

Supporting Cyclists

Bicyclists face many challenges—from safety on the roads to dealing with frustration from drivers who see them as being “in the way.” In addition, cyclists must consider whether safe bike lanes are available and if there will be a secure place to park once they reach their destination. These daily concerns are often overlooked by non-cyclists, as they are unique to the cycling experience. As a driver, you typically leave home without worrying whether a safe route exists; you may think briefly about parking, but there’s usually confidence that a spot will be available. This general lack of awareness leads to a major issue: driver impatience, which can make cycling a dangerous and stressful experience.

In my own city, I’ve noticed how cycling is increasingly becoming more popular. To accommodate this growth, there have been construction projects geared towards adding bike lanes. On some streets, bike lanes have replaced car lanes, reducing two lanes of vehicle traffic to just one. In congested areas, this means one thing: traffic! And I’m not sure there’s anything drivers hate more than traffic. While bike lanes are intended to protect cyclists, research in Baltimore shows that many accidents still occur within the bike lane itself—70% of cyclist crashes happen in bike lanes, shoulders, or crosswalks, and 53% at intersections (“Baltimore Bicycle Safety Overview: Infrastructure and Crash Stats.”) This signals the need for a better design and greater driver awareness.

Reflecting on this has made me realize how little I actually knew about cyclist-related laws before writing this essay. I imagine I’m not alone. One critical law in Maryland is the state-wide three-foot passing rule, which requires drivers to leave at least three feet when passing cyclists on all roads (Korin). If signage reminded drivers of this rule, we could close the gap in general public awareness and boost cyclist safety.

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When I visited Amsterdam, which is famous for its bike culture, I gained a new appreciation for cycling. Observing the cycling model in Amsterdam helped me understand just how sustainable and impactful cycling can be—something I find very important. It makes me wonder how Amsterdam was able to incorporate cycling so seamlessly and how that model can be successfully replicated in other cities. My appreciation for Amsterdam's approach has helped me have patience for my own city as it transitions to being more bike-friendly. Personally, I can be a more aware driver, doing my part to make the roads safer and more welcoming for cyclists.

If I lived in a city where cycling was more prevalent and supported by safer lanes and routes, I would strongly consider cycling myself. I care about reducing my carbon footprint and enjoy staying active. With that in mind—and considering my career goal of helping marginalized communities—I believe it's important to recognize how valuable cycling can be as an affordable, accessible mode of transportation. This realization is a meaningful perspective that I will carry with me into law school.

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Works Cited

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