Hall, Renee

From: jodeedwards@gmail.com
Sent: Sunday, June 9, 2024 6:23 AM
To: City Council and Mayor
Subject: Is bicycle safety in Ames misguided?
Attachments: Bike-lanes-don't-make-bicycling-safe.pdf

[External Email]

To the Mayor and City Council:

I am requesting the Council and city staff please reconsider current guidelines used for bicycle safety in Ames. I believe they may be making bicycling in Ames more dangerous.

In a letter from City staff to City Council dated May 3, it was suggested that "the traffic volume along Hyland Avenue would exceed the guidance threshold for utilizing bike lanes and trigger either a separated path or protected bike facility". The bike lane on the south end of Ash Avenue is used as an example for future development on Hyland Avenue.

As a resident of Ames, and former resident of Madison, WI (which has many on-street bike lanes on much busier streets including bike lines between lanes of traffic), I have long had serious doubts that off-street bike lanes make biking safer. Bikes on off-street lanes are often hidden from view of motorists resulting in accidents, especially from turning traffic. Twice I have had bicyclists in Ames ride into the side of my car when the bicyclists were riding off street (once on the path on Ontario, once on a sidewalk downtown Ames). In both incidents, visibility was an issue and would not have been an issue if the bicyclists had been on-street. I have never had even a close call with on-street biking as a bicyclist or motorist.

I have attached a recent supporting article from Forbes magazine. It took a very quick google search to discover that there is a wealth of data supporting my viewpoint. The article includes numerous citations and traffic studies demonstrating that contrary to common belief, and even U.S. Department of Transportation guidelines, off-street bike paths are more dangerous than bike lanes on the street. The primary issue being motorists don't see bikes on protected bike lines creating a hazard for motorists turning across the bike lane.

While there may be data contrary to what I have found, I would urge those making future decisions about bike lanes in Ames to please justify your decision making. The attached article presents some stunning statistics about the dangers of off-street bike paths. Please review available data and studies to support future decision making. We don't need to spend money to create fatal accidents.

Thanks for your time.
Jode Edwards
1204 Arizona Ave.
Ames, IA 50014

Bike Lanes Don't Make Cycling Safe

Diana Furchtgott-Roth Former Contributor
I write on transportation and tech topics shaping tomorrow's news.

Sep 8, 2022, 01:38pm EDT

Everyone favors safe cycling, but bike lanes are not safe. This was demonstrated once again with the tragic death of U.S. State Department foreign service officer Sarah Langenkamp on August 25.

Langenkamp, who had recently returned from serving in Ukraine, was biking during daylight, in a bike lane on River Road in Bethesda, Maryland, returning from a meeting at her child's school, when a Volvo flat-bed truck turned right from the road into a parking lot and hit her. Her injuries were fatal.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 938 cyclists were killed on the roads in 2020, the latest available data. That's up by 9 percent from 2019 and the highest number since 1987. Injuries were estimated at 10,171, down 21 percent from the previous year.

It's time to rethink the concept of bike lanes as a safe space for cyclists. Why? Because it's impossible to structure bike lanes without vehicles turning into these lanes to get to underground garages, above-ground parking lots, and to make right or left turns at intersections.

In the case of Langenkamp, the truck driver was turning to go to a commercial strip area and did not see her. The bike lane at that location, where I have ridden many times, is narrow and without protection from car lanes. However, even when bike lanes are protected from car lanes with a line of parked cars or a physical barrier, it is still necessary to have entryways so that cars can get to businesses or make turns.

The problem was originally described by industrial engineer John Forester in his 800-page book *Effective Cycling,* which boasted seven editions (MIT Press, 2012).

Forester estimated that accidents on bike lanes are 2.6 times higher than on roadways, because bike paths are more dangerous. He forecast more car-bike collisions, because it is difficult to make intersections between cycle lanes and roads as safe as normal roads. Almost 90 percent of urban accidents were caused by crossing or turning—either by the cyclist failing to obey the rules of the road or the motorist turning into the cyclist, as happened in the case of Langenkamp.

Writing about California plans for bike lanes, Forester stated, "Nobody with traffic-engineering training could believe that [bikeway] designs that so contradicted normal traffic-engineering knowledge would produce safe traffic movements.... If these designs had been proposed for some class of motorized traffic—say, trucks or motorcycles—the designers would have been considered crazy."

Jan Heine, editor-in-chief of *Bicycle Quarterly*, wrote, "Any barrier that separates the cyclist visually from other traffic effectively hides the cyclist. This is counterproductive to safety. Moving cyclists out of the roadway altogether, on separate bike paths, is even more dangerous, because drivers don't look for (or cannot see) cyclists off to the side." He continued, "On streets with frequent intersections, separate paths only make cycling less safe. I wish those who advocate for them would look at the data and stop asking for facilities that will cause more accidents."

Although the U.S. Department of Transportation recommends bike lanes, other studies have reached similar conclusions to Forester and Heine, such as a 2019 analysis of bike lanes and crashes in Colorado (which includes a literature review). The author concluded that separated bike lanes raise the number of crashes by 117 percent compared with shared roadway. Separated bike tracks, which are separated from cars by a median strip, parking lane, or row of plantings, increased crashes 400 percent more than a bike lane.

In many urban settings the safest place for a bike is in the middle of a car lane, with bike lights and a helmet lamp for the rider, cycling behind vehicles rather than beside them. Naturally, cyclists have no place on urban or interstate highways. Cyclists should operate with the same rules as motor vehicles, stopping at STOP signs and traffic lights, and signaling when they turn.

All states need to educate drivers, as part of driving tests, to treat cyclists respectfully, just as they treat other vehicles respectfully. For example, as part of the driving and licensing curriculum, states could require a technique used in the Netherlands, called the Dutch

Reach. Drivers are taught to open car doors with their right hand, to force them to check for approaching cyclists.

Despite their dangers, bike lanes are proliferating. One example: the Washington, D.C., Department of Transportation is planning multiple more bike lanes, including one on each side of Connecticut Avenue. This particular bike lane would reroute 7,020 vehicles each day onto local streets, according to the DC Department of Transportation.

District residents have pointed out that the plan does not account for how people would cross the bike lanes to board buses; where rideshare vehicles, taxis, and delivery drivers would pick up and drop off people and goods; how people who use wheelchairs and walkers would cross the bike lanes; and where trucks would unload. All these functions pose dangers to cyclists because potential obstacles require them to stop suddenly or to swerve out of the bike lane and into traffic.

Cities are spending millions of dollars on bike lanes. That money could be better used for other purposes, such as app-based intelligent transportation systems that would connect drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists, and alert them to potential crashes.

Bike lanes give cyclists and drivers a false sense of security, leading to increased accidents. Cyclists should be aware that the term Protected Bike Lane is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. It's time to change.
Follow me on Twitter or LinkedIn. Check out some of my other work here.

Diana Furchtgott-Roth

I'm Director of Energy, Climate, and Environment at the Heritage Foundation, and I teach Transportation Economics at George Washington... **Read More**

Reply ▪ 14 ▪ Share

D **dan**

16 September, 2022

Apologies to the author of the study, but it's hot trash.

The author admits in the "limitations" section that:
– they had no ability to compare crash rates to overall traffic volume, either for bikes or for cars
– there's a strong possibility that the city purposely built bike lanes in places where c...**See more**

Reply ▪ 4 ▪ Share

J **James**

10 September, 2022

Nothing is perfect but without protected lanes no one will cycle. The protection gives the cyclist the power to be safe without it they rely on drivers.

Reply ▪ 9 ▪ Share

1 reply

DP **Dutch planner**

17 September, 2022

The author has apparently never been to the Netherlands or Copenhagen and has an extremely dangerous American-centric understanding of cycling. That is a shame.
In the Netherlands, separated bike lanes along with raised roads at intersections solve this exact problem she's referring to. A raised pa...**See more**

Reply ▪ 3 ▪ Share

Show More Comments