


Inquiry into e-mobility safety and use in Queensland

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eRidables submission.

I haven't finished writing all I could and wanted to say but hopefully there's a few points in here that the government will realise and accept.

1The public debate and complaints about eRidables is mostly biased, ignorant, discriminatory, greedy and self-harming.

2Be glad that an idiot is only on a eRidable instead of driving a car that can kill so easily.

3eRidables should be encouraged since they are cleaner, quieter, cheaper, far more resource & energy efficient, require far less road & parking space, and are far less harmful than cars.

4Higher powered eRidables are not legal for street use, their riders often have a similar attitude to many car drivers and should NOT be grouped with and used to punish legal lower powered eRidables or bicycles.

5If "Safety is our first priority" is really true, then far more police resources need to be applied to enforce existing road rules and change the dangerous entitled behaviour of car and truck drivers who are the real cause of so much death and harm in Australia.

6Politicians have a poor reputation in Australia because they so often ignore logic and facts to make popular decisions just to win votes and favour with companies for their own gain.

7People talk about "using common sense" but what society needs is "good sense" that is not common because most common people simply don't know the real facts but believe urban myths and childhood beliefs.

8Many people complain about eRidables not following road rules but most, and even many police, do not know the actual written road rules but "believe" what they incorrectly learnt as kids by parents and incorrect "Road Safety" lessons.

9"Rego" does NOT pay for most roads and there are far more unregistered cars on the roads than there are eRidables. 85% of roads are council roads paid for by rates & general taxes that EVERYONE pays, not just motorists who are actually being heavily subsidised.

10Urban road design and high urban speed limits need to stop being designed primarily to suit cars but instead be designed to suit people. Urban street speed limits should be 30kmh.

11Enjoy the traffic congestion that YOU cause with your car-centric beliefs, budgets and poor education.

Be glad the idiots are on eRidables rather than in cars.

Some people love to whinge about idiots on bicycles or eRidables. It's easy human psychology to blame others who "are not the same as me" and ignore your own failings. But really people should be glad that those "idiots" are only on a bicycle or eRidable because those idiots are only likely to harm themselves if they crash. If those same idiots were in cars, then they are likely to harm other innocent people including other car occupants. If they harm themselves, then so be it – THEY made those decisions, have to live or die with the consequences and governments should NOT think they have to protect every idiot from themselves. Governments should only be protecting the public from idiots but it needs to be balanced against other costs / benefits rather than narrowly focusing on just one aspect of an issue.

Also, it's long been recognised by bicycle and motor bike riders that riding any sort of bike teaches the rider to pay more attention to road conditions and other road users, than driving a car does.

Because on a bike, the rider is far more vulnerable and less likely to be noticed by car drivers who are protected in their tin can. So while young eRidable riders may be more likely to crash and hurt themselves, in the long run they probably become safer drivers because they had to learn to pay more careful attention to everything on the roads.

Road crash data shows that for every driver under the age of 25 years that dies, they kill 2.3 other people, mostly other young people in the car with them. But if they were on an eRidable, then they won't take as many others with them. Currently in Queensland, a person has to hold a car licence

before getting a motorbike licence. It should be the other way around since riding a small low powered bike will teach more awareness and the consequences of crashes than learning in a car. While it might initially cause an increase in individual young deaths, in the long term it would probably result in fewer car crashes and deaths. And drivers who grew up in that system would probably be more understanding of youngsters on eRidables making mistakes because they would have ridden eRidables or similar themselves.

Pedestrians can harm eRidable riders too.

As a pedestrian it is easy to be scared by the silent bicycle or eRidable suddenly passing closely. But pedestrians need to realise that eRidables will crash if their handle bars are even just clipped by a pedestrian and the rider will fall from a greater higher and higher speed than the pedestrian if they fall over. So riders of eRidables don't want to hit anyone else. And often it's the pedestrian who causes a crash by suddenly changing direction or something else unpredictable.

Cars, not eRidables, are the main cause of death, injury and a lower quality of life.

In Australia car and truck drivers are responsible for almost all the crashes, deaths and injury on our roads yet a very low level of poor driver behaviour is accepted by police and the courts. Around 1200 Aussies are killed and 40,000 seriously injured every year. Around 150 of those are pedestrians and 50 are bicycles riders who were usually NOT at fault for the collision. Cars have killed more Australians since 1925 than all the wars put together have but the public have been taught by the car industry since the 1920s to ignore that human cost as the price for everyone's lazy car comfort and to maximise the profits of the car, oil and media companies.

Combustion engine vehicle exhaust pollution is also now recognised as causing at least 11,100 Aussie's premature deaths per year through air pollution related illness. Plus the report estimated over 60,000 cases of asthma made worse, more strokes, brain disease etc. Fossil fuels are also known carcinogens. Yet Motordom has discouraged Australian governments from taking real action to reduce that harm because it would cost them money to reduce the harm Motordom cause in the first place. Even when standards have been changed to lower exhaust pollution, the cost has been met by tax payers rather than the companies that caused the problem in the first place. e.g. in the early 2000's Caltex was paid by the government to upgrade the Brisbane refinery to produce cleaner fuels despite it being Caltex that caused and profited from the harm in the first place. Fossil fuels should be taxed far more like alcohol and tobacco to pay for the hidden costs of the harm they cause and to reduce demand for fossil fuels.

At least eRidables are quiet unlike internal combustion engine (ICE) vehicles.

Excessive noise pollution caused by ICE vehicles is now recognised as causing a human stress response with chemicals released within the body. That stress is now recognised as causing some types of harm and premature deaths, so many European places now have noise pollution limits. Try sleeping in a unit above the Gold Coast Highway or at Main Beach and you'll quickly realise just how noisy it is with so many illegally loud vehicles and hoons racing at night. Yet our police resources are inadequate and failing to enforce the rules or stop the selfish hoon behaviour. While it seems many police & even political leaders enjoy such doing such activities themselves in the culture that worships fast cars and loud Harleys.

Teach and enforce real rules not subservience to cars and discrimination.

Many of today's "cars own the roads" driver attitudes appears to stem from Motordom's and schools so-called "Road Safety" lessons that were originally started by motoring organisations in the 1820s to suit motoring freedoms and deflect blame from drivers onto pedestrians rather than actual road safety. For the last 100 years school children are incorrectly taught "STOP. Look 3x and ALWAYS give way to cars." That does NOT match the road rules. That was prudent for short-term individual child safety but those kids later grew up to become drivers and despite the road rules requiring cars to give way to pedestrians & other path users while turning at intersections, left slip lanes and

driveways, most drivers fail to do so and pedestrians don't even realise they have legal priority so they just act subservient to cars. So instead of slowing for pedestrians and being prepared to stop their cars, most drivers just ignore pedestrians and path users while expecting them to stop for the cars. But we know from child psychology that children do not have the situational awareness of adults and they fail to realise a car might be about to turn over the top of them. It would appear that a great many people are run over by cars in situations where they had legal priority but drivers and police simply expected them to stop for the car because of incorrect road safety lessons in childhood. Similarly, many police reports I've seen incorrectly blamed children crossing from paths for being hit, rather than actually apply the road rules correctly and blame the offending driver. Police and the public need far more education on what the rules are rather than what they learnt as kids.

While reading anti-cyclist comments to media articles, it became apparent to me that many people “believe” bicycles and eRidables have to “Keep to the far left and out of the way of cars.” But not is NOT what the rules actually state. Motorists often harass and assault riders who do ride in the middle of the general traffic lane as legally allowed in many situations, instead of dodge around parked cars and suddenly opened cars doors (also illegal driver behaviour but blamed on “cyclists” who are the innocent victims)

To counter these safety problems and driver complaints about eRidables on the streets due to misguided driver beliefs, the government should introduce car licence renewal road rules testing and run a large education campaign to teach the correct road rules. The testing of both drivers and police needs to ensure real knowledge and understanding of the road rules to overcome the last century of misinformation and childhood beliefs driven by Motordom and misguided teachers. Education around road safety needs to stop teaching school kids to “get out of the way of cars” because it is teaching future drivers to believe cars always have priority despite what the road rules and decent human behaviour are.

Cars cause about 85% of vehicle/bike crashes.

In the case of bicycles, Monash University reports have shown that it's car drivers who are at fault in 85% of crashes and video studies at intersections have shown that many potential crashes were avoided because alert bicycle riders were able to take action to avoid the cars whose driver caused the situation.

“Rego” doesn't pay for roads & there are more unregistered cars than eRidables

“Rego” is a State fee but only a small part of it is actually for road construction and maintenance. Most of the rego cost is CTP and administration that is only needed because cars and trucks cause so much harm and need to be kept under tighter controls for public safety. TMR should provide exact details currently to the review panel, but the Queensland government budget for State Main Roads which are less than 15% of all roads, has generally been roughly double the money actually raised by rego for roads. The rest of the funds comes from general revenue that EVERYONE pays, not just motorists.

About 85% of Australian roads are council owned roads paid for mostly through local council rates and grants from general revenue. Councils do NOT receive “rego” or “fuel excise” revenue. Everyone, even pedestrians & eRidable riders, pay council rates either directly or indirectly through rent / local business purchases.

So despite the common belief even amongst politicians, road authorities, police and the ignorant public that “my car rego paid for the road”, it's not actually the case, Many studies around Australia and the world have all shown that car usage is heavily subsidised by tax payers. Especially when the side effects of poor health, wasted time, disability pensions for crash victims, police & SES costs at crashes, hospital treatment etc. are all taken into account. Not only that a huge financial drain for individuals and governments, but car usage has another financial drain on the Australian economy because cars and most fuel are imported. All of that adds to a large amount of lost opportunity for individuals, non-car businesses & governments. The only people

who really profit from car usage are car, mechanic & oil companies and the media.

Media bias and discrimination for profits.

<https://www.collectorsweekly.com/articles/murder-machines/>

Since the 1920s car companies have worked with the media and government to change public perceptions and rules to suit car usage

<https://lens.monash.edu/@technology/2019/03/27/1374089/dangerous-dehumanisation-of-cyclists>

www.bandt.com.au/revealed-australias-biggest-ad-spender-as-media-advertising-spend-soars

In 2019, car advertising was one of the largest categories of car advertising totally \$742M. That's a lot of reason for the media to promote a car-centric society and denigrate all other transport modes including eRidables, walking, cycling and public transport usage that could reduce car usage and hence advertising revenue.

Final suggestions

The Qld government should lower urban street speed limits, encourage denser urban form, build far more equitable road and path networks, educate people, including police, that roads are for all modes not just cars and enforce existing road rules. If governments continue to fail to do so and just continues pandering to ignorant public popularity as it has for the last 100 unsafe years, then all I can say is “Enjoy the CARgestion and poor health, car drivers – you cause the problems, not bicycle and eRidable riders.”



Murder Machines: Why Cars Will Kill 30,000 Americans This Year

(<https://www.collectorsweekly.com/articles/murder-machines/>)

By Hunter Oatman-Stanford (</articles/hunter-oatman-stanford/>) March 10th, 2014

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There's an open secret in America: If you want to kill someone, do it with a car. As long as you're sober, chances are you'll never be charged with any crime, much less manslaughter. Over the past hundred years, as automobiles have been woven into the fabric of our daily lives, our legal system has undermined public safety, and we've been collectively trained to think of these deaths as unavoidable "accidents" or acts of God. Today,

despite the efforts of major public-health agencies and grassroots safety campaigns, few are aware that car crashes are the number one cause of death for Americans under 35. But it wasn't always this way.

“At some point, we decided that somebody on a bike or on foot is not traffic, but an obstruction to traffic.”

“If you look at newspapers from American cities in the 1910s and ’20s, you’ll find a lot of anger at cars and drivers, really an incredible amount,” says Peter Norton, the author of *Fighting Traffic: The Dawn of the Motor Age in the American City* (<http://www.amazon.com/Fighting-Traffic-American-Inside-Technology/dp/0262516128/?tag=colleweekl-20>). “My impression is that you’d find more caricatures of the Grim Reaper driving a car over innocent children than you would images of Uncle Sam.”

Though various automobiles powered by steam, gas, and electricity were produced in the late 19th century, only a handful of these cars actually made it onto the roads due to high costs and unreliable technologies. That changed in 1908, when Ford's famous Model T ([/classic-cars/ford-model-t](#)) standardized manufacturing methods and allowed for true mass production, making the car affordable to those without extreme wealth. By 1915, the number of registered motor vehicles was in the millions.

NATION ROUSED AGAINST MOTOR KILLINGS

THE need for vigorous action to reduce traffic deaths on city streets and highways has prompted Secretary Hoover to call a conference of representatives of the various agencies interested in checking the steady increase in vehicular fatalities. The conference will be held in Washington on Dec. 19. It will treat the subject from seven angles, including statistics, traffic control, construction and engineering, city planning and zoning, insurance, education and the control of vehicles and public assistance.

MEAN horrors of war appear to be less appalling than the horrors of peace. The American people have been told that the atomic bomb is far more destructive than the machine gun, and that the machine gun is more deadly than the artilleryman. The man in the street seems less safe than the man in the trench.

But the war was not limited to action or died of wounds in the nineteen months of this country's participation in the war. The average American made 2,600 fatalities a month—a month's average was compared with the startling total of 7,000 lives destroyed monthly by accidents in the United States.

The greatest safety lethal factor is the automobile. It left a shambles in its wake in 1934, with 10,000 deaths and 300,000 for 34,000 victims. According to the tragic case releases reported in the first few months of the year, the automobile is responsible for 2,000 per 100,000. At the beginning of October approximately 34,000 motor deaths had already been

A conference called by Secretary Hoover for next month will concentrate its deliberations upon street and highway accidents. A Committee on Statistics was appointed by Mr. Hoover to supply the conference with a clearly defined picture of the public accident situation. This committee is placing particular emphasis upon the annual report of the United States Census Bureau on mortality statistics, which revealed that 12.61 percent died in vehicular mishaps in 1928, an increase of almost 2,000 over

While the number killed in automobile accidents last year was given as 28,622, the motor car was also concerned in other highway fatalities. The Census Bureau charges each accident to the heaviest vehicle involved. A collision between a train and an automobile is classified as a train accident. When street cars collide, the machines, the street cars are named upon the records. There were 2,263 deaths in train grade crossing accidents in 1923, many of the 2,806 who

Secretary Hoover's Conference Will Suggest Many Ways to Check The Alarming Increase of Automobile Fatalities.—Studying Huge Problem



The huge economic loss caused by street and highway accidents is set forth in a preliminary report prepared by the Committee on Statistics appointed by Secretary Hoover. On this subject the

"The economic loss due to these approximately 120,000 accidents in which personal injuries occur can probably never be known. Several estimates have been made. The most conservative is based upon the usual liability of \$5,000 per life and amounts of \$175 for each

*These two items, applied to 22,601 fatalities and \$75,000 non-fatal injuries, respectively, give an approximate total of \$332,500,000. Add to this an average actual property damage of \$90 due to all accidents involving either personal injury or property damage (conservatively estimated at 7,000,000), there results a total estimated loss of nearly \$998,000,000 annually.

"In these estimates no account is

"It is usually only when in court at the post-mortem of an accident or of his own badly post-mortem from such accident that the pedestrian is, so to speak, allowed to enjoy his legal rights! Most of us prefer not to fall victims as the price of such recourse.

"Those three age General O'Brien was quoted as saying that 'most of us are still addicted to habits on the street which were suitable to the life of a generation ago when all vehicles were horse drawn. The modern street calls for an entirely new set of habits and for a kind of alertness and promptness which we did not even dream of twenty years ago.' He recommends that the pedestrian familiarize himself with the rules of the road and traffic regulations as well as the problems of the motor vehicle driver.

the streets and roads. As a result, they would be a privileged class who would steer such matters. In reality, the automobile drivers are a privileged class.

"Under present conditions there is deadly competition between pedestrian and motorist for a use of those strips of territory we call street & sidewalk, deadly to the wayfarer, with the va-

"Frankly, it is a largely a one-sided viewpoint. This war system, and the same individual if alive, is much altered from his other self," added Chwied. As both men rose the highway, and as two bodies seemed occupy the same space at once, when the two met, as they so often do, what is the solution?

"Manifestly, the old or cannot go on. The mangling and crushing cannot continue. Human—in for relief. The troubled mother who must lose little child off to school or out to play, the fathering aged person who transposed attempts a crossing must have some sense of their anxiety. Conversely, the compassionate operator who with tender nerves sees the food dart out late his very path from some unexpected direction is entitled to some regard."

"As it stands, the motorist has won his contest for the use of the streets over the foot passengers, despite the present efforts of police, courts and motor vehicle authorities to regulate him and his kind. The motorist has inspired fear and the sort of respect that brooks force inspires.

"If we have failed adequately to regulate the economy, we should at least endeavor to better its attempts to regulate politicians!" It is well enough to condemn the "Joy Walker," if by that term we mean the man who has been elected to be king of the city, though there is nothing so off as to walk without looking or governing his movements. But if we mean the average and the under-average in intelligence and character, we are not to condemn them, not use the eye but judgment because they cannot and who, encompassed by the never heading, never ending trails of so-called truth, are not to be blamed for their condition that otherwise, not essentially, would be the same. It is not to be said, as is said, that we are to be used as to upset all calculations of time and space, try to thread their way through, if they are to come at all, then

As to Regulating Jugglery.

"Any regulating of the pedestrian is to be done with caution. His constitutional rights still exist on paper, at least. To place in the hands of any single official such as the Police Commissioner of this or any other city the unrestricted power to promulgate codes for his conduct is a questionable expedient, no matter how well meaning that official may be."

(<https://d3h6k4kfl8m9po.cloudfront.net/uploads/2014/03/New-York-Times-Nov-23-1924.jpg>)

Top: A photo of a fatal car wreck in Somerville, Massachusetts, in 1933. Via the Boston Public Library. Above:

The New York Times coverage of car violence from November 23, 1924.

Within a decade, the number of car collisions and fatalities skyrocketed. In the first four years after World War I (/military-and-wartime/world-war-one), more Americans died in auto accidents than had been killed during battle in Europe, but our legal system wasn't catching on. The negative effects of this unprecedented shift in transportation were especially felt in urban areas, where road space was limited and pedestrian habits were powerfully ingrained.

For those of us who grew up with cars, it's difficult to conceptualize American streets before automobiles were everywhere. "Imagine a busy corridor in an airport, or a crowded city park, where everybody's moving around, and everybody's got business to do," says Norton. "Pedestrians favored the sidewalk because that was cleaner and you were less likely to have a vehicle bump against you, but pedestrians also went anywhere they wanted in the street, and there were no crosswalks and very few signs. It was a real free-for-all."



(<https://d3h6k4kfl8m9po.cloudfront.net/uploads/2014/03/Circa-1903-Shoppers-on-Sixth-Avenue-New-York-City.jpg>)

A typical busy street scene on Sixth Avenue in New York City shows how pedestrians ruled the roadways before automobiles arrived, circa 1903. Via Shorpy.

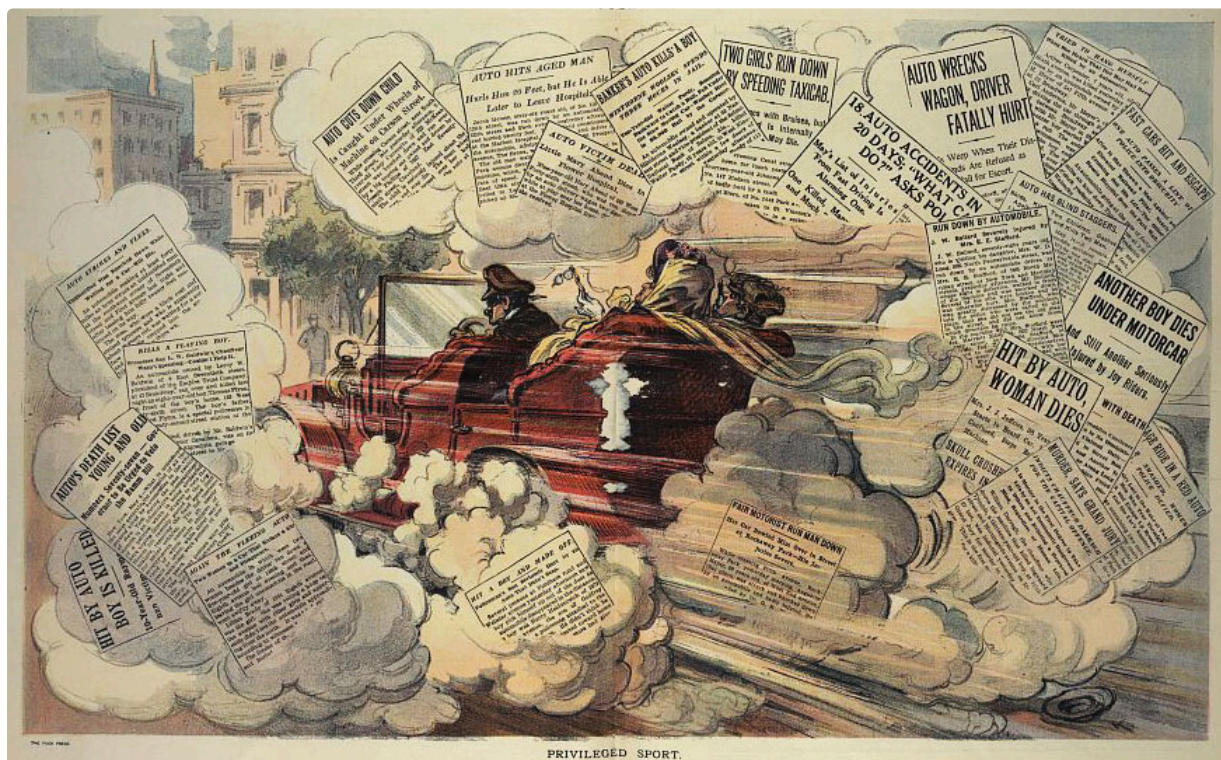
Roads were seen as a public space, which all citizens had an equal right to, even children at play. "Common law tended to pin responsibility on the person operating the heavier or more dangerous vehicle," says Norton, "so there was a bias in favor of the pedestrian." Since people

on foot ruled the road, collisions weren't a major issue: Streetcars and horse-drawn carriages yielded right of way to pedestrians and slowed to a human pace. The fastest traffic went around 10 to 12 miles per hour, and few vehicles even had the capacity to reach higher speeds.

“The real battle is for people’s minds, and this mental model of what a street is for.”

In rural areas, the car was generally welcomed as an antidote to extreme isolation, but in cities with dense neighborhoods and many alternate methods of transit, most viewed private vehicles as an unnecessary luxury. “The most popular term of derision for a motorist was a ‘joyrider,’ and that was originally directed at chauffeurs,” says Norton. “Most of the earliest cars had professional drivers who would drop their passengers somewhere, and were expected to pick them up again later. But in the city, they got this reputation for speeding around wildly,

Eventually, the term spread to all types of automobile drivers, along with pejoratives like “vampire driver” or “death driver.” Political cartoons featured violent imagery of so-called “speed demons” murdering innocents as they plowed through city streets in their uncontrollable vehicles. Other editorials accused drivers of being afflicted with “motor madness” or “motor rabies,” which implied an addiction to speed at the expense of human life.

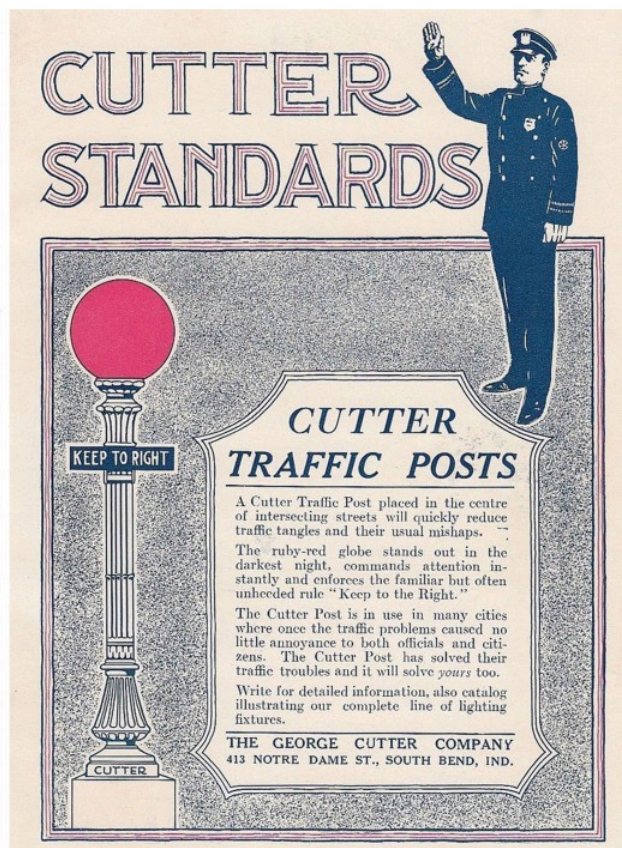
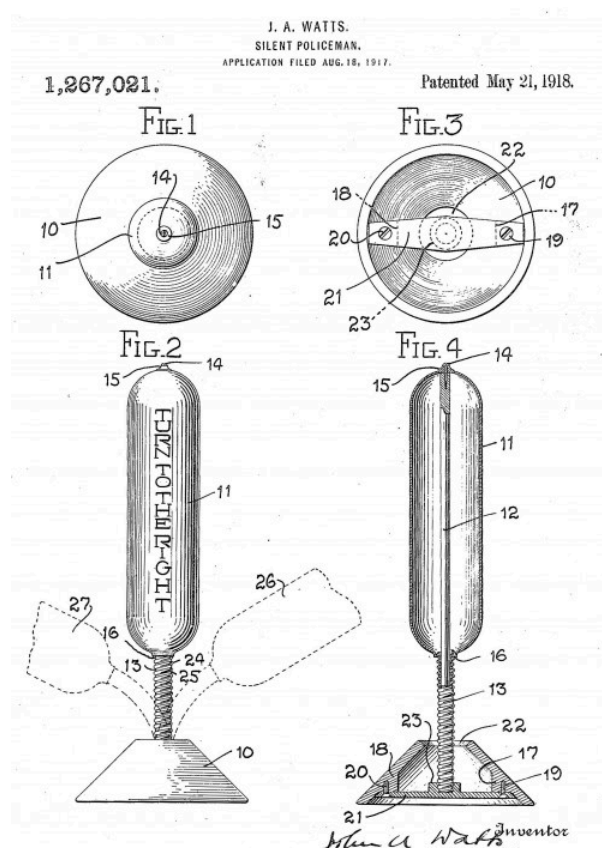


(<https://d3h6k4kfl8m9po.cloudfront.net/uploads/2014/03/puck-number-2.jpg>)

This cartoon from 1909 shows the outrage felt by many Americans that wealthy motorists could hurt others without consequence. Via the Library of Congress.

In an effort to keep traffic flowing and solve legal disputes, New York City became the first municipality in America to adopt an official traffic code in 1903, when most roadways had no signage or traffic controls whatsoever. Speed limits were gradually adopted in urban areas across the country, typically with a maximum of 10 mph that dropped to 8 mph at intersections.

By the 1910s, many cities were working to improve their most dangerous crossings. One of the first tactics was regulating left-turns, which was usually accomplished by installing a solid column or “silent policeman” at the center of busy intersections that forced vehicles to navigate around it. Cars had to pass this mid-point before turning left, preventing them from cutting corners and speeding recklessly into oncoming traffic.



(<https://d3h6k4kfl8m9po.cloudfront.net/uploads/2014/03/silent-policeman-images.jpg>)

Left, a patent for a Silent Policeman traffic post, and right, an ad for the Cutter Company's lighted post, both from 1918.

A variety of innovative street signals and markings were developed by other cities hoping to tame the automobile. Because they were regularly plowed over by cars, silent policemen were often replaced by domed, street-level lights called “traffic turtles” or “traffic mushrooms,” a style popularized in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Detroit reconfigured a tennis court line-marker as a street-striping device for dividing lanes. In 1914, Cleveland installed the first alternating traffic lights, which were manually operated by a police officer stationed at the intersection. Yet these innovations did little to protect pedestrians.

By the end of the 1920s, more than 200,000 Americans had been killed by automobiles. Most of these fatalities were pedestrians in cities, and the majority of these were children. “If a kid is hit in a street in 2014, I think our first reaction would be to ask, ‘What parent is so neglectful that they let their child play in the street?’” says Norton.

“What evil bastard would drive their speeding car where a kid might be playing?”

“In 1914, it was pretty much the opposite. It was more like, ‘What evil bastard would drive their speeding car where a kid might be playing?’ That tells us how much our outlook on the public street has changed—blaming the driver was really automatic then. It didn’t help if they said something like, ‘The kid darted out into the street!’ because the answer would’ve been, ‘That’s what kids do. By choosing to operate this dangerous machine, it’s your job to watch out for others.’ It would be like if you drove a motorcycle in a hallway today and hit somebody—you couldn’t say, ‘Oh, well, they just jumped out in front of me,’ because the response would be that you shouldn’t operate a motorcycle in a hallway.”



(<https://d3h6k4kfl8m9po.cloudfront.net/uploads/2014/03/milwaukee-pics.jpg>)

Left, an ad for the Milwaukee-style traffic mushroom, and right, the device in action on Milwaukee streets, circa 1926. Via the Milwaukee Public Library.

In the face of this traffic fatality epidemic, there was a fierce public outcry including enormous rallies, public memorials, vehement newspaper editorials, and even a few angry mobs that attacked motorists following a collision. “Several cities installed public memorials to the children hit by cars that looked like war monuments, except that they were temporary,” says Norton. “To me, that says a lot, because you collectively memorialize people who are considered a public loss. Soldiers killed in battle are mourned by the whole community, and they were doing that for children killed in traffic, which really captures how much the street was considered a public space. People killed in it were losses to the whole community.”

As the negative press increased and cities called for lower speed limits and stricter enforcement, the burgeoning auto industry recognized a mounting public-relations disaster. The breaking point came in 1923, when 42,000 citizens of Cincinnati signed a petition for a referendum



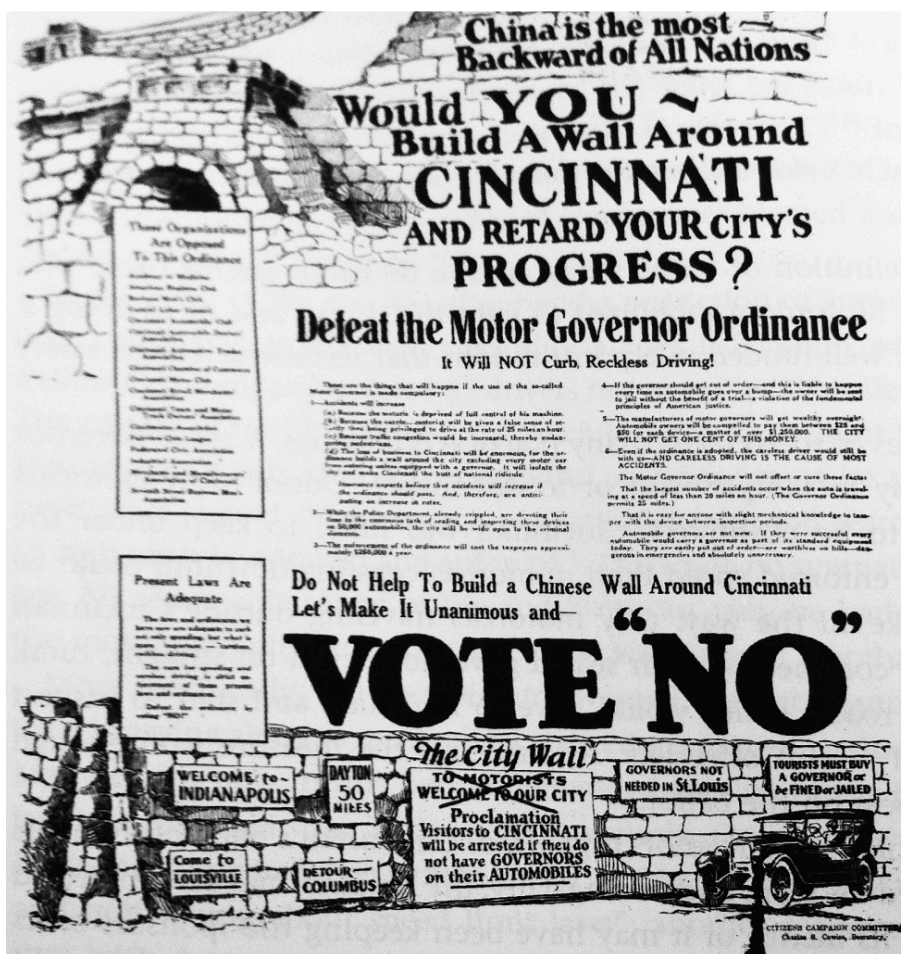
JOYOUSLY TOYING WITH DEATH

(<https://d3h6k4kfl8m9po.cloudfront.net/uploads/2014/03/1905-Grim-Reaper-Car.jpg>)

As early as 1905, newspapers were printing cartoons that criticized motor-vehicle drivers.

requiring any driver in the city limits to have a speed governor, a mechanical device that would inhibit the fuel supply or accelerator, to keep vehicles below 25 miles per hour. (Studies show that around five percent of pedestrians are killed when hit by vehicles traveling under 20 miles per hour, versus 80 percent for cars going 40 miles an hour or more.)

The Cincinnati referendum logically equated high vehicle speeds with increasing danger, a direct affront to the automobile industry. “Think about that for a second,” Norton says. “If you’re in the business of selling cars, and the public recognizes that anything fast is dangerous, then you’ve just lost your number one selling point, which is that they’re faster than anything else. It’s amazing how completely the auto industry joined forces and mobilized against it.”



(<https://d3h6k4kfl8m9po.cloudfront.net/uploads/2014/03/cincinnati-ad.jpg>)

One auto-industry response to the Cincinnati referendum of 1923 was to conflate speed governors with negative stereotypes about China. Via the

“Motordom,” as the collective of special interests including oil companies, auto makers, auto dealers, and auto clubs dubbed itself, launched a multi-pronged campaign to make city streets more welcoming to drivers, though not necessarily safer. Through a series of social, legal, and physical transformations, these groups reframed arguments about vehicle safety by placing blame on reckless drivers and careless pedestrians, rather than the mere presence of cars.

In 1924, recognizing the crisis on America’s streets, Herbert Hoover launched the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety from his position as Commerce Secretary (he would become President in 1929). Any organizations interested or invested in transportation planning were invited to discuss street safety and help establish standardized traffic regulations that could be implemented across the country. Since the conference’s biggest players all represented the auto industry, the group’s recommendations prioritized private motor vehicles over all other transit modes.



(<https://d3h6k4kfl8m9po.cloudfront.net/uploads/2014/03/Screen-Shot-2014-03-07-at-11.50.55-AM.jpg>)

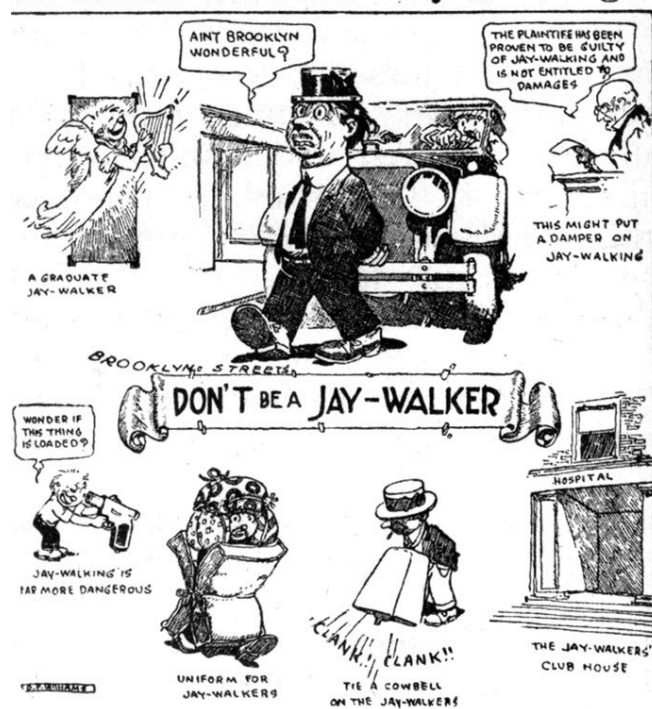
A woman poses with a newly installed stop sign in Los Angeles in 1925, built to the specifications recommended at the first National Conference on Street Safety. Via USC Libraries.

Norton suggests that the most important outcome of this meeting was a model municipal traffic ordinance, which was released in 1927 and provided a framework for cities writing their own street regulations. This model ordinance was the first to officially deprive pedestrians access to public streets. “Pedestrians could cross at crosswalks. They could also cross when traffic permitted, or in other words, when there was no traffic,” explains Norton. “But other than that, the streets were now for cars. That model was presented to the cities of America by the U.S.

Department of Commerce, which gave it the stamp of official government recommendation, and it was very successful and widely adopted.” By the 1930s, this legislation represented the new ^Q rule of the road, making it more difficult to take legal recourse against drivers.

Meanwhile, the auto industry continued to improve its public image by encouraging licensing to give drivers legitimacy, even though most early licenses required no testing. Norton explains that in addition to the revenue it generated, the driver’s license “would exonerate the average motorist in the public eye, so that driving itself wouldn’t be considered dangerous, and you could direct blame at the reckless minority.” Working with local police and civic groups like the Boy Scouts, auto clubs pushed to socialize new pedestrian behavior, often by shaming or ostracizing people who entered the street on foot. Part of this effort was the adoption of the term “jaywalker,” which originally referred to a clueless person unaccustomed to busy city life (“jay” was slang for a hayseed or country bumpkin).

A Traffic Problem—Jay Walking



DON'T JAY WALK



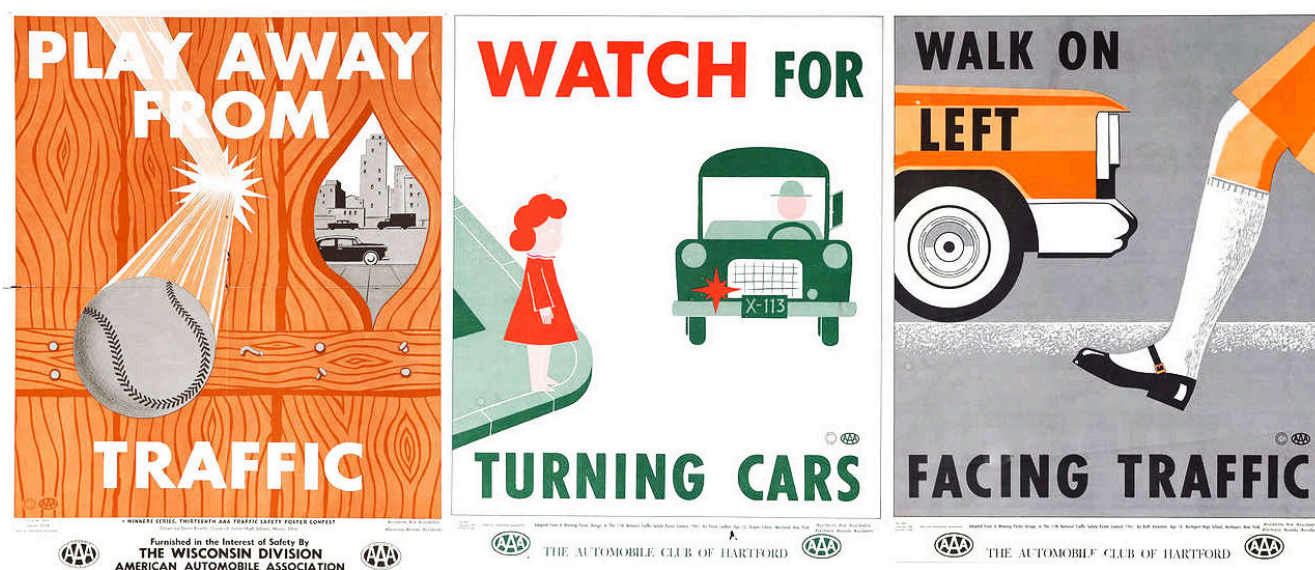
WATCH YOUR STEP

(<https://d3h6k4kfl8m9po.cloudfront.net/uploads/2014/03/jaywalking-double.jpg>)

Left, a cartoon from 1923 mocks jaywalking behavior. Via the National Safety Council. Right, a 1937 WPA poster emphasizes jaywalking dangers.

“Drivers first used the word ‘jaywalker’ to criticize pedestrians,” says Norton, “and eventually, it became an organized campaign by auto dealers and auto clubs to change attitudes about walking in the street wherever you wanted to. They had people dressed up like idiots with sandwich board signs that said ‘jaywalker’ or men wearing women’s dresses pretending to be jaywalkers. They even had a parade where a clown was hit by a Model T over and over again in front of the crowd. Of course, the message was that you’re stupid if you walk in the street.” Eventually, cities began adopting laws against jaywalking of their own accord.

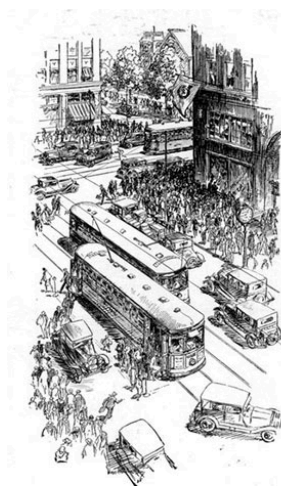
In 1928, the American Automobile Association (AAA) took charge of safety education for children by sending free curricula to every public school in America. “Children would illustrate posters with slogans like, ‘Why I should not play in the street’ or ‘Why the street is for cars’ and so on,” explains Norton. “They took over the school safety patrols at the same time. The original patrols would go out and stop traffic for other kids to cross the street. But when AAA took over, they had kids sign pledges that said, ‘I will not cross the street except at the intersection,’ and so on. So a whole generation of kids grew up being trained that the streets were for cars only.” Other organizations like the Automobile Safety Foundation and the National Safety Council also helped to educate the public on the dangers of cars, but mostly focused on changing pedestrian habits or extreme driver behaviors, like drunk driving.



Street-safety posters produced by AAA in the late 1950s focused on changing behavior of children, rather than drivers.

Once the social acceptance of private cars was ensured, automobile proponents could begin rebuilding the urban environment to accommodate cars better than other transit modes. In the 1920s, America’s extensive network of urban railways was heavily regulated, often with specific fare and route restrictions as well as requirements to serve less-profitable areas. As motor vehicles began invading streetcar routes, these companies pushed for equal oversight of private cars.

“Automobiles could drive on the tracks,” explains Norton, “so this meant that as soon as just five percent of the people in cities were going around by car, they slowed the street railways down significantly, and streetcars couldn’t make their schedules anymore. They could ring a bell and try to make drivers get off their tracks, but if the driver couldn’t move because of other traffic, they were stuck. So the streetcars would just stand in traffic like automobiles.”



Crowds ... and the Street Car's answer

OUT of the multiplying perplexities of the traffic problem, one fact emerges clearly; the electric street car is our most efficient means of moving masses of people.

The street car passenger occupies six square feet of traffic space. The automobile passenger requires an average of 44 square feet. In thirty of our largest cities, street cars are now carrying over 30,000,000 passengers daily. Attempt to put them in automobiles, and the street—which cannot easily expand its curbs—would be too narrow to hold them.

The street car is handling the crowds. Hundreds of capable and far-seeing street railway executives are busy modernizing equipment and improving schedules so that to-morrow and the day after, winter and summer, this essential public servant may do its work even better and win a still larger measure of popular cooperation.



The next time you board a street car, notice how smoothly it starts and stops, how quickly it gathers speed. Much of this improved equipment carries the General Electric monogram—the same monogram as on the efficient and dependable electric appliances that save time and labor in the electrified home.

GENERAL ELECTRIC

330-8818

Automobile Actual Size

1 Trolley Coach Will Seat All the People Who Ordinarily Ride in 24 Automobiles Requiring at Least 10 Times As Much Street Space*

WE ASKED our trick photographer to make a picture showing you an automobile in its true light—considering the number of people it usually carries and the amount of street space it occupies. Even though the result looks monstrous we assure you it's very much on the conservative side. Now we don't propose to hinder progress. The fact that almost every American family can own an automobile is a fine thing. But when they use automobiles in the limited street space of a city to the extent of seldom or never using the public transit system, thus causing stagnation of traffic, then it is time for traffic engineers to go to the source of the trouble. The way to reduce traffic congestion is to revitalize

*Based on the national city average of 1.12 passengers per automobile.

the MOST EFFICIENT USER OF STREET SPACE—THE PUBLIC TRANSIT SYSTEM. Any city government can render the citizens a real service by co-operating with the transit company to modernize and promote increased use of its system. People like to ride in modern electric coaches. They carry them swiftly, noiselessly, comfortably, and at low cost. Furthermore, this means of travel pays its own way. We think that when the facts are known they will appeal far more to the people than huge expenditures for street widening, express highways, and municipal parking lots which load them with unfairly proportioned taxes—and never provide more than a partial solution of the problem.

REVITALIZE PUBLIC TRANSIT TO REDUCE TRAFFIC CONGESTION

GENERAL ELECTRIC

330-115

(<https://d3h6k4kfl8m9po.cloudfront.net/uploads/2014/03/GE-streetcar-ads.jpg>)

GE streetcar ads from 1928, left, and the early 1940s, right, emphasize the efficiency of mass transit over private automobiles.

The final blow was delivered in 1935 with the Public Utility Holding Company Act, which forced electric-utility companies to divest their streetcar businesses. Though intended to reduce corruption and regulate these growing electric utilities, this law removed the subsidies supporting many streetcar companies, and as a result, more than 100 transit companies failed over the next decade.

Even as government assistance was removed from these mass-transit systems, the growing network of city streets and highways was receiving ever more federal funding. Many struggling metro railways were purchased by a front company (operated by General Motors, Firestone Rubber, Standard Oil, and Phillips Petroleum), that ripped up their tracks to make way for fleets of buses, furthering America's dependency on motor vehicles.

Meanwhile, traffic engineers were reworking city streets to better accommodate motor vehicles, even as they recognized cars as the least equitable and least efficient form of transportation, since automobiles were only available to the wealthy and took up 10 times the space of a transit rider. Beginning in Chicago, traffic engineers coordinated street signals to keep motor vehicles moving smoothly, while making crossing times unfriendly to pedestrians.



(<https://d3h6k4kfl8m9po.cloudfront.net/uploads/2014/03/Washington-D.C.-in-1939.-Willard-Hotel-at-14th-Street-and-Pennsylvania-Avenue.jpg>)

An aerial view from 1939 of 14th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, in Washington, D.C., shows early street markings. Via shorpy.com.

“Long after its victory, Motordom fought to keep control of traffic problems. Its highway engineers defined a good thoroughfare as a road with a high capacity for motor vehicles; they did not count the number of persons moved,” Norton writes in *Fighting Traffic*. Today our cities still reflect this: The Level of Service (LOS) measurement by which most planners use to gauge intersection efficiency is based only on motor-vehicle delays, rather than the impact to all modes of transit.

As in other American industries ranging from health care to education, those with the ability to pay for the best treatment were prioritized over all others. One 1941 traffic-control textbook read: “If people prefer to drive downtown and can afford it, then facilities must be built for them up to their ability to pay. The choice of mode of travel is their own; they cannot be forced to change on the strength of arguments of efficiency or economy.”

All the while, traffic violence continued unabated, with fatalities increasing every year. The exception was during World War II (/military-and-wartime/world-war-two), when fuel shortages and resource conservation led to less driving, hence a drop in the motor-vehicle death rates, which spiked again following the war’s conclusion. By the time the National Interstate and

Defense Highways Act was passed in 1956, the U.S. was fully dependent on personal automobiles, favoring the flexibility of cars over the ability of mass transit to carry more people with less energy in a safer manner.



In 1962, Boston formally adopted jaywalking laws to penalize pedestrians.

In 1966, Ralph Nader published his best-selling book, *Unsafe At Any Speed* ([http:// www.amazon.com/Unsafe-Any-Speed-Ralph-Nader/dp/B0006BMWYU/?tag=colleweekl-20](http://www.amazon.com/Unsafe-Any-Speed-Ralph-Nader/dp/B0006BMWYU/?tag=colleweekl-20)), which detailed the auto industry's efforts to suppress safety improvements in favor of profits. In the preface to his book, Nader pointed out (http://www.autolife.umd.umich.edu/Design/Gartman/Books/BK_Unsafe_Any_Speed.htm) the huge costs inflicted by private vehicle collisions, noting that "...these are not the kind of costs which fall on the builders of motor vehicles (excepting a few successful lawsuits for negligent construction of the vehicle) and thus do not pinch the proper foot. Instead, the costs fall to users of vehicles, who are in no position to dictate safer automobile designs." Instead of directing money at prevention, like vehicle improvements, changing behaviors, and road design, money is spent on treating the symptoms of road violence. Today, the costs of fatal crashes are estimated at over \$99 billion in the U.S., or around \$500 for every licensed driver, according to the Center for Disease Control (<http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/costs/index.html>) (CDC).

Nader suggested that the protection of our “body rights,” or physical safety, needed the same broad support given to civil rights, even in the face of an industry with so much financial power. “A great problem of contemporary life is how to control the power of economic interests which ignore the harmful effects of their applied science and technology. The automobile tragedy is one of the most serious of these man-made assaults on the human body,” Nader wrote.

Dr. David Sleet, who works in the Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/injury/>) at the CDC, says Nader’s book was a game-changer. “That really started this whole wave of improvements in our highway-safety problem,” says Sleet. “The death rates from vehicle crashes per population just kept steadily increasing from the 1920s until 1966. Two acts of Congress were implemented in 1966, which initiated a national commitment to reducing injuries on the road by creating agencies within the U.S. Department of Transportation to set standards and regulate vehicles and highways. After that, the fatalities started to decline.”



Ralph Nader’s book, “Unsafe at Any Speed,” brought a larger awareness to America’s traffic fatalities, and targeted design issues with the Corvair. A few years prior, in 1962, comedian Ernie Kovacs was killed in a Corvair wagon, seen at right wrapped around a telephone pole.

The same year Nader’s book was published, President Lyndon Johnson signed the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act and the Highway Safety Act. This legislation led to the creation of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (<http://www.nhtsa.gov/>) (NHTSA), which set new safety standards for cars and highways. A full 50 years after automobiles had overtaken city streets, federal agencies finally began addressing the violence as a large-scale, public-health issue. In 1969, NHTSA director Dr. William Haddon, a public-health physician and epidemiologist, recognized that like infectious diseases, motor-vehicle deaths were the result of interactions between a host (person), an agent (motor vehicle), and their environment (roadways). As directed by Haddon, the NHTSA enforced changes to features like seat belts, brakes, and windshields that helped improve the country’s fatality rate.

Following the release of Nader's book, grassroots organizations like Mothers Against Drunk Driving (<http://www.madd.org/>) (MADD, 1980) formed to combat car-safety issues that national legislators were not addressing. The CDC began adapting its public-health framework to the issue of motor-vehicle injury prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov/Motorvehiclesafety/index.html>) in 1985, focusing on high-risk populations like alcohol-impaired drivers, motorcyclists, and teenagers.



In the late 1970s, the NHTSA standardized crash tests, like this 90 mph test of two Volvos.

“I think the perennial problem for us, as a culture, is recognizing that these injuries are both predictable and preventable,” says Sleet. “The public still has not come around to thinking of motor-vehicle crashes as something other than ‘accidents.’ And as long as you believe they’re accidents or acts of fate, then you won’t do anything to prevent them. The CDC continues to stress that motor-vehicle injuries, like diseases, are preventable.”

Sleet says the CDC's approach is similar to its efforts against smoking: The first step is understanding the magnitude of the problem or threat, the second is identifying risk factors, and the third is developing interventions that can reduce these factors. “The last stage is getting widespread adoption of these known and effective interventions,” explains Sleet. “The reason we

think motor-vehicle injuries represent a winnable battle is that there are lots of effective interventions that are just not used by the general public. We've been fighting this battle of increasing injuries since cars were first introduced into society, and we still haven't solved it.

"Public health is a marathon, not a sprint," adds Sleet. "It's taken us 50 years since the first surgeon general's report on smoking to make significant progress against tobacco. We need to stay the course with vehicle injuries."



Though their advocacy is limited to drunk driving, MADD is one of the few organizations to use violent imagery to promote road safety, as seen in this ad from 2007.

Although organizations like the CDC have applied this public-health approach to the issue for decades now, automobiles remain a huge danger. While the annual fatality rate has dropped significantly from its 1930s high at around 30 deaths for every 100,000 persons to 11 per 100,000 in recent years, car crashes are still a top killer of all Americans. For young people, motor-vehicle collisions remain the most common cause of death. In contrast, traffic fatalities in countries like the United Kingdom, where drivers are presumed to be liable in car crashes, are about a third of U.S. rates.

In 2012, automobile collisions killed more than 34,000 Americans, but unlike our response to foreign wars, the AIDS crisis, or terrorist attacks all of which inflict fewer fatalities than cars there's no widespread public protest or giant memorial to the dead. We fret about drugs and gun safety, but don't teach children to treat cars as the loaded weapons they are.

“These losses have been privatized, but in the ’20s, they were regarded as public losses,” says Norton. After the auto industry successfully altered street norms in the 1920s, most state Departments of Transportation actually made it illegal to leave roadside markers where a loved one was killed. “In recent years, thanks to some hard work by grieving families, the rules have changed in certain states, and informal markers are now allowed,” Norton adds. “Some places are actually putting in DOT-made memorial signs with the names of victims. The era of not admitting what’s going on is not quite over, but the culture is changing.”



In recent years, white Ghost Bikes have been installed on roadways across the country where cyclists were killed by motorists, like this bike in Boulder, Colorado, in memory of Matthew Powell.

“Until recently, there wasn’t any kind of concerted public message around the basic danger of driving,” says Ben Fried, editor of the New York branch of Streetsblog (<http://www.streetsblog.org/>), a national network of journalists chronicling transportation issues. “Today’s street safety advocates look to MADD and other groups that changed social attitudes toward drunk driving in the late ’70s and early ’80s as an example of how to affect these broad views on how we drive. Before you had those organizations advocating for victims’ families, you would hear the same excuses for drunk driving that you hear today for reckless driving.”

Though anti-drunk-driving campaigns are familiar to Americans, fatalities involving alcohol only account for around a third of all collisions, while the rest are caused by ordinary human error. Studies also show that reckless drivers who are sober are rarely cited by police, even when



Though drunk driving has long been recognized as dangerous, seen in this WPA poster from 1937, reckless driving has been absent from most safety campaigns.

they are clearly at fault. In New York City during the last five years, less than one percent of drivers who killed or injured pedestrians and cyclists were ticketed for careless driving

(<http://www.streetsblog.org/2013/10/21/nypd-charges-0-7-percent-of-drivers-who-injure-and-kill-with-careless-driving/>). (In most states, “negligent” driving, which includes drunk driving, has different legal consequences than “reckless” driving, though the jargon makes little difference to those hurt by such drivers.)

Increasingly, victims and their loved ones are making the case

([http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/24/treat-reckless-driving-like-drunk-driving/?](http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/01/24/treat-reckless-driving-like-drunk-driving/?php=true&type=blogs&ro)

php true& type blogs& r o) that careless driving is as reprehensible as drunk driving, advocating a cultural shift that many drivers are reluctant to embrace. As with auto-safety campaigns in the past, this grassroots effort is pushing cities to adopt legislation that protects against reckless drivers, including laws inspired by Sweden’s Vision Zero

(<https://visionzeronetwork.org/>) campaign. First implemented in 1997, Vision Zero is an effort to end all pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries; recently, cities like New York, Chicago, and San Francisco also announced their goals of eliminating traffic deaths within 10 years. Other initiatives are being introduced at the state level, including “vulnerable user laws,” which pin greater responsibility on road users who wield the most power—whether a car compared to a bicyclist, or a biker to a pedestrian.

Fried says that most people are aware of the dangers behind the wheel, but are accustomed to sharing these risks, rather than taking individual responsibility for careless behavior. “So many of us drive and have had the experience of not following the law to a T going a little bit over the

speed limit or rolling through a stop sign,” he explains. “So there’s this tendency to deflect our own culpability, and that’s been institutionalized by things like no-fault laws and car insurance, where we all share the cost for the fact that driving is a dangerous thing.”



(<https://d3h6k4kfl8m9po.cloudfront.net/uploads/2014/03/moths-and-the-flame-puck.jpg>)

This dark political cartoon from “Puck” magazine in 1907 suggested that speeding motorists were chasing death. Via the Library of Congress.

As cities attempt to undo years of car-oriented development by rebuilding streets that better incorporate public transit, bicycle facilities, and pedestrian needs, the existing bias towards automobiles is making the fight to transform streets just as intense as when cars first arrived in the urban landscape. “The fact that changes like redesigning streets for bike lanes set off such strong reactions today is a great analogy to what was going on in the ’20s,” says Fried. “There’s a huge status-quo bias that’s inherent in human nature. While I think the changes today are much more beneficial than what was done 80 years ago, the fact that they’re jarring to people comes from the same place. People are very comfortable with things the way they are.”

However, studies increasingly show

(<http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/10/01-social-media-driving-millennials/2898093/>) that most young people prefer to live in dense, walkable neighborhoods, and are more attuned to the environmental consequences of their transportation than previous generations. Yet in the face of clear evidence that private automobiles are damaging to our health and our environment, most older Americans still cling to their cars. Part of this impulse may be a natural resistance to change, but it's also reinforced when aging drivers have few viable transportation alternatives, particularly in suburban areas or sprawling cities with terrible public transit.

"People don't have to smoke," Sleet says, "whereas people might feel they do need a car to get to work. Our job is to try and make every drive a safe drive. I think we can also reduce the dependency we have on motor vehicles, but that's not going to happen until we provide other alternatives for people to get from here to there."



Gory depictions of car violence became rare in the United States after the 1920s, though they persisted in Europe, as seen in his German safety poster from 1930 that reads, “Motorist! Be Careful!” Via the Library of Congress.



Fried says that unlike campaigns for smoking and HIV reduction, American cities aren’t directly pushing people to change their behavior. “You don’t see cities saying outright that driving is bad, or asking people to take transit or ride a bike, in part because they’re getting flack from drivers. No one wants to be seen as ‘anti-car,’ so their message has mostly been about designing streets for greater safety. I think, by and large, this has been a good choice.”

“The biggest reductions in traffic injuries that the New York City DOT has been able to achieve are all due to reallocating space from motor vehicles to pedestrians and bikes,” says Fried. “The protected bike-lane redesigns in New York City are narrowing the right of way for vehicles by at least 8 feet, and sometimes more. If you’re a pedestrian, that’s 8 more feet that you don’t have to worry about when you’re crossing the street. And if you’re driving, the design gives you cues to take it a bit slower because the lanes are narrower. You’re more aware of how close you are to other moving objects, so the incidence of speeding isn’t as high as it used to be. All these changes contribute to a safer street environment.”

Like in the 1920s, these infrastructure changes really start with a new understanding of acceptable street behavior. “That battle for street access of the 1910s and ’20s, while there was a definite winner, it never really ended,” says Norton. “It’s a bit like the street became an occupied country, and you have a resistance movement. There have always been pedestrians who are like, ‘To hell with you, I’m crossing anyway.’”

“The people who really get it today, in 2014, know that the battle isn’t to change rules or put in signs or paint things on the pavement,” Norton continues. “The real battle is for people’s minds, and this mental model of what a street is for. There’s a wonderful slogan used by some bicyclists that says, ‘We are traffic.’ It reveals the fact that at some point, we decided that somebody on a bike or on foot is not traffic, but an obstruction to traffic. And if you look around, you’ll see a hundred other ways in which that message gets across. That’s the main obstacle for people who imagine alternatives and it’s very much something in the mind.”

1935 Chevy Promo Envisions the Self-Driving Car: "...



(<https://d3h6k4kfl8m9po.cloudfront.net/uploads/2014/03/single-pixel-image.jpg>)

This 1935 Chevy safety film made the argument that motor vehicles were “the safest place to be,” and that danger was only created by careless drivers.

(This article is dedicated to my uncle, Jim Vic Oatman, and friend, Chris Webber, both of whom were killed by car collisions. Learn more about the CDC's battle against motor-vehicle injuries here (<http://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/>), find out how to bring Vision Zero (<https://visionzeronetwork.org/>) to your city, or scare yourself with the Boston Public Library's archive of historic car wreck images (http://www.flickr.com/photos/boston_public_library/sets/72157626646768526/with/73430) If you buy something through a link in this article, Collectors Weekly may get a share of the sale. Learn more (<https://www.collectorsweekly.com/answer-desk/about-external-sites/>).

73 comments so far

1. *Scott MacNaughton Says:*

March 27th, 2014 at 9:20 am

What a brilliant and informative article. Bravo!

I live in a Canadian city of 1.2 million that averages 1.5 pedestrians hit by vehicles per DAY. Frightening, especially for a dedicated walker such as myself (voluntarily gave up the car over five years ago, haven't regretted it once). Recently, a woman was hit and killed in the downtown core, early in the afternoon on a clear day, not two blocks from her office, in a

marked crosswalk on a green light. She did everything she was supposed to, but was still struck fatally by a turning vehicle. The driver was finally charged last week: “failure to yield to a pedestrian”, a \$545 fine, plus 4 demerit points (only 1/4 the amount required for a 1-month licence suspension), and exactly the same charge that would have been issued had the driver missed the pedestrian entirely. The message to me as a pedestrian: you’re on your own, the justice system is not looking out for you, and pedestrian casualties are an acceptable and unavoidable side-effect of urban life. Something desperately needs to change.



2. *Smarty Marky Says:*

March 30th, 2014 at 3:08 pm

An impressive article; I certainly agree as with any machine, the operator determines the ultimate safe usage, both for the operator and those with whom the machine comes in contact other than the operator. Big money brings big lobby which affects the world of law in an unbalanced scenario. My belief is someone who operates anything from a power saw to a rifle to an automobile to a nuclear power plant and including a bicycle must behave in line and in responsibility with the possible/probable damage the machine can inflict upon both the operator and others. Including direct and indirect damage. Excellent article raising consideration of an issue which affects most people in one way or another.

3. *Norunn Nygard Says:*


June 2nd, 2014 at 4:09 pm

A couple of years ago, I was surprised to find out what many have already mentioned, that car drivers who hit pedestrians in crosswalks rarely if ever get so much as a fine or a demerit point against their license.

But after paying attention to what happens when car drivers are irresponsible, I was hardly surprised when I got a demerit point after being an eyewitness to a very distracted car driver who made an illegal left turn and hit a motorcyclist. Yes, I was on a motorcycle too at the time. No, I was not in any manner involved in the collision (I refuse to call it “accident”; when drivers bumble around at random in cars with most the windows blacked out, without even looking out the front window, and not considering the possibility of others on the road, collisions are expected).

But according to the CHP, I was more at fault than the car driver, who got off scot free though he failed to get a payout on his claim against my insurance.

With law enforcement so corrupt, there is no incentive to driving safely. Actually, there is an incentive to just the opposite; when law enforcement automatically blame motorcyclists for any accident they are involved in or in the immediate vicinity of, car drivers who have dented their cars against poles, fences, or other cars have an incentive to hitting motorcycles, as they can then make a claim against the motorcyclist’s insurance! Motordom must be pleased.

4. *Pat Chambers, Carthage Mo Says:*June 4th, 2014 at 4:13 am 

Heartland homicide is generally committed by inexperienced youth or impaired or impatient or drugged drivers pulling into traffic without yielding, lots of two-wheelers killed like this. Then, there's the big trucks driven by economically enslaved maniacs for maniacs who worship profit. I would favor a thirty-five mile an hour limit nationwide, with long distance covered by train car carriers. Residential areas let's say 15 max. We're all living longer, what's the darn hurry? Wouldn't be bad for air quality either.

5. *RDG Says:*

June 4th, 2014 at 4:20 am

Autos are safer BECAUSE of people like Nader and therefore, and despite the numbers, fewer folks are crippled, maimed or killed than would be otherwise.

This car lover is also a road cyclist. There are plenty out there who give all riders at all levels a dubious reputation. That said, it is unbelievable how many drivers can't safely pass a cyclist with endangering anyone involved. Many of these same people gripe about how cyclists flout the law while they text behind the wheel, run lights and can't seem to find their turn signal lever.

Separate cyclists from the road? Not bloody likely. There will be more and more people riding the streets as the years go by and I'm not talking about the Spandex set. Get used to it and make the necessary adjustments. Those whatever's will still be on sale if you have to slow down for a few seconds.

6. *Anthony Carter Says:*

June 4th, 2014 at 8:03 am

Definitely a great article. I myself do not advocate for bike lanes, because they actually make traffic MORE confusing, not less. Cyclists should ride in the lane with cars; it reduces danger because motorists SEE you, and therefore won't hit you.

7. *Michael Beaver Says:*

October 1st, 2014 at 11:57 pm

Commenters: Finding a difference between yourself and others and using that difference to prove you're more superior or correct is known as bigotry. Cyclists are just people like you on bikes. They're not some lesser alien species that deserve what they get. The main difference is that it is not easily in their power to kill someone unlike their motorised equivalent

8. *BILL BRYTAN Says:*

October 24th, 2014 at 1:56 pm

I'm sick and tired of "travelling to work in Anchorage, Alaska justifies the existence of the automobile in the entire country". There are more cities in the United States than just Anchorage. The city with the most problems is Los Angeles. How often do they have 0 degree temperatures? Extreme climate in a limited number of locations is traditionally used to justify a behaviour which people refuse to change.



9. *Michael Beaver Says:*

December 24th, 2014 at 12:03 am

What speed will driverless cars do? The speedlimit and no more!

10. *Chuck Says:*

January 16th, 2015 at 11:17 am

Eliminating the right-turn-on-red will only make the car vrs pedestrian problem worse – when are you going to turn right then? When the light is green, that's when pedestrians are crossing the street you're trying to turn on to.

A good point about dangerous cyclists being dangerous drivers – probably the case. However most cyclists are also drivers (at least in Oregon) so kind of a moot point.

We live in an increasingly unequal world – it costs literally twice as much to live in Portland as it costs to live basically anywhere else in the state. Plus maybe I'd like to live somewhere where I can secure the safety of my family while they sleep, it's a lot harder to do that in an apartment. As for change, how about you change and stop trying to force what you think people need, on everyone. That food you like is grown on a farm, farms need vehicles lots of them.

A simple google search for "cyclist" and "manslaughter" will get you TONS of drivers charged with manslaughter for hitting cyclists. It is usually up to the DA to make that choice, and I think that's probably best. I have friends who have died from getting hit by cars, and I have friends who have killed cyclists with their cars. You don't get off "scott free" for killing someone with your car. Most of the time you never drive again and those that do think about the person they hit every time their hands hit the steering wheel for the rest of their lives.

This article and 90% of the responses are still more of the same – Blame someone else, it's not my fault! The road isn't the battlefield, your whole life is duck and cover.

11. *Healthy commuter Says:*

March 28th, 2015 at 1:31 pm

The article should really cover the additional few millions who die from diseases secondary to inactivity since cars are simply couches with wheels where people drive from their doorstep to the doorstep of their jobs. Research has shown drivers burn fewer calories than

any other class of commuter (i.e rail, tram, bicycle, walk), and the correlation between type 2 diabetes prevalence over the past 50 years and car ownership is near perfect.



12. *HBM Says:*

April 15th, 2015 at 6:08 pm

@38- Cigarro “If a car and a bicycle collide, the car wins. Bicycles and cars don’t mix well. Separate them.”

That’s not a tenable solution, given the amount of mileage you would have to duplicate in order to make separate bike paths that would get cyclists to all the places that roads already go. The fact of the matter is that bikes and cars (and pedestrians) will mix, must mix- at intersections, crosswalks, driveways, etc.- it’s unavoidable. We all have to follow the rules to make our presence predictable and as safe as possible to other travelers, but given the increased risk that cars pose to cyclists and pedestrians, it is the car drivers who must bear the burden of responsibility for the safety of the more vulnerable. We have to start teaching are requiring car drivers to look for, and be accountable for the safety of cyclists and pedestrians.

Cyclists should be riding in the lane, where they’re most visible to all cars, just like a motorcycle. And car drivers should be looking for them, and expect them to be there. The excuse of, “I didn’t think anyone was there [because I was only looking for other large vehicles like myself].” just isn’t good enough.

13. *The Good Old Days Says:*

April 20th, 2015 at 1:27 pm

When I was learning to drive about 20 years ago, the drivers’ manuals for Mississippi and Alabama both explicitly stated that, in all situations, pedestrians and bicyclists have the right-of-way. Is this something that’s been removed from the manuals since the mid-90s? If so, why?

14. *Labann Says:*

June 13th, 2015 at 3:23 am

Here we go again, motorist haters versus their vulnerable victims. Been discussing transportation as a basic life modality for decades in my blog and book, Bike&Chain. <http://bike-n-chain.blogspot.com> (<http://bike-n-chain.blogspot.com>)

Self propulsion via bike or feet or wheel chair is an unalienable right, like breathing. It’s already banned most places, particularly limited access highways, but legally takes precedence on surface roads. Federal and state laws mandate “complete streets” in which non-motorists get preference with nearby alternatives where impractical. An operator’s

license is a contract not to kill and maim. The straight line to improving this tragic mess is to deny, revoke and suspend them, but this won't happen in a society so dependent upon automotive spending.



15. *Labann Says:*

June 13th, 2015 at 4:05 am

So reminiscent of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. Spoiler alert: Daisy runs down a pedestrian and Gatsby covers for her with his life.

16. *templeton Says:*

June 14th, 2015 at 4:47 pm

Clearly, there will always be a need for automobiles. Too many municipalities do not have useful transit or pedestrian/ bicycle facilities, were designed assuming everyone will always have a car (e.g., subdivisions with curvy raked-zen-garden street patterns and precisely one entrance from the closest major road, commercial zoning that requires acres of parking for retail development, et cetera), or are just little tiny towns in rural areas too far to walk or bike to the nearest burg with needed goods/ services. Too many people have health or mobility issues and simply can not walk or bike. Understood. Having said that, however, the car is just ONE mode of transport, not THE mode of transport. Putting cars first to the exclusion of all other modes has not created healthier cities or people; in fact the opposite has occurred. It is time to pull the plug on the "car is king" experiment and shift the focus from how to move X cars from point A to point B, and toward creating more options for allowing more PEOPLE to make the same trip.

17. *Tom Says:*

January 5th, 2016 at 6:42 pm


2016 will most likely have 34,000 kills as the current trend is going up after early 2000 was decreasing. USA global rank is 6th on car kills because this country is a car country. No sufficient public transport solutions available.

18. *Fred walter klein Says:*

February 20th, 2016 at 10:39 am

Cars are nothing but awful cancer causing poverty keeping conformity boxes. The millennial generation is sacrificing the special feeling of having a car for the pleasure of being on their gadgets by train, bus or cab. More production in the end. A traffic jam represents a large amount of lost production where as being on a Bus, train, or Cab or just walking will lead to much more production and an increase in the human spirit. DOWN WITH CARS!!!!!! God bless a future w/o Cars.

19. *Brian Says:*

March 4th, 2016 at 1:19 pm 

They kill so many is because they are legal just like tobacco and alcohol.

20. *Brian Says:*

March 4th, 2016 at 1:39 pm

Hey i blame auto mobiles partially for obesity too. I have for years.

21. *jonn amenta Says:*

January 24th, 2017 at 5:44 pm

walking and driving people have become more more stupid

22. *RGD Says:*

April 11th, 2017 at 5:47 pm

Lawrence Selkirk: I contend quite strongly that if you make the rules of the road work for cyclists, they will follow them. You probably won't want to hear it, but don't shut off your brain to what I am about to say: the rules as they are set up today are impractical and sometimes dangerous to cyclists. If I stop at a red light and wait for it to change, I may well be run over by the cars behind me when it changes; if I run the light when there is a safe gap (which I can judge much more easily on a bike than in a car because if have practically no limitations on my visibility), I will NOT be run over by those cars becuae they don't run that light; the same ifs true of stop signs. Even when no other traffic is waiting, sometimes, by running them, you increase your safety by eliminating the hazard of the traffic which may roll up behind you as you wait for a gap. Even if you know no traffic is there, you will often increase your safety by decreasing fatigue and stress incurred at the junctions. Driving is an inherently dangerous mode of transportation that ought to be treated and thought of as such.

Until the car existed, people really did have the right to walk anywhere they wished, and there is no reason that they shouldn't today (except that blasted automobile causing danger everywhere). I would say that in order to ensure this, it should be motorists who do not get to drive everywhere.

That's my thinking. By the way, I do drive. I am still learning, but man, I think it would be much safer if people did not have to drive at all.

23. *Zzantor Says:*

July 15th, 2017 at 12:40 pm

Bikes are not moter vehicules and as long as bikes are on the road with moter vehicles, there will be bicyclist's injured and killed.

When I lived in Portland, OR. there were bike trails and bike lanes everywhere, but, about

once a week I'd hear about another cyclist hit by a car on the morning news. When I started riding , it was very hard to not ride as if I was in a car, due to my years of driving cars. I had one rule, just like when I was a kid, DON'T GET HIT BY A CAR



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