

I want to take up issue of sharing the road from a bicyclist's view point. Sharing the road requires that we all are considerate of each other. It is also my hope that once we understand each other and our responsibilities our behaviors will improve. Here is my attempt to educate both sides in a hope for a brighter future.

Here are some reasons why bicyclists ride out into the road:

1. To avoid road debris that will cause a flat tire or cause us to fall.
2. To avoid the edge of the road which may have a 5" drop off and cause falling.
3. Riding too close to the edge a motorist might pass when they shouldn't and push you off the road's edge. I suggest bicyclists ride 24" out into the road so they can maneuver around junk in the road. NC statues say bicyclists may ride into the road if it is unsafe to ride far to the right. This does not mean they may take the whole road and become defiant. When going up hill a cyclist should pull as far to the right as reasonable.
4. When descending a bicycle can keep up with motorists and even gain on them on a curvy road so taking the lane to avoid getting squeezed is a good idea.

There are a lot of misconceptions about passing a bicyclist. Motorists should leave at least 3 feet to the left of the bicyclist and not move back to the right side until safely past the overtaken bicycle. Waiting till it is safe to pass is extremely important. No passing on a blind curve, on a rise or when a car is coming. Many folks do not realize how fast a bicycle can travel or they forget that when they pass the cyclist that they are still moving forward. For the bicyclist this is extremely dangerous.

Many tourists forget how wide their vehicles are when they are pulling campers and hit a cyclist with their extended mirrors or the awning of their camper. The wind vacuum from a fast moving large vehicle can actually suck a bicyclist into the rear wheels of it. Many motorists become irritated about waiting behind a bicyclist but it usually takes only a matter of seconds before it is clear for them to pass. Being annoyed about 60 seconds is not worth the price of another person's life.

There are bicyclists who do irritating illegal things as well, like not obeying traffic signs and signals. No vehicle, bicycle included is allowed to pass another vehicle on the right unless there is a lane especially for them to do so. When a long line of cars is stopped at a light the bicyclist does not have the right to pass on the right of the stopped traffic. This is not only illegal but unsafe; one of those cars might decide to turn right.

Riding after dark all vehicles are required to have headlight and tail light. Not only is it the law but it only makes sense. If you cannot be seen you cannot be avoided.

Claudia Nix is co-owner with her husband of Liberty Bicycles, Inc. She is the facilitator of the Bicycle/Pedestrian Task Force for Asheville, a member the Transportation Coordination Committee of the Metropolitan Planning Organization, a member of the NC DOT Bicycle Committee and a member of the NC Recreational Trails Committee and a member of the Asheville Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee.