

**Changing the Matrix for Public Safety**

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**Prepared for**

**The 36th**

**Rhode Island Transportation Forum**

**“Intelligent Transportation Infrastructure and System for Eternal Peace and  
Prosperity”**

**Friday, October 27, 2023**

**Memorial Union Ballroom**

**University of Rhode Island**

Changing the matrix for Public safety.

The othering of people of color has been present in America since people of color arrived in chains classified as property. To focus on the disrespectful handling and disproportionate injury and death rate of people of color by police is to treat the most extreme and rare symptom of a much broader malady. The disregard by police of the value of particular citizens is unfortunately consistent with our social ethos. Leaders and media give signals to law enforcement to focus their attention on poor people, i.e., people of color.

There is a huge disparity for poor people in levels of housing, education, healthcare, employment, transportation and economic opportunity in general. People in general are numb to this and accept passive oppression as the norm. These have become social signals to the police of acceptable behavior. The pandemic has brought into high relief the apparent across-the-board deprivation of poor people and these poor people are disproportionately people of color.

It is clear that Public Safety needs restructuring. This is a comprehensive undertaking that leaders historically shrink from. Our public safety system's focus on the poor is misguided. Corporate crime is ignored in all but the most egregious of crimes. No one is in prison for two flawed planes that killed 346 people or housing schemes that drove the economy to the brink. The hoarding of the world's wealth in quasi legal tax avoidance scams is another issue. Addressing economic injustice would facilitate the economic recovery.

There is no magic solution but increasing the numbers of police and folks of modest means on bicycles by building a safe bicycle infrastructure is a start. Charles Duhigg, in his book 'the Power of Habit,' talks about keystone habits. With intentionality we can change a habit that can change our lives. Bike riding, with proper preparation, promotes fitness, sociability, economic benefits, transportation, sustainability and a feeling of personal power.

I have studied police on bicycles and found a number of encouraging factors. Bicycles are stealthy and nimble, and positively influence the tenor of police citizen encounters. They provide broad and up close contact at significantly higher rates than motor patrols. Police chiefs and other police assume bicycles are not as effective, as demonstrated in my research .

Bicycle infrastructure improvement bears a comparatively low cost. In response to the pandemic, bicycles are currently being sold or tuned up at enormous rates in America. We lack the infrastructure to support this surge. We and leaders can address this.

We need to change. In spite of bike naysayers, bikes offer a litany of pluses. We need change. Utility biking is one less car ride. Nearly anyone can do it. Assisted pedals is a nice oomph. Some real suggestions:

- Criminal justice detention facilities develop bike refurbishing programs:

A proposal the Rhode Island Department of Correction asked me to prepare is available. Teaching sanctioned people the skill of bike refurbishing provides them linkage with community and society.

- Police involvement in traffic enforcement needs to be significantly reduced.

Police should not be forced to confront people in their cars. It is unfair to the public and the police to place them all in potential peril over civil legal issues. Sarah Seo's book, "Policing on the open road: How cars transformed American freedom," details how traffic enforcement was foisted on the police. This responsibility evolved into pretextual traffic stops as entree to criminal investigation. The individual and societal ramifications of cars shaped policing to the point where not enough people want the job.

- Automated Traffic Enforcement algorithms can be refined to prioritize safety and equity.

It is imperfect but being used nationally and internationally. Camera locations and times of day are based on data. Protest from motorists impede these efforts to enhance safety and equity. Sanctions should start with warnings and graduate to sliding scale fines. The USDOT should develop models and policies.

- Part of the retraining police receive will be on safe and orderly use of bicycles.

Police will become part of a societal effort to increase bike usage. At this time, use of a bicycle is believed to be at .6% for short trips. We can do better through training the habit of biking.

- Pre-schools and kindergartens teach balance biking capabilities, including police with the teachers, moving on to pedal bicycling and providing correction refurbished bicycles.

Legislation, Department of Education policy, and associations of physical education educators could make this happen! Woom and Strider bike companies are offering glider bike programs for modest prices. Providence has piloted a Strider glider bike program. Coventry and the Bristol/Warren schools have made inquiries. Police, along with teachers, can teach elementary school children how to ride a

bike properly. Police will give students from disinvested demographics the correction refurbished bikes. One in four Americans know how to ride a bike. Police supervised bike lessons can be extended to adults. Correction refurbished bikes can be given to citizens who demonstrated bike competency.

I developed the curriculum for and taught the lion's share of classes for ethics in criminal justice at Roger Williams University. The overwhelming majority of Rhode Island police officers with college degrees earned them at RWU. Rhode Island police have the lowest rate of violence against individuals from disinvested demographics.

I have asked the International Police Mountain Bike Association (IPMBA) to do two things:

1. Add to IPMBA curriculum teaching citizens how to ride a bike.
2. Adopt a policy stance of deemphasizing police traffic enforcement.

I have asked IPMBA, the International Chiefs of Police Association and the Police Executive Forum this, 'which police officer is more respected, the officer who gives you a ticket or the officer who teaches you to ride and gives you a bike?'

I have found bikes to be invisible on many levels. In policing they are stealth, in traffic unseen, in policy planning and as a topic for academic investigation not included, as a device for economic transportation overlooked. A University of Texas Austin study found the #1 reason for not biking was fear. We make invisible that which we fear.

I have been researching, submitting proposals and presenting with little support. I am a barely ok writer trying to get the invisible noticed.

Background; I am a criminologist, a social scientist and a student of cycling. I possess extensive field and scholarly experience. I worked decades in a correctional system, retiring as a staff training director.

Historically my research is original and respected in the field. My study of men who batter and go to jail was called a watershed piece by the USDOJ Office on Violence Against Women. My studies on police bicycle patrols were foundational. I wrote a book that is a qualitative study on the unprecedented prison growth in the last quarter of the 20th century.

We ride nearly every day. Come for a ride with us.

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