

As a member of the Rhode Island Bicycle Coalition board, I am honored to be speaking to our state's transportation brain trust. You are people who influence transportation's direction. As a bike advocate, I am humbled to be addressing you all. I have been coming to this conference as a participant for some years and am impressed by the collegiality and serious tenor.

Transportation is dynamic. Transportation infrastructure and means have evolved, and we adjust to these changes. The current deployment of the police for traffic enforcement needs to be reconsidered. Advances in camera technology and data analysis are pushing increased electronic enforcement. Automated Traffic Enforcement algorithms can be refined to prioritize safety and equity as determinant variables.

The National Institute of Justice and other research asserts increased safety with camera enforcement. Further research suggests discontinued use of camera enforcement precipitates an increase in violations and crashes. Camera enforcement is imperfect but is being used nationally and internationally. Camera locations and times of day are based on data analysis. They can enhance safety and equity. Sanctions should start with warnings and graduate to sliding scale means tested fines. The USDOT should develop models and policies for effective, safe, and equitable automated traffic enforcement.

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. Columbia Law School Professor 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 has 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.

Bicycle patrols by police is an area that is worthy of increased attention. Police need transition to receive training on the safe and orderly use of bicycles. I have studied police bicycle patrols. I 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 can become part of a societal effort to increase bike usage. Police are society's vanguards. They can guide us to safe slower transportation. Public safety is the key. We know lowering the velocity and mass increases safety/survivability. I have a list to increase safety posted. Increase the utilization of bikes for short trips is called utility biking. Every short bike ride is one less car ride.

Police personnel should facilitate a new public safety matrix. to help members of our communities take personal responsibility in getting around. Running an errand, or going to the office by bike is one less car ride. It is a starting point. Public safety can play pivotal role in bike education for the public.

That is it!

References

Brown, C., Rose, J'L., & Cling, S., (2023). Arrested Mobility: Barriers To Walking, Biking, And E-Scooter Use In Black Communities In The United States. Equitable Cities LLC.

Cohn, Ellen G., Suman Kakar, Chloe Perkins, Rebecca Steinbach, and Phil Edwards. 2020. "Red-Light Camera Interventions for Reducing Traffic Violations and Traffic Crashes: A Systematic Review." Campbell Systematic Review 16.

Davis, V., (2023). Inclusive Transportation: A Manifesto for Repairing Divided Communities. Island Press

Duhigg, C., (2012) The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business. Random House

Fell, J., (2019). Underutilized strategies in traffic safety: Results of a nationally representative survey. Traffic Injury Prevention. 2019 Supplement2, Vol. 20, pS57-S62. 6p.

Hoffmann, M., (2016). Bike Lanes Are White Lanes: Bicycle Advocacy and Urban Planning. University of Nebraska Press.

Lambert, D., Menton, C., & Ivone, K., (2022). Proposed Bike Repair and Refurbish Program in the Rhode Island Department of Corrections. Roger Williams University Justice Training and Research Institute.

Menton, C., (2008) Bicycle Patrols: An Underutilized Resource. Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management Vol. 31 No. 1 pp. 93-108

National Institute of Justice 2021 Practice Profile: Red-Light Camera Interventions for Reducing Traffic Violations and Crashes. <https://crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedpractices/123#summary>

Seo, S. (2019). Policing the Open Road: How Cars Transformed American Freedom. Harvard University Press..

That is it!

Chris Menton is a Professor Emeritus, League of American Bicyclist Certified Trainer and an American Bicycle Education Association Master Cyclist. A bicycle advocate on the local, state and federal levels. Has conducted various bicycle related research and program proposals. Chris and his peer Judy bike most days for reasons that range from utility to tourism. Come bike with us