

27 ~~letter~~ - Bring in as Communication: 2/
Refer to Transportation Committee



Cambridge Bicycle Committee

57 Inman St.

Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139

617.349.4604 FAX: 617.349.4633

September 9, 1997

Police Commissioner Ronnie Watson
Cambridge Police Department
5 Western Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

RECEIVED BY
OFFICE OF CITY CLERK
97 SEP 17 PM 12:21
CAMBRIDGE MA.

Dear Commissioner Watson:

I am writing to ask for your help in reducing the danger to bicyclists and others in Central Square. The newly installed bicycle lanes along Massachusetts Avenue have the great potential to improve the safety and convenience of bicycle travel in the oft-congested Central Square area. In addition, they encourage bicyclists who would otherwise choose to ride on the sidewalks to instead travel in the roadway. However, misuse of the lanes by motorists frequently blocks bicycle access to them and creates a safety hazard for bicyclists and motorists alike. Vigorous and visible police enforcement is the only way to reduce the frequency of these infractions. I understand from Sgt. Sugrue that enforcement was not possible before the road markings were completed. Now that they are, I hope you will begin the enforcement process with diligence.

Automobile violations of the lanes in Central Square occur in many different places and include both moving and parking infractions. I would like to mention just a few of the problems that I have personally observed. First, the cab stand in front of Harvest Market has on several occasions had more cabs than the six that can fit in the space; the overflow extends into the bicycle lane. Second, cars stopping at the 7-Eleven block the lane near Pleasant Street. Double parking in front of the post office is also a problem.

The lanes at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Prospect Street are often obstructed on both sides of the street. On the Boston-bound side, perhaps even the majority of traffic uses the bicycle lane when proceeding straight on Massachusetts Avenue. Other cars double-park in front of the MBTA entrance. The Harvard Square-bound lane, while not as frequently blocked, often has right-turning traffic stopped in it. These two



locations might be the most dangerous for bicyclists because of the congestion of the intersection and the frequency of infraction; I have heard several reports of "near-miss" accidents in the Boston-bound lane approaching Central Square as well as almost being hit there myself.

Violations of the lanes themselves are not restricted to private automobiles. Buses block the lanes when cars illegally occupy the bus stops. Delivery trucks and garbage trucks use the lanes because of the proximity to the curb and again because of cars stopped in the loading zones. For the most part, though, rampant illegal parking and double parking in the square seems to be at least an indirect cause of most of the bicycle lane obstructions.

I appreciate your concern and prompt action to discourage this illegal and dangerous behavior on behalf of drivers. Throughout the recent discussion of bicycles on sidewalks in the city of Cambridge, bicyclists made a conscious effort to work constructively for the interests and safety of the community at large. Those efforts seem to be making a difference. We now hope that the City will work to protect our safety as first-class citizens of the road; clearing the bicycle lanes for their intended purpose is a first step towards that goal.

Thank you for your help in improving this situation.

Sincerely,

Michael Halle
Chair, Cambridge Bicycle Committee

cc: Sue Clippinger, Cambridge Director of Traffic and Parking

✓ cc: Cambridge City Council

cc: Cambridge Community Development Department



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Michael Halle
Chair, Cambridge Bicycle Committee

cc: Sue Clippinger, Cambridge Director of Traffic and Parking

✓ cc: Cambridge City Council

cc: Cambridge Community Development Department

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Communication was received from Michael Halle, Chair, Cambridge Bicycle Committee, regarding the danger to bicyclists and others in Central Square.

In City Council September 22, 1997

Referred to Traffic
and Transportation
Committee meeting
of September 30, 1997
on motion of
Councillor Davis.