

*Idaho,
the Golden Rule,
the SFPD,
and You*

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Bicycles can be very civilizing – great cities often enjoy great routine biking, as a humane equitable thing.

More than sustainability, or public health, urban biking is about efficiency of mobility at a human scale, in terms of energy and speed and space and noise and safety.

(Amsterdam 2010 by Leah Shahum, SF Bicycle Coalition)



This looks like the Wiggle, a very welcoming place for people on bikes and people in general.

Of course it's Copenhagen, a very human and humane city. Everything moves at a human pace.

If speeds are kept reasonable and rights-of-way are established and respected, bicycle transportation can be very appealing to a lot of people, as a commonsense utility that's also fun.

[Streetfilm: *Cycling Copenhagen, Through North American Eyes*, 2010, Clarence Eckerson, Jr.]



San Francisco is coming along as an “everybody rides a bike” city quite well, despite the hostile, vehicle-dominated nature of many of our streets, and the residual sense of the “strangeness of bicycling” held by a large number of Americans (including San Franciscans).

[APT photo, Market St at Van Ness, standing in front of SFMTA headquarters, August 2012]



other



mother

In the US, even in SF, most people maintain a number of barriers to bicycling.

Fear of sweat, fear of getting hit by a car, a fear of the otherness of it, the “strangeness”.

It’s something other people do, people who are so different from me that they may not even be people.

That’s a barrier to empathy and that’s a barrier to civilization.

[other - SFBC: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/sfbike/397005698/>]

[mother - Jake in Dublin: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/65405521@N00/4623385891/>]



cyclists



people

I've been using this slide for a year, using this gag for a few years,

I stole it from Mikael Colville-Anderson.

It's about empathy, it's about humanity.

[photos by Amsterdamize.com and Mark Emery (from Momentum Magazine, <http://momentumplanet.com/articles/the-helmet-debate>)]



Sharing – empathy – respect – compassion

In San Francisco we have some great shared spaces, unsorted space.

Only works if people treat each other well, show compassion,

Or at least take turns.

[Embarcadero / Herb Caen Way, Mark Dreger, SanFranciscoize.com <http://www.flickr.com/photos/sanfranciscoize/7184890386>]



Sometimes segregation is useful, where there's a lot of traffic moving at different speeds – bike traffic, foot traffic, car traffic.

Conflicts are minimized (or they're relocated).

You still have to take turns, show respect to other folks.

[Embarcadero Bikeway concept, ROMA Design Group 2012]



Here we are at the Wiggle, the celebrated bike route – left right left right left right left.

Not much stopping, natural flow, an ancient tributary of Mission Creek,

(see Joel Pomerantz for more on the Wiggle and water).

But that non-stop bicycle flow sometimes offends observers, even if collisions are rare.

[Mark Dreger, SanFranciscoize.com <http://www.flickr.com/photos/sanfranciscoize/7213597946>]



scofflaw



lawmaker

Brings us to the quintessential “otherness” of the scofflaw cyclist – the outlaw.

Why don't you people ever stop?

I never see you people stop!

Beware of sentences that point at “you people” -- they're the opposite of empathy.

[scofflaw - Jeremy Hughes: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/37423935@N00/3813042212/>]

[lawmaker - Dustin Jensen: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/edmdusty/3531571526/in/photostream/>]



So neighbors call the SFPD, officers stake out key intersections in the Wiggle and elsewhere (Market Street).

It doesn't serve public safety, it doesn't address actual collision hotspots where people are actually being hurt.

But it does speak to the massive disingenuousness that a lot of bike riders show their neighbors when they fail to take turns.

[SF Citizen (Jim Herd) <http://sfcitizen.com/blog/2012/06/06/the-new-sfpd-bmws-are-here-the-new-sfpd-bmws-are-here-as-seen-busting-cyclists-on-market-street/>]



STOP signs are the focus of much of the “scofflaw” concern.

First one showed up in Detroit in 1915, a blunt tool to oblige road users to give way to each other.

In a world where some of those users are operating machines that are beyond a human scale for speed and danger .

Ivan Illich wrote about the "critical threshold" for speed, four or six times the speed of a man on foot

– beyond that critical threshold, speed becomes destructive in multiple ways

[Brooklyn – Christopher Walker <http://www.pbase.com/csw62/image/51671259>]



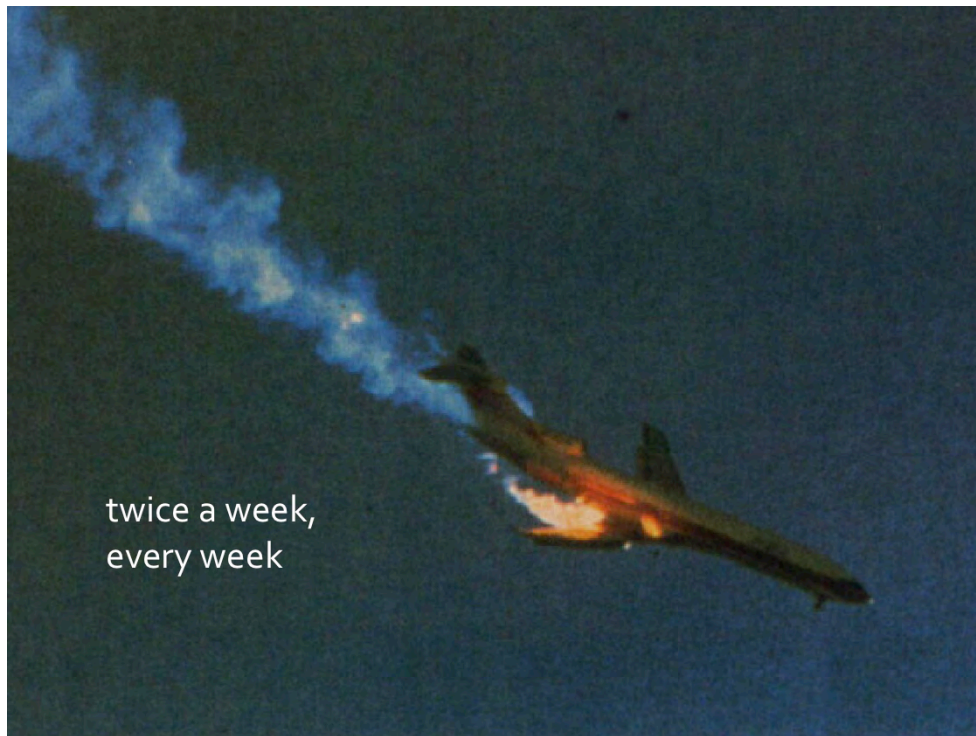
Here's what Market St looked like before STOP signs were needed, 1906 a week before the quake

I'm not taking advantage of tonight's kinetic innovation, but do watch this film if you haven't lately

The car isn't much evolved beyond the bicycle, everyone took turns in a fluid and human way

But pretty soon cars were much faster and much more lethal, and we needed STOP signs and signal lights to restrain them

[*A Trip Down Market Street*, 1906 - <http://youtube.com/watch?v=oubsaFBUCtc>]



Every week in the United States nearly 700 people die in car crashes,

As if two fully-loaded commercial jet airliners went down with all on board lost.

It's not those scofflaw bikes rolling through the Wiggle that are killing,

It's the bull in the china shop.

The Idaho Law

TITLE 49 MOTOR VEHICLES

CHAPTER 7 PEDESTRIANS AND BICYCLES

49-720. STOPPING -- TURN AND STOP SIGNALS. (1) A person operating a bicycle or human-powered vehicle approaching a stop sign shall slow down and, if required for safety, stop before entering the intersection. After slowing to a reasonable speed or stopping, the person shall yield the right-of-way to any vehicle in the intersection or approaching on another highway so closely as to constitute an immediate hazard during the time the person is moving across or within the intersection or junction of highways, except that a person after slowing to a reasonable speed and yielding the right-of-way if required, may cautiously make a turn or proceed through the intersection without stopping.

(2) A person operating a bicycle or human-powered vehicle approaching a steady red traffic control light shall stop before entering the intersection and shall yield to all other traffic. Once the person has yielded, he may proceed through the steady red light with caution. Provided however, that a person after slowing to a reasonable speed and yielding the right-of-way if required, may cautiously make a right-hand turn. A left-hand turn onto a one-way highway may be made on a red light after stopping and yielding to other traffic.

(3) A person riding a bicycle shall comply with the provisions of section [49-643](#), Idaho Code.

(4) A signal of intention to turn right or left shall be given during not less than the last one hundred (100) feet traveled by the bicycle before turning, provided that a signal by hand and arm need not be given if the hand is needed in the control or operation of the bicycle.

25 years ago people in Idaho decided to recognize that bikes and cars are different and changed the law.

In Idaho, bike riders treat STOP signs like Yields – slow down, check for other folks, give way as appropriate, then proceed.

A sensible human-scale thing to do, and it's worked great for Idaho,

but it would be a huge big deal to change California law.

[49-720, added 1988, ch. 265, sec. 209, p. 679; am. 2005, ch. 205, sec. 1, p. 615.]



The essence of the Idaho law is that bikes treat STOP signs like Yields.

Not many Yield signs in SF, I can't think of one, but they're a lot more appropriate than STOP signs in most cases.

Here's Tulsa OK police officer Clinton Riggs with his innovation, rolled out in 1950 (though the concept goes way back).

Yield the right-of-way – Give Way, Take Your Turn.

[
<http://www.roadtrafficsigns.com/a-brief-history-of-the-yield-sign>

In 1950, the world's first yield sign was posted at the corner of First Street and Columbia Avenue in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Before the sign was introduced, this intersection was considered one of the most dangerous in Tulsa. Although there was already a right of way law in place, it was difficult to enforce, and many drivers failed to abide by these rules. Officer Clinton Riggs, a Tulsa native and police officer, had begun developing a sign that he hoped would alleviate these problems. He also wanted to assign clear blame in the event of a collision and hoped his sign would make liability clear.

The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) added the yield sign in 1954 to assign right of way at intersections where a stop was not normally required.

heavy red Yield: US (MUTCD)

red Give Way : Jamaica

white Give Way: UK, Bahamas, Singapore

yellow: Croatia, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Kuwait, Poland, Sweden, Serbia, Vietnam

blue: Botswana

green: Swaziland

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Over the years there have been attempts to reach people with a message of turn-taking on the street.

The Golden Rule – treat others as you'd like to be treated.

The SFBC has developed a series of flyers speaking to drivers and bike riders about the need to give way and show respect.

Yielding doesn't suit the American personality -- it's weak, passive, capitulatory

[vintage flyers from the author's own collection; see <http://sfbike.org/giveget>]



But everybody learned this from their mother and father, and grandma and grandpa.

Turn-taking is most important – learn to take your turn – it’s the Golden Rule.

You shouldn’t need a STOP sign to bang you over the head – play fair and don’t go if it’s not your turn.

[found: <http://now-here-this.timeout.com/2012/04/16/write-your-way-around-the-monopoly-board/>]

Setting enforcement priorities

AS AMENDED AND DIVIDED IN COMMITTEE		297-06
FILE NO.	061205	11/13/06
ORDINANCE NO.		
1	[Policy Making Marijuana Offenses the Lowest Law Enforcement Priority.]	
2		
3	Ordinance amending the San Francisco Administrative Code by adding Chapter 12X to	
4	make marijuana offenses by adults the lowest law enforcement priority in San	
5	Francisco, establish a Community Oversight Committee, and require notification of	
6	state and federal officials.	
7	Note: Additions are <u>single-underline italics Times New Roman</u> ;	
8	deletions are strike-through italics Times New Roman .	
9	Board amendment additions are <u>double underlined</u> .	
10	Board amendment deletions are strike-through-normal .	
11	Be it ordained by the People of the City and County of San Francisco:	
12	Section 1. The San Francisco Police Code is hereby amended by adding Sections	
	12X.1 through 12X.9, to read as follows:	

Changing California law to create an Idaho STOP for bike riders would be very hard, maybe impossible.

SFPD can set their own enforcement priorities – de-prioritize failure to STOP by bike riders.

Crack down on failure to yield by **everyone**, bikes, cars, **everyone** – that’s a real safety problem.

If the SFPD won’t get their priorities straight, SF citizens might do as they’ve done for marijuana enforcement.



But an Idaho law, or better SFPD priorities, are just part of the answer,

We've all got to give way, take turns, observe the Golden Rule.

Whether you're riding a bike or driving a car,

Yield with pride and show some respect.

[Frank Chan - Sunday Streets on the Embarcadero April 2009 <http://www.flickr.com/photos/sfbike/3478937099/>]



Cultivate empathy and compassion on the streets of San Francisco.

Civilization starts with you.

Treat each other well, the way you'd like to be treated,

And Saint Francis will smile down upon us, and ring his heavenly bike bell.

[Frank Chan - SFPD on bike hands out treats on 3rd St. at McKinnon, July 2012 Sunday Streets <http://www.flickr.com/photos/geekstinkbreath/7627649758/>]