

## For the public record re Safe Streets/Bike Lanes/Bike Safety

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Since 1993, when I moved to Boston, I have found the bicycle by far the best way to get around the city. Being on a bicycle helped me discover the areas between T stops, and to realize that you can get from Allston to Harvard Square in 10 minutes if you don't have to take the T.

Life on two wheels is far better now than it was back then. Bikes are more prevalent, drivers are more aware of bikes and the bike infrastructure is vastly improved.

Over the last 5 years the pace of improvement has been dramatic, however in my opinion as a daily bicycle commuter, the most improvement has happened in our neighbors to the North and South.

In Boston things were slow to get better but now there are wonderful improvements that are in place:

1. Commonwealth Ave near Charlesgate has a bike lane separated from car travel lanes by parking.
2. Brighton Ave in Allston has the slow traffic lane doing double duty as a bike lane but it is clearly marked as such. Drivers need to be reminded, and reminded often and loudly, that bikes belong in the street and have an equal right to be there.

In Somerville we see several examples of the city moving fast to improve the situation for bicyclists, such as bike head start area at many traffic lights, most notably at Union Square.

In Cambridge we have fallen behind:

1. You can't ride from City Hall to Harvard Square in a bike lane
2. Major streets have almost no bike infrastructure:
  - a. Prospect
  - b. Columbia
  - c. Large stretches of Mass Ave, especially past Porter Square
3. Big projects like Western Ave are wonderful but they take a lot of time and money. We need solutions that can be put in place in a matter of weeks and months, not years.

Supporting a bicycle infrastructure need not be a lengthy and expensive undertaking.

The first category of improvements is those that can be done immediately, such as to enforce the existing bike lanes. Any time you go through Central or Harvard you will see many cars double parked in bike lanes. This is unacceptable. We need to have cops on bicycles patrolling these areas intensely and ruthlessly, issuing very expensive parking tickets. Unless the cops enforce the laws we in essence don't have bike lanes in the busiest parts of the city because they are always blocked.

The next category to address are short term improvements:

- a. Move bike lanes to between parked cars and the sidewalk
- b. Bike lanes between car travel and car parking lanes are a horrible idea

- i. Fast moving traffic on one side
  - ii. Jack-in-the-Box doors opening on the other
  - iii. Horrible situation, worse than not having a bike lane because it is a false sense of security
- c. On smaller streets, like Pearl St, put the bike lane down the middle of the road, mark it clearly and put up signs saying this is a “Bike Priority” road. Then enforce violations of it.

The third category is long term improvements, such as separated bike lanes like Western Ave. Wonderful but not going to happen overnight.

I used to worry a lot less about commuting by bike but this summer has changed my mind. I must admit that I often reach for the car keys in a situation where I would much rather ride my bike. The truth is that it's not a convenient time for me to die, so I have to take steps to avoid that because the city hasn't done enough.