift in awareness and attitudes towards cyclists is equally important. Many cyclists face challenges as they perceive a lack of respect from motorists, hindering their ability to share the road safely. This lack of understanding and empathy can contribute to dangerous behaviors such as close passes, aggressive driving, and a general disregard for cyclists' safety. It highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive approach to improving awareness and fostering harmonious coexistence on our roads.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. Education campaigns targeting motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists play a crucial role in bridging the awareness gap. Additionally, well-designed cycling infrastructure, such as protected bike lanes, holds tremendous potential to reduce cyclist-motorist collisions significantly. Research published in the *Journal of Transport & Health* reveals

¹ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. (2020). *Bicyclists and Other Cyclists*. Traffic Safety Facts. <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813322>

² McLeod, K. (2023, April 7). *New Fatality Data For 2021 Shows Increase In Bicyclist Deaths*. League of American Bicyclists. <https://bikeleague.org/new-fatality-data-for-2021-shows-increase-in-bicyclist-deaths/>

that bicycling infrastructure is significantly associated with fewer fatalities and better road-safety outcomes, underscoring the transformative impact of infrastructure improvements.³ Furthermore, it is imperative to establish stricter penalties for motorists who endanger or harm cyclists, accompanied by cyclist-friendly road design regulations. This requires collaboration among lawmakers, transportation authorities, and cycling advocacy organizations, like the League of American Bicyclists. By prioritizing awareness, infrastructure enhancements, and legislative measures, we can create safer roads for bicyclists and alleviate their daily challenges, making substantial progress in promoting road safety and ensuring the well-being of all road users.

³ ScienceDaily. (2019, May 29). *Cycling Lanes Reduce Fatalities For All Road Users, Study Shows*. ScienceDaily. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/05/190529113036.htm>