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BIKING FORUMS

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Date: March 08, 2000 01:56 PM
Author: Ethan Gelber (ethang@gorp.com)
Subject: should I pay my fine?

I have been biking in New York City since I was a teenager. Mayors have come and gone. Different city administrations have shown more or less sensitivity to the needs of the non-vehicular population. Bike paths have been built and destroyed. But one thing has more or less remained the same: cycling in the city is tough and requires a mixed sense of deference to some laws and respect for the spirit of others.

Cycle commuters know that spinning the length or breadth of any stretch of urban road is perilous. Neither drivers nor pedestrians are on the lookout for cyclists and so cyclists must be on the lookout for all of them instead. This is harder than it sounds. Cycling in the middle of traffic isn't ideal and bikers end up in the side lanes of the avenues where parking, loading and turning cars and trucks, jaywalking pedestrians, and oblivious others linger. Unfortunately, being stuck in the side lanes also means slow progress. And so when progress - any kind of progress - is possible, most bikers go for it. Just as pedestrians do. That is, even when there is a red light - and perhaps especially when there is a red light (since the death-smiting power of the cars is temporarily hindered) - bikers tend to keep moving forward.

Now, I have always done this with care. That is, I slow down or stop, wait until crossing foot and motorized traffic passes, and then continue. I have been doing this for more than 15 years. And I have never hesitated to do this even while the police are watching. There is a sense of respect for the spirit of the law in this town that I have learned.

After 15 years, last week I received a ticket for \$100 for running a red light. I will contest it. But who is right? What is right? Is there a right? Why are policemen wasting time ticketing a cyclist (part of the solution to the gridlock problem in New York) and turning a blind eye to the countless acts of carelessness that almost level me every day?

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=32864)

Date: March 10, 2000 09:23 PM
Author: Mike (1pebbles1@netscape.net)
Subject: No Choice!

I don't think you'll have a choice whether or not to pay the fine. As to why they ticketed you now; It's just like every other city and state across the nation, the police can't seem to stop the real criminals for what ever reason so they are forced to create criminals out of the rest of us to justify their respective departments!

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=33091)

Date: March 20, 2000 08:02 AM
Author: Jack (Mage21@mindspring.com)

Criminals? You've got to be kidding. A bicycle is a vehicle, and must follow the same rules as other vehicles. When you run a red light, you take the risk of citation and you should know that.

The officer was doing his job. He's supposed to ticket those who willfully break the rules, and personally I'm glad he did. Time and again I've been listening

to coworkers talking about "those damn cyclists" and when I ask what the problem is, they invariably tell me that it's because they are always running lights or breaking other rules. I try to defend cyclists by pointing out the good things about cycling, and that most cyclist I know (myself included) don't do that, but attitudes like yours certainly aren't helping my case any.

Oh, and use so other arguement than "they're making criminals of us". It's a fine, not an arrest. Get some perspective, OK? They aren't singling you out, they're enforcing the law.

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=33704)

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Date: March 14, 2000 01:54 AM

Author: rich from philly (frogandtoad27@hotmail.com)

Subject: fight it!

I bike to work in Philadelphia. I know it isn't half the city congestion as NYC, but it is of course perilous. I have gotten many a ticket for disobeying traffic signals and have won every one of them. Judges, at least here, seem sympathetic to the bicyclist. Fight it at all costs- tell them an angry cabbie was yelling at you. 9 times out of 10 the ticketing cop won't be there, so you automatically win. It's a hassle, but don't let them win.

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Date: March 14, 2000 10:53 PM

Author: Sal D (sallyduffy@earthlink.net)

Subject: bike ticket

I ride my bike to work everyday too. Although I ride up in the northern part of the city and into the Bronx, where there is less congestion
Fight it!

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=33468)

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Date: November 17, 2000 11:52 PM

Author: fuzzybunnies

If they have no real way of making you pay it such as being able to suspend your license than I can only ask, why bother? I too ride in the city and it just isn't worth stopping if the way is clear.

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=44597)

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Date: March 18, 2000 11:50 AM

Author: John (jstamm@megsinet.net)

Subject: Ticket

You can rationalize it all you want, but what it comes down to is this: if you want to be treated with respect as a serious vehicle (in a car or on a bike) you have to obey the rules. You can't have it both ways.

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Date: March 18, 2000 03:04 PM

Author: Cornell (ynoopycjt@aol.com)

Subject: pay the fine

A bicycle is a vehicle just like a car is. STOP THROWING A TANTRUM -- like a spoiled, immature brat -- and PAY THE FINE.

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=33630)

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Date: March 18, 2000 05:49 PM

Author: Brooklyn Cyclist

Subject: Red Light Bike Fine

Considering your long rationalization of your actions, I take it that this is not your first time running a red light, so I would count all those times as being ahead and pay the fine.

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Date: March 20, 2000 03:06 PM
Author: Richelle (richellesevin@netscape.net)
Subject: ticket

I think it sucks that the police ignore the real problems and feel it necessary to ticket bikers, BUT I have had more that 1 friend die on a bike and I think that bikers need to adhere to the same laws as cars. Stop at stoplights. Believe it or not it does save lives.

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=33738)

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Date: March 22, 2000 06:16 PM
Author: pk (pskotr@parrett.net)
Subject: pay the fine

You broke the law.....so pay the fine. You are setting a bad example and making the rest of us look bad.

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=33915)

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Date: July 15, 2000 06:41 AM
Author: Bob (Imprbob@AOL.com)
Subject: biking and rules.

Should bycyclists go by the rules. Absolutely.. Any vehicle, as a matter of fact, anything that is driven or ridden on the road is subject to all rules. I ride, and I try to obey all the laws. Drivers do get angry when they are in a jam and you ride by them. I do have a couple of horror stories. But, I really get upset when bycyclists ride on teh wrong side of the road, at you, run through stop signs and red light. Drivers get angry at the next rider they see. But, riding gives me such a relaxing high that I will do it as long as I can. I would like to hear some stories about bicycling...

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=39805)

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Date: September 19, 2000 10:52 PM
Author: Jack Bringloe (taphed@delete.this.nospampart.okix.netcom.com)
Subject: Haven't had much urban riding experience, have we?

Do any of you "law and order" types ever ride much in the urban environment? Didn't think so. Try going for a little rush hour spin downtown in a large city near you sometime. Go with the flow of traffic, stop at every light and stop sign, and stay off the sidewalks. Kind of tough getting the stains out of your bike shorts afterwards, isn't it? Following traffic statutes written for MOTOR VEHICLES to the letter of the law in a busy city can TURN YOU INTO A ROAD PIZZA IN A HEARTBEAT. This is certainly true even in Seattle, which is a very bike friendly town. If you're somewhere like Denver, which is full of drunken rednecks and incompetent bus drivers doing fifteen over constantly, forget about it. It's a jungle out there, and if you're on the bottom of the food chain, you gotta be fast or you're gonna be lunch!

If people in cars actually paid attention to two wheeled vehicles (motorcyclists suffer from this too, but at least they can keep up with traffic and/or punch it out of a bad situation), it might be different. Unfortunately you are pretty much invisible on a bicycle. Many situations arise where it's just flat out safer to blow that red light or four way stop or do a little "sidewalk surfing" to avoid getting flossed off the road. People often assume that messengers ride the way they do because they have an excess of attitude (or just want to show off). I'm not saying this is never the case, but most of the time those folks are just doing their jobs and riding to survive, period. It is a little difficult to imagine a more polite and law abiding city than Seattle--except for maybe Singapore. Pedestrians here generally don't jaywalk even in the middle of the night; They stand there and wait for the light. It is telling that experienced inner-city cyclists ride pretty much the same here as they do in any other big city.

So I guess you'll just have to be honest with yourself. If you ran the light just because you were in a hurry or it was convenient to do so, by all means pay the ticket. On the other hand, if you did it to avoid being a sitting duck at some heinous intersection of automotive death, then fight it! When all the streets have bike lanes and all the traffic laws have been revised with even one iota of thought given to the prospect of bicycles being on the same roads as cars, maybe I'll change my tune. Until then, not getting squished will definitely be more important to me than slavishly following laws written when bicycles were considered nothing more than toys for kids.

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Date: September 24, 2000 11:17 PM
Author: Denis Rochon (derovo@bikerider.com)
Subject: Yes pay it!

Sorry to sound so blunt but, YOU BROKE THE LAW. You say you let the cars and the pedestrian go by and then you went through a red light "GUILTY". I'm talking to you as both a bike rider and a car driver. Let's have the same scenario but with a different mode of transportation. I'm in a car, driving down this road, the light turns red, I stop, I let the traffic and the pedestrians go by and I then proceed through the red light. Am I guilty or not guilty of going through a red light? You tell me!! See, if you get away from paying that ticket, why should I, as a car driver pay my ticket for the same infraction? IT'S THE SAME THING!!! You would probably be the first one to bitch if you saw me doing the same thing in my car. Plus, yes you are giving the rest of the biking community (that respect the laws) a bad name, no wonder we (bike riders) have problems getting respect from others (car drivers, pedestrians, hikers, land managers and the legal system) A bike rider that cares!!!

(http://gorpforums.gorp.com/forums/Index.cfm?CFApp=52&Message_ID=43110)



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