

# NCATA Position Paper: Police Education on Bicycling Issues

**Subject:** Educating police about traffic enforcement for bicyclist safety and mobility

**Summary:** Law enforcement plays an essential role in supporting bicycle travel by reducing unsafe operation of motor vehicles and bicycles and by reminding the public about the legal rights and duties of road users. A police force that is more knowledgeable than the general public about best bicycling practices is more confident when dealing with bicycling issues, improves the environment for bicycling, and ultimately reduces bicyclist crash rates. Police who are uninformed, however, sometimes improperly stop bicyclists who are operating lawfully and safely. Police training programs that explain effective traffic law enforcement practices for bicyclist safety should be included in any community's strategy for improving bicycling.

## **Discussion:**

As bicycle traffic volumes have increased, police have been asked to become more involved in bicycling-related enforcement issues, but most police have not been trained on best bicycling practices and related law. NCATA is aware of numerous cases of police officers in North Carolina stopping and/or ticketing bicyclists who were operating lawfully on roadways. Many traffic enforcement officers ignore violations associated with common bicyclist crashes, including wrong-way bicycling, bicycling at night without lights, and failure to yield. When police are uninformed about best bicycling practices and the law, they may spread misinformation to the motoring and bicycling public, which in turn results in increased harassment and endangerment of lawfully operating bicyclists and reduced visibility and predictability of bicycle operation.

Police departments and cycling safety experts across the United States have developed a number of police training programs to improve officers' knowledge about traffic bicycling and related enforcement (see Attachment 1). These programs all share the following essential components:

1. A detailed presentation of how the traffic law defines the rights and duties of bicyclists and other drivers on roadways, and how this relates to safety
2. A list of priority violations by bicyclists (cycling at night without lights, wrong-way cycling, failure to yield at junctions, and unsafe operation on sidewalks)
3. A list of priority violations by motorists (drunk/distracted driving, failure to yield at junctions, improper right turn, driving too fast for conditions, unsafe passing)
4. A discussion of effective methods for dealing with bicyclists and motorists during bicycling-related traffic stops

The City of Raleigh has developed a police training program entitled *Bicyclist Safety and Law Enforcement* (see Attachment 2) that includes these components as well as an analysis of common causes of local bicycle crashes based on local police reports. Such crash data provides a compelling justification for the existing rules of the road and the prioritization of traffic violations. The training also includes discussion of bicycle-specific facilities such as shared lane markings and bike lanes. This program is currently being adapted for use by other cities including Cary. The program has received high praise by both police and bicyclist advocates.

## **Recommended Actions:**

- NCATA recommends that the *Bicyclist Safety and Law Enforcement* police training program be adapted and distributed for use by communities across NC.
- NCATA recommends that local communities incorporate the *Bicyclist Safety and Law Enforcement* training program into their local police training materials.

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## ***Attachment 1: Examples of Police Education Programs on Bicycling***

The Law Officer's Guide to Bicycle Safety: <http://www.massbike.org/projectsnew/law-officer-training/>

Florida Bicycle Law Enforcement Guide:

[http://www.floridabicycle.org/resources/pdfs/PEGLEG2008\\_7-31-08web.pdf](http://www.floridabicycle.org/resources/pdfs/PEGLEG2008_7-31-08web.pdf)

Georgia Bicycle Law Enforcement Guide:

<http://www.gahighwaysafety.org/docs/gabicyclelawenforcementguide.pdf>

Law Enforcement's Roll Call Video: "Enforcing Law for Bicyclists":

[http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/multimedia/bicycles/bicycle\\_safety\\_LE.wmv](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/multimedia/bicycles/bicycle_safety_LE.wmv)

NHTSA Enhancing Bicycle Safety: Law Enforcement's Role (Computer Based Training):

[http://bicycledriving.org/enforce/main\\_menu.htm](http://bicycledriving.org/enforce/main_menu.htm)

City of Los Angeles police training

video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1N3Q3ILBlk>

<http://la.streetsblog.org/2011/03/16/lapd-posts-officer-training-program-for-bicycle-safety-on-youtune/http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1N3Q3ILBlk>

Implementing Enforcement Programs Aimed at Bicyclists:

<http://www.bicyclinginfo.org/enforcement/programs-bicyclists.cfm>

The Case for Bicycle Law Enforcement – International Police Mountain Bike Association:

<http://www.ipmba.org/printables/case-for-bike-enforcement.PDF>

[Enforcement Resources](#) - by the League of Illinois Bicyclists

[12 Things You Should Know about Bicycles, Safety, and Crashes](#) – Concise 2-page summary for police by the League of Illinois Bicyclists

[Safe Roads for Bicycling](#) – PowerPoint training presentation for police by League of Illinois Bicyclists (also [pdf version](#))

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## ***Attachment 2: Bicyclist Safety and Law Enforcement Training Program***

The following is an outline of the material appearing Raleigh's Bicyclist Safety and Law Enforcement on-line training program, which consists of a lesson plan, slide show, and on-line multiple-choice test. A condensed version of this training program adapted for the Town of Cary can be seen online at [http://humantransport.org/ncbikeed/?page\\_id=57](http://humantransport.org/ncbikeed/?page_id=57)

- I. Introduction
- II. Body
  - A. Types and Causes of Bicyclist Crashes
  - B. Laws Applicable to Bicyclists and Other Drivers
    - 1. Legal status of bicyclists as drivers of vehicles
    - 2. Basic rules of the road
      - a) Yield to traffic already in the road ahead
      - b) Drive on the right half of the roadway
      - c) Yield before entering a more important roadway
      - d) Yield before moving laterally
      - e) Destination positioning at intersections
      - f) Speed positioning between intersections; passing
    - 3. Lighting requirements for bicyclists at night
    - 4. Signals
    - 5. Special Cases
      - a) Impeding traffic law not applicable to bicycles
      - b) Sharing a travel lane
      - c) Shared use markings (sharrows)
      - d) Signed bike routes
      - e) Paved shoulders
      - f) Striped bike lanes
      - g) Sidewalk operation
      - h) DWI
      - i) Parking (City of Raleigh)
      - j) Helmet requirements for children under 16
  - C. Recommended Practices for Enforcement
    - 1. Prioritizing activities
      - a) Most dangerous actions by cyclists
      - b) Important violations by motorists
    - 2. Enforcement options
    - 3. Stopping cyclists
      - a) No license plate
      - b) No driver's license
      - c) Writing the ticket
      - d) Attitudes of bicyclists and motorists
      - e) Educational resources
    - 4. Common complaints from the public
      - a) Common complaints from motorists about cyclists
      - b) Common complaints from cyclists about motorists
    - 5. Group bike rides
      - a) Legal status
      - b) Group dynamics
      - c) Engagement and Education
      - d) Enforcement
- III. Conclusion (10 minutes)