

## City of Cambridge

The Traffic and Transportation Committee conducted a public meeting on Tuesday, September 30, 1997 at six o'clock and thirty minutes p. m. in the Sullivan Chamber to discuss bicycle safety in the City.

Present at the meeting were Councillor Henrietta Davis, Chair of the committee; Donna P. Lopez, Deputy City Clerk; Ronnie Watson, Police Commissioner; Sergeant Paul Sugrue, Police Department; Sue Clippinger, Director of Traffic, Parking and Transportation; Bob Goodwin, Human Services Department; Susanne Rasmussen, Cara Seiderman and Rosalie Anders of the Environmental and Transportation Division of the Community Development Department and Helen Ford, School Department.

Councillor Davis opened the meeting by stating that this meeting was conflicting with a meeting scheduled by the MDC and some attendees want to attend the MDC meeting. She stated that the meeting was to discuss two issues: one a letter from Michael Halle and the second on safety and bicycle helmets. She proceeded to open the meeting for discussion on the issue of bicycle safety.

The committee heard from Douglas Kline, 10 Mellen Street #3, member of the Bicycle Committee, who stated that bicycle transportation could be used by many, but people do not know this fact. He stated that bicyclist are portrayed as menaces. The City Council, he said, could take a leading role for respect for bicycle riders. He felt that there had been prejudicial statements made about bicyclists at City Council meetings. These statements aggravate the prejudicial feelings toward bicyclists, he said. He stated that respect should be promoted in the city.

The committee heard from Arvilla Sarasen, 15 Lambert Street, Senior Center representative, who stated that she felt that bicyclists do not respect pedestrians. She stated that everyone needs to be respectful and the laws need to be enforced. She stated that she is in favor of visible bicycle registration.

The committee heard from Michael Halle, 2 Westacott Court, member of the Bicycle Committee, who submitted a communication to the committee which is attached as ATTACHMENT A. He stated that the issue of respect needs to be worked on. He stated that enforcement is one way to get the word out to the community. The lead the Police Department has taken through its safety education in the schools is a beginning, he said. The public, he said, does not think of a bicyclist as a motorist. The education program in the schools has had a positive effect on the issue of respect for all. He stated that bicyclists are grateful for all the positive efforts made by the city and the city staff.

Councillor Davis inquired about the safety education in the schools.

Ms. Helen Ford, 2 Rumeal Robinson Place, School Department safety division employee, stated that Sergeant Paul Sugrue recruited her. She stated that fourteen elementary schools had presentations given to them. At the presentations helmets were demonstrated to the children and the children were incorporated into the presentations. The high school also had a presentation. Ms. Ford stated that she feels the age limit after which helmets are not required by law is too low. She feels that helmets should be required up to the age of high school. Councillor Davis stated that high school children would rather not ride a bike if they have to use a helmet. Ms. Ford responded that the children are using helmets. She stated that the children would like to purchase them for a discount. She added that the condition of their hair is an issue for the children. Ms. Ford further stated that if you tell the children there is a fine, the younger children listen, the older children say they will not pay. The older children are told their parents will have to pay the fine.

Councillor Davis asked if there was a penalty for not wearing a helmet under the age of twelve. Sergeant Sugrue responded in the negative. Councillor Davis asked Sergeant Sugrue about the enforcement aspects. Sergeant Sugrue responded that the children are stopped and told to wear the helmets. As an incentive, an ice cream certificate is issued for wearing a helmet. He stated that this reward program reinforces wearing the helmet. The children are getting the idea, he said.

The committee heard from Bob Goodwin, 14 Locust Street, Youth Program Director, Human Services Department, who stated that bicycle rodeos are done at the youth centers in the city. Obstacle courses are set up; safety courses are given; and the children interact with the Police Department. This is another piece of the "hands on" work done by the Police Department. He stated that as a parent he feels that the parent piece is needed to reinforce the use of helmets.

The committee heard from Eddie Harris, 26 1/2 Callendar Street, Director of Positive Edge, who said that you have to go backward in order to go forward. It is about education. We have to re-educate the children, we have to show them by example by using helmets, contacting manufacturers and media and bicycle safety. How are we going to change our attitudes. It is a health issue as well, he said. Mr. Harris further asked how do we get someone 17-18 years old to turn their behavior around and how do we enforce the law? He asked should bikes come with helmets, to make it reasonable and affordable. There are conflicting messages out there, for example, motorcyclists do not need helmets in bordering states. Mr. Harris stated that the younger children are educable because they are not inundated by social issues. Technology should be invented, he said, where if the helmet is not put on the bicycle will not operate.

The committee heard from Ted Hamann, 106 Holworthy Street, member of the Bicycle Committee, who stated that it is a matter of perception. It is one thing to pass a law, it is another thing to enforce it. He stated that bicycles are legal vehicles. The Vehicle Trip Ordinance was enacted to encourage the use of more transportation means of travel in the city. The City Council can exert more of a leadership role in this area, he said. He also stated that helmets and the attitude for their use need to be made "way kool."

Councillor Davis stated that hair is an issue for the children. Having a bad hair day is an issue and style is an issue: fancy aerodynamic helmets are expensive. Mr. Harris responded that price and style are not the issue. It is a health issue. The head is the most vulnerable part in an accident, he said. You may have a bad hair day, but at least you have a bad hair day -- today and tomorrow, he said.

Mr. Kline stated that the emphasis on bike safety should not only be on helmets, helmets do not prevent accidents. An impact to the head creates a reflex action to bend the head away from the impact, he said. He further stated that an overemphasis on helmets may have an under focus on safety.

The committee heard from Commissioner Watson who stated that we teach driver education and we teach health, no one is taught how to ride a bike. Car manufacturers put seat belts in the cars because of safety, he said. Bike manufacturers could be required to have a helmet with the sale of bicycles, he said. Commissioner Watson stated that if a helmet saves a life, it is worth it. Bicyclists are not always safe in the bike lanes. We need to get away from enforcement -- we need to focus on education, he said

Councillor Davis asked Commissioner Watson what was his emphasis for education. Commissioner Watson responded that before the children are put out on the street we need to teach them how to ride a bike.

The committee heard from Ken Field, 108 Pleasant Street, who stated that all bicyclists are doing a significant service to the city because of their means of transportation. Unsafe bicyclists, he said, are among the minority. He stated that enforcement of traffic laws without bicycle registration would be difficult. He believes that it is possible to ride a bicycle safely on the sidewalk. He questioned how many motorists who are blocking the bicycle lanes have been ticketed. There needs to be respect for these regulations, he said.

The committee heard from Sergeant Sugrue who stated that California and Minnesota are the only two states which require bicycle registration. Sergeant Sugrue stated that it is hard to enforce bike laws in one city in the state, a registration program needs to be a state wide program. The registration program, he said, should be a visible registration required by law, at the point of sale and done by the police station. A document entitled "Bicycle Safety and Enforcement" by the Cambridge Police Department was made part of the report as **ATTACHMENT B**. Sergeant Sugrue informed the committee that selective enforcement has been done in the city by the Police Department. There have been a lot of violators from Arlington. People are driving through the city, he said. The fine for not having your bike registered in the city is \$1.00, he said. Sergeant Sugrue stated that the Police Department has tried various ways to encourage the registration of bicycles, but the numbers have not really increased. He informed the committee that the Community Policing van would be registering bicycles on Sunday at the Charles River.

Councillor Davis stated that she was in support of State Representative John Stasic's work on bicycle safety and registration. She stated that drivers' education should be providing education on issues such as the danger of opening car doors into bicyclists. The City Council should put pressure on the legislature to change the drivers' education booklet, she said. She further stated that drivers' education should be a two step program, with a learner's permit where there is a six month waiting period before you can take a final test. Drivers' education, she said, is so minimal, bicycle safety should be incorporated into the manual.

The committee heard from Doug Willen, a resident of 111 Milton Street, Arlington, who stated that the East Cambridge community had requested increased enforcement in Kendall Square, Cambridge Street and Inman Square in the areas of stop signs and lights, more enforcement as it relates to safe cycling. He stated that the city should approach cycling as a viable transportation mode, provide more interaction with the campus police departments, as well as getting the message of safety into the newspaper. Flyers should be done to publicize and market cycling. He stated that people do not feel safe cycling in the city. The pavement surface is a critical concern. Work is done by utility companies and the pavement is not returned to a normal surface. This condition causes accidents for bicyclists and can cause injury to pedestrians. Mr. Willen further stated that cyclists who are stopped for violations while cars are not stopped for similar violations cause cyclists to become very frustrated and does not instill respect for the law. He stated that he did not feel safe in Cambridge and that was the reason he moved out. He stated that the City could encourage developers to include showers and lockers for cyclists.

The committee heard from Susanne Rasmussen, Environmental and Transportation Planning Division of the Community Development Department. She stated that through Transportation Demand Management provisions special permits that are issued require that certain buildings provide bicycle parking, showers or changing rooms. Mr. Willen stated that developers have been receptive to the idea of the showers and parking. Ms. Rasmussen distributed the 1997 Bicycle Safety Education which is attached to the report as **ATTACHMENT C**.

Councillor Davis asked about the accommodation of the bicycle racks in front of City Hall. Ms. Cara Seiderman stated that there are two bike racks in front of City Hall.

The committee heard from Michael Flynn, Quincy Street, who stated that Cambridge is one of the more bicycle friendly cities, but more could be done. He encouraged the city to keep pursuing the enforcement measures, sidewalk restrictions and the addition of the bicycle lanes. He stated that there is not enough emphasis on enforcing jay walking and illegally parked cars. He would like to see more enforcement or more measures taken.

Ms. Sarasen stated that the college student should be registered. No one is focusing on the college students, she said. She raised the issue of the visually impaired pedestrian and the handicapped persons as well as the issue of truck traffic through the city. Councillor Davis stated that the City Council has raised the issue of the size of trucks, but it is a federal issue.

Mr. Kline stated that there is no security for bicycles. Registration is a means of recovery for bicycles, he said. Pegging a registration plate number as a bicycle goes by is very difficult, he said.

Mr. Halle asked about enforcement to keep bicycle lanes clear. Sergeant Sugrue stated that the Police Department has done Signal 86 ( park and walk measures) in Central Square. He informed the committee that there was a \$100.00 fine for driving in the bike lane and that most people were stopped in the bicycle lanes. He stated that the Bicycle Officers are doing serious enforcement at Massachusetts Avenue, Pleasant Street and in front of the Senior Center.

The committee heard from Sue Clippinger, Director of Traffic, Parking and Transportation, who stated that there has been increased intensity of enforcement in Central Square and it will be an ongoing thing. Mr. Willen asked Ms. Clippinger to increase the number of parking control officers on bikes.

Sergeant Sugrue stated that 446 bicycle citations were given out by the Police Department, of which 395 were fines and the remainder were written warnings. He stated that at the Bicycle Safety Alliance meetings the focus was on helmets. He stated that the state booklet on bicycle safety has to be distributed by everyone in the community. Some children cannot afford a helmet. Bicycles given away by the Police Department are given with helmets, he said. He informed the committee of pediatricians who issue helmet prescriptions. The doctors measure the children's heads and the helmets only cost \$5.95. He stated that the lead needs to be taken in this area.

At the conclusion of the meeting Councillor Davis stated that the committee would like to take the lead in this area. She was concerned about the helmet issue, getting the message out of respect for cyclists and involvement of the state in driver and rider education.

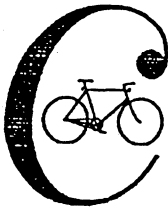
She stated that she would request the drafting of an ordinance on the age requirement of helmet wearing. She thought the addition of the minutes and motions of the committee on the Web Site on the request of Mr. Willen was a good idea.

The meeting adjourned at eight o'clock and ten minutes p. m.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henrietta Davis", written in a cursive style.

Councillor Henrietta Davis,  
Chair



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



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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

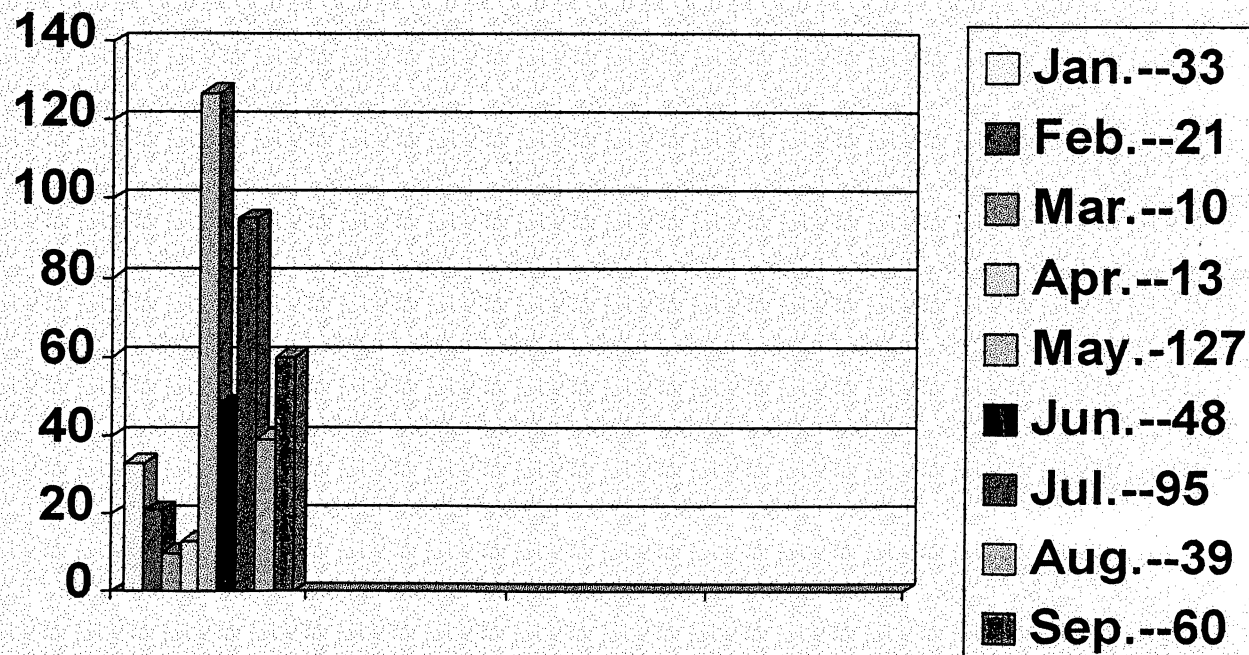
cc: Sue Clippinger, Cambridge Director of Traffic and Parking  
✓ cc: Cambridge City Council  
cc: Cambridge Community Development Department

# Bicycle Safety and Enforcement

Cambridge Police Department  
City of Cambridge

# Number of Citations

■ 446 citations issued in 1997 through Sept. 26



# Selective Enforcement

The Cambridge Police Department has been doing selective enforcement of bicycle laws in many areas, including the following;

- Harvard Sq.
- Central Sq.
- Porter Sq.
- Inman Sq.
- Mass. Ave at Wendell St.
- Mass. Ave at Walden St.
- First St. area
- Kendall Sq.
- Entire length of Mass Ave.
- Any other areas as complaints arise

# Reason for Citations

- Sidewalk----138 for 31%
- Red Light--- 263 for 59%
- Other----- 45 for 10%
- Arrests----- 3

# Education

- **School Safety taught in all Cambridge Public Schools in all Grades**
- **Newspaper Articles in the Chronicle, Tab, Harvard Crimson, Harvard Gazette, The Ride magazine**
- **Cable TV, Three times on "Be Live"**
- **Safety Trifold Brochure distribution 13,000**
- **Neighborhood Block Parties, Riverfest, Mayfair etc.**
- **Bikes, Boards and Blades show at the Bayside Expo Center**
- **Police and Bicycle Committee of Cambridge working in conjunction to all these events.**

# What's Next

- Continue Education Programs including the schools
- Continue Selective Enforcement
- Working together with the College Police Departments on Education
- Continue and Hopefully expand the Registration Program

Community Dev. Dept. -- Sep. 30, 1997

**Bicycle safety education  
1997**

**ATTACHMENT C**

**CITY OF CAMBRIDGE**

- \* Police conducted bicycle safety program in Cambridge Public Schools and private schools - April and May, 1997
- \* Police produced brochure with bicycle safety information - spring 1997
- \* Police distributed brochure to all bike shops - spring and summer 1997
- \* Police appeared on CCTV and discussed safety and enforcement - spring 1997
- \* Harvard distributed email messages to students, spoke with Harvard newspaper reporters - spring 1997
- \* New regulations regarding bicycling on sidewalks posted and highlighted on City Web Page
- \* Bicycle safety videos shown on Cambridge Cable TV-July 1997
- \* Cambridge River Festival: Bicycle safety information distributed, bicycle safety quiz administered, several hundred people picked up information - September 1997
- \* Transportation Awareness Day, Kendall Square: Bicycle safety information distributed, public questions answered--September 1997
- \* Posters with sidewalk cycling ban information distributed to stores in affected areas - July 1997
- \* Additional signs installed indicating areas where sidewalk cycling is banned

**Ongoing projects**

- \* Continued distribution of *How to Get Around in Cambridge* (approximately 25,000 a year).
- \* Continued featuring of bicycle and pedestrian safety information in Traffic, Parking, and Transportation's information brochure.
- \* Continued distribution of safety promotion materials, including magnets, bumper stickers, police brochures at public events.

**Newspaper coverage**

- \* Thirteen newspaper articles, letters to the editor, or editorials related to bicycle safety between 1/1/97 and 9/15/97. Major stories were related to police enforcement of bicycle laws.

# Bicycle safety education

1993-1996

## CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

### Bike rodeos

- 10/11/95 – Kennedy Park (Cambridge Police Bicycle Patrol and Recreation Dept.)
- June 1996 – Danehy Park (Community Development and Bicycle Patrol)
- May 1993 — Bicycle Fair (Recreation Dept. and Kiwanis)

### Bicycle Safety Week in the schools, June 3-8 1996

- Presentations to fourth, fifth, and sixth graders in 10 elementary schools. About 1500 safety education kits with water bottles and for parents and children distributed.

### Information tables (and bike safety quiz)

- 1993 and 1994 – Police open houses
- 1994, 1995, and 1996 – Transportation Awareness Day (Kendall Square)
- April 1995 – Earth Day celebration
- 1995 and 1996 – Cambridge River Fest
- October 1995 – Huron Ave. bicycle lane opening
- June and September 1996 – Cambridge Hospital events
- October 1996 – MIT

### Written Information distributed

- About 35,000 maps since January 1995 (8190 of these were purchased by Harvard).
- About 3200 safety flyers (2300 as part of the signs on the street campaign).
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety information included in Traffic, Parking and Transportation Dept. street sweeping schedule pamphlet (X copies).
- Hang tags with bicycle rules, through Cambridge bicycle stores.
- Safe cycling notice translated into 5 languages and distributed to every child in Cambridge elementary schools – June 1994.
- Educational “ticket” developed for distribution by the Cambridge Police Department.

### Other

- Refrigerator magnets (Bicycles/Cars/Same roads/Same laws) designed and distributed at various events.
- Bumper stickers (Bicycles/Cars/Same roads/Same laws) designed and distributed by Bicycle Committee.
- Bicycle safety display at Cambridge Public Library – May 1995
- Bicycle safety information posters in lobby at TP&T from 11/95 - 7/96
- Bicycle safety training provided to 55 City staff .

### Media

- Cable TV appearance – Spring 1996 (two programs).
- Weekly *TAB* column, “Sole Survivor” – Nov. 1995-March 1996.
- Various other articles in the *Globe*, *Chronicle*, *Crimson*, *Phoenix*, and neighborhood newsletters.

### Street events

- October 7 and 8, 1996, during morning and evening rush hours: City officials and volunteers held safety signs in Porter, Harvard and Central Square.
- 1996 St. Patrick's Day Parade: safety information handed out along the route.

### Physical facilities

Bicycle lanes serve an educational purpose. They indicate to motorists and cyclists that bicycles belong on the street, and they indicate that cyclists should ride with the traffic.

Committee Report #1

S-659

A report from Councillor Henrietta Davis,  
Chair of the Traffic and Transportation  
Committee, for a meeting held on  
September 30, 1997 for the purpose to  
discuss bicycle safety in the City and  
the issue of bicycle helmets.

In City Council October 20, 1997

- Report Accepted.  
Placed on File.