

# THE REFLECTOR

PROMOTING HEALTH FOR PEOPLE AND THE PLANET

A Newsletter from the OHSU Bike Commuters Group

October 2005



The following general tips are from a fantastic webpage article called **How to Not Get Hit by Cars**. I urge you to read the entire webpage because the information is practical but are too detailed to summarize here. Visit the site by clicking on the image above or type: <http://bicyclesafe.com/>

## Avoid busy streets.

One of the biggest mistakes that people make when they start biking is to take the exact same routes they used when they were driving. It's usually better to take the streets with fewer and slower cars. Sure, cyclists have a right to the road, but that's a small consolation when you're dead. Consider how far you can take this strategy: If you learn your routes well, you'll find that in many cities you can travel through neighborhoods to get to most places, only **crossing** the busiest streets rather than **traveling** on them.

**Light up.** Too obvious? Well, if it's so obvious, then why do most night-time cyclists ride without lights? Bike shops have rear red blinkies for \$15 or less and headlights are just a bit more. In Oregon it's illegal to ride without a headlight and rear red light or red reflector. Look for the new kind with LEDs, they last longer.

**Take the whole lane when appropriate.** It's often safer to take the whole lane, or at least ride a little bit to the left, rather than hug the right curb. Here are some things that make it *impractical* to ride to the extreme right:

*You're in a heavy traffic area with lots of side streets, parking lots, or driveways ahead and to your right.* Cars turning left won't see you because they're looking for traffic in the *middle* of the road, not on the extreme edge of the road. Move left.

*Cars are passing you too closely.* If the lane is too narrow for cars to pass you safely, then move left and take the whole lane. Getting buzzed by cars is dangerous.

*Cars are parked on the right-hand side of the road.* If you ride too close, you're gonna get doored when someone gets out of their car. Move left.

## Evacuation by Bike?

In **The Oregonian**, September 29, 2005, Jessica Roberts of the Bicycle Transportation wondered about the feasibility of escaping Portland by bike in the event of an earthquake or other disaster. After watching the evacuation from the Gulf Coast on the news, she asks: "Just because you could do it, should you? ...Would it be a bad idea to not have the warmth and relative safety of a car? On the other hand, you wouldn't have to worry about filling up on gas, so maybe it would be a smarter option." Patty Rueter, mitigation and planning coordinator in the city's Office of Emergency Management, believes bicyclists might have an advantage over cars. She is assisting the development of the city's evacuation plan and supports the idea. "If everyone drove, it's [evacuation] going to take us longer." For the full story: [http://www.oregonlive.com/metro/oregonian/index.ssf?/base/portland\\_news/112781886519950.xml&coll=7](http://www.oregonlive.com/metro/oregonian/index.ssf?/base/portland_news/112781886519950.xml&coll=7)

## Volunteer Needed

The BCG is looking for a volunteer to coordinate a discussion group during the fall. The courses are usually 8 weeks long and meet once a week. For topics and more information visit the website of the Northwest Earth Institute at <http://www.nwei.org/pages/discussion2.html> or contact [bike@ohsu.edu](mailto:bike@ohsu.edu) for more info.

## Important Safety Numbers

**911** to report a drunk or reckless driver  
**503-823-1700** is the 24-hour maintenance emergency line to report street sweeping requests or other maintenance needs  
**503-823-BUMP** is for pavement repair including potholes  
**503-823-SAFE** is the city line for neighborhood traffic safety  
**503-823-5195** is for parking enforcement.





## BTA's Plan to Respond to Cyclist Deaths

### (1) Identification of, and advocacy for, site-specific engineering safety improvements.

The BTA's crash team will review crash sites in the Portland Metro area and make recommendations to transportation departments on how to improve bike safety with engineering changes.

### (2) Advocacy for appropriate enforcement actions.

The BTA's crash team will work with police departments and district attorneys' offices and call for proper citations and charges in response to crashes.

### (3) Expanded driver and cyclist education efforts.

The BTA is working to expand its existing share the road education effort (see [www.easytoshare.com](http://www.easytoshare.com)). It is also working to improve the Department of Motor Vehicles' education efforts, including expanded information in the Oregon Drivers' Manual.

### (4) Improved identification of dangerous areas.

The BTA is asking the City of Portland to create a web-based crash reporting system to identify dangerous areas, drawing on the experience of the ghostcycle.org database.

### (5) Advocacy for a fair share of safety funding for bike and pedestrian projects.

The BTA is calling for bike and pedestrian facilities in Oregon to receive Federal highway safety improvement money in proportion to the number of bikes and pedestrians that are killed. In the most recent data reviewed (2001-02), 14% of the fatalities in Oregon were pedestrians and bicyclists, yet none of the Federal money earmarked for highway safety projects was spent on bike-pedestrian focused improvements. The BTA will advocate for a law requiring a fair share in the 2007 Legislature, and will lobby for individual projects until then.

To see the BTA's press release:

<http://www.bta4bikes.org/act/5partplan.html>

**Most bicycling crashes (65%-85%) do not involve collisions with motor vehicles; they usually involve falls or collisions with stationary objects, other cyclists and pedestrians.**

[-Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan](#)

## Bicycle Legal Resources

Have you ever wondered what to do if you're in an accident or if your bike is stolen? When and where is it legal to ride on the sidewalk? Is it legal to ride without lights at night? All of these questions and more are answered (mostly) by Ray Thomas of Swanson Thomas & Coon, Attorneys at Law.

<http://www.stc-law.com/bikearticles.html>

Ray Thomas also holds monthly legal clinics at the Bicycle Transportation Alliance, 717 SW 12<sup>th</sup>, Portland. Check the calendar for dates and times.

<http://www.stc-law.com/bikeclinics.html>

Their resources list is worth checking out, while you're at it: <http://www.stc-law.com/bikelinks.html>



## SHARROWS

In a move to create a platinum level bike city, the Portland Office of Transportation is trying out a new share-the-road concept called "sharrows." Sharrows are going to appearing on a few streets in Portland. A sharrow is a pavement marking that indicates that cars and bicyclists will be sharing the road. Studies on the effectiveness of sharrows have shown that they tend to keep bicyclists from riding too close to parked cars, which could reduce the number of bike injuries caused by drivers opening doors as a bicyclist is passing. They cause drivers to give a bicyclist more space while passing, reduce the bicyclists riding the wrong way down a street, and decrease the frequency of aggressive interactions between bicyclists and drivers.

This is a summary of an article written by Roland Chlapowski, which can be found here:

[http://www.commissionersam.com/sam\\_adams/2005/08/sharrows\\_moving\\_1.html](http://www.commissionersam.com/sam_adams/2005/08/sharrows_moving_1.html)



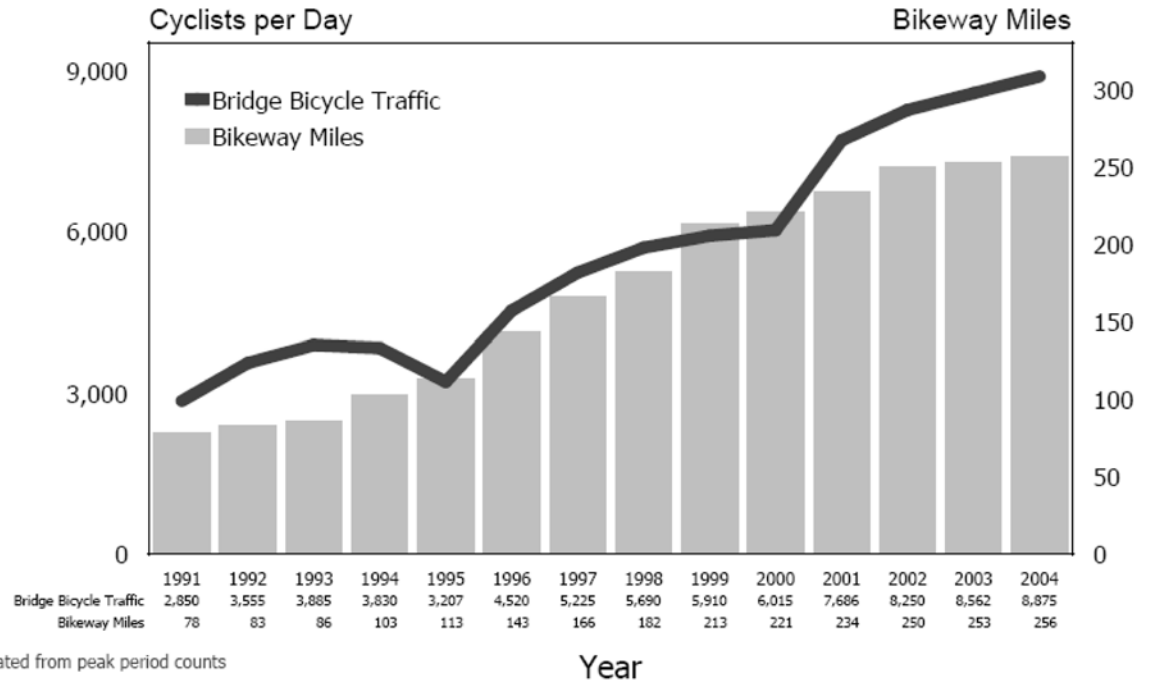
**BIKE TO WORK!**



The Bike Commuters Group (BCG) promotes bicycling as a healthy mode of transportation that benefits individuals and the environment. For more information about the BCG or to find ways to get involved, contact us at [bike@ohsu.edu](mailto:bike@ohsu.edu) or visit our website at [www.ohsu.edu/bike/](http://www.ohsu.edu/bike/).

These two charts indicate that as the number of bicyclists increase, the number of bike crashes decreases.

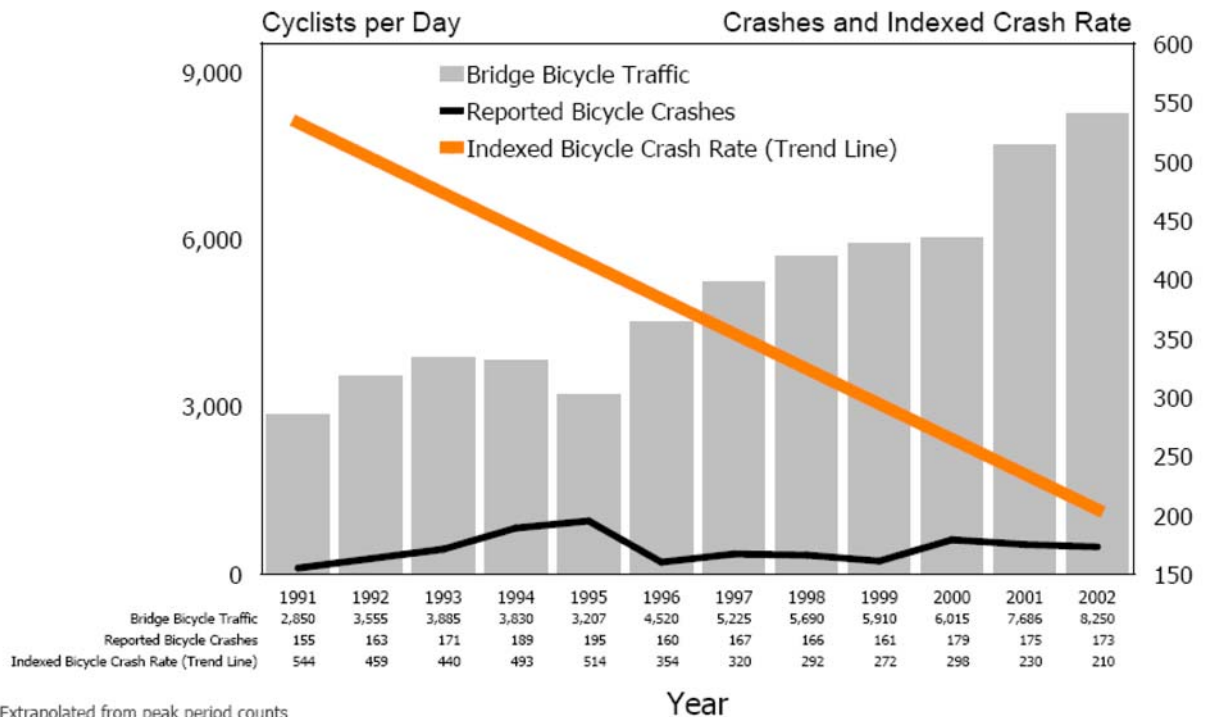
## Combined Bicycle Traffic over Four Main Portland Bicycle Bridges Juxtaposed with Bikeway Miles



Extrapolated from peak period counts

Portland's Bikeway Network increased 215% between 1991 and 2004. During that same period, the number of bicycle riders daily crossing the four main bicycle bridges in Portland increased 210%. This increase was especially noticeable on the Broadway, Hawthorne, and Steel Bridges, where combined daily ridership went from 2,115 in 1991 to 7,910 in 2004. During this period, the bikeway network feeding these bridges was greatly improved, as were facilities on the bridges themselves.

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Extrapolated from peak period counts

"Crash Rate" represents an indexing of annual reported crashes to daily bicycle trips across the four main bicycle bridges.