

David R. Guenette
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March 12, 2000

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CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Cambridge City Council
City Hall, 2nd Floor
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

To Cambridge City Council:

An edited version of this letter was submitted to The Boston Globe. The letter is in response to an article about traffic-calming efforts in Cambridge and elsewhere, but reflects a long-time concern of mine. I see too little in terms of traffic law enforcement—from pedestrian laws, to speeding—being effectively applied here in Cambridge, and I submit this letter to you as my expression of concern on this very important matter.

It is my hope that Cambridge City Council will expand its efforts to push the Cambridge Police Department to adopt a more vigorous traffic law enforcement practice, so that our streets may be safer for our citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. R. Guenette', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

David R. Guenette

[copy of full letter to The Boston Globe follows]

Tatiana With Ribadeneira's four-page article, "Can't tame the drivers, tame the streets," [*Boston Sunday Globe*, March 12, 2000, "City Weekly"] about traffic-taming efforts in Cambridge and other Metro Boston cities, unfortunately took little time to cover traffic law enforcement efforts taking place—or not taking place—in these municipalities. "Apparently...police enforcement [does] little or nothing to rein in harried, hurried, or careless drivers," Ribadeneira writes. She didn't offer any sign of having investigated

this presumption. Perhaps, simply enough, there is insufficient traffic enforcement effort.

In Cambridge, which Ribadeneira describes as being in the forefront of traffic-calming initiatives, I've seen little evidence that our 264 officers take traffic law enforcement seriously. Indeed, I have witnessed many instances of Cambridge police car patrols themselves violating the very traffic laws they are supposed to enforce, and many more instances of our police not acting on traffic violations occurring right in front of them. I still vividly recall one particularly grievous incident some years ago when my first child was in the stroller, as I and two of my neighbors (each with their own toddlers in strollers), were crossing in a Hampshire Street crosswalk, only to have to come to a stop in the middle of the street, as a Cambridge police patrol car slowly rolled past us.

Some facts and figures about Cambridge's record of traffic enforcement, quotes of police officials' views of their traffic enforcement challenges and successes, and comparison with other cities that experience better traffic behavior would have made this article a more useful source of information for expanding public discourse on a matter of import as obvious as public safety, not to mention the potential windfall in municipal revenue robust traffic law enforcement might produce. The more important news might well be that Cambridge, and many other towns and cities in our area have largely failed to take their traffic enforcement duties seriously. In the age of so-called community policing, apparently our police officers feel too shy or uninterested in talking to citizens, even when presented with the seemingly near-endless opportunities to discuss with them the dangers of poor driving behavior.

It is very much a matter of civic consideration for us to gain perspective on driving habits, and we all need to remember—sometimes, perhaps, aided by law enforcement personnel—that getting through a traffic light or intersection to shave a half-a-minute off travel time, simply doesn't compared to the injury and loss of life that our too-often terrifyingly thoughtless driving styles can cause.

The Boston area is known, nation-wide, for its poor driving, to the point that our dangerous roads are the focus of many jokes. It is really no laughing matter, however, that our law enforcement agencies tacitly contribute to this dark comedy, or that the Globe fails to shed much light on this subject.

Consnet Communication #2

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A communicaiton was received from
David R. Guenette, relative to
traffic calming and traffic law
enforcement practices in
Cambridge.

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In City Council April 3, 2000

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