

From: Spring, Dona
Sent: Wednesday, October 08, 2003 10:31 AM
To: 'Roger Marquis'; Jason Meggs
Cc: Brown, Don L.; Vafa, Virginia; BFBC-Talk; East Bay Bicycle Coalition; Wozniak, Gordon; Battle, Minnie; Breland, Margaret; Kelly, Sherry; Berkeley Mayor's Office; Maio, Linda; Hawley, Miriam; Olds, Betty; Oniki, Christeen; Kusmiss, Mary C.; Attard, Barbara; Cardinaux, Rene; Shirek, Maudelle; Worthington, Kriss; Nancy Grimley Carleton; Mark Hendrix; REBAC; California Bicycle Coalition; CABO Forum; SF Bike List; Professor Elizabeth Deakin; Fred Nemo; Sara Stout; World CM
Subject: RE: [ebbc] WHEELCHAIRS HAVE THE RIGHT.

My proposal does not ask that wheelchair users be able to use busy commercial streets like Telegraph.

-----Original Message-----

From: Roger Marquis [mailto:marquis@roble.com]
Sent: Monday, October 06, 2003 8:36 AM
To: Jason Meggs
Cc: Spring, Dona; Brown, Don L.; Vafa, Virginia; BFBC-Talk; East Bay Bicycle Coalition; Wozniak, Gordon; Battle, Minnie; Breland, Margaret; Kelly, Sherry; Berkeley Mayor's Office; Maio, Linda; Hawley, Miriam; Olds, Betty; Oniki, Christeen; Kusmiss, Mary C.; Attard, Barbara; Cardinaux, Rene; Shirek, Maudelle; Worthington, Kriss; Nancy Grimley Carleton; Mark Hendrix; REBAC; California Bicycle Coalition; CABO Forum; SF Bike List; Professor Elizabeth Deakin; Fred Nemo; Sara Stout; World CM
Subject: Re: [ebbc] WHEELCHAIRS HAVE THE RIGHT.

On Mon, 6 Oct 2003, Jason Meggs wrote:

> By way of introduction: a new law has been proposed in Berkeley (authored by Dona Spring, and coming before City Council on October 14) intending to give those who ride wheelchairs the right to ride in bicycle lanes,

Note that Dona's proposal would not just allow wheelchairs in bike lanes where there is no sidewalk or curb cut. State law already allows that. What Dona's proposal would do is allow wheelchairs in any bike lane regardless of the sidewalk or curb cuts.

Putting aside the fact that the city does not have jurisdiction to enact such a law it would be wise to consider the broader costs and benefits. Has anyone enumerate the benefits to wheelchair users beyond slowing for pedestrians and curbs?

Among the costs would be bicycle safety. We all know how dangerous it is to pass skaters and bladders in a bike lane, especially given the aggressive traffic on streets like Telegraph and Oxford. Even the most powerful electric wheelchairs travel as slow or slower. Bike lanes are intended, and funded, to facilitate the safe passage of bicyclists on otherwise hazardous streets. Is this safety really a lower priority than the convenience of wheelchair users? If so perhaps we should use funds currently allocated to wheelchair safety to replenish the recently gutted bicycle facilities budget?

A second cost is wheelchair safety. Few wheelchair users would argue that many roadways are safer than the adjoining sidewalk. This is why virtually all Berkeley streets have sidewalks after all.

> The hubub over wheelchairs in bicycle lanes rightly erupted when
Berkeley
> lost a dearly loved local activist, Fred Lupke, after a motorcar
> "accidentally" struck him from behind and reportedly threw him 55
feet.

Let's hope the city's loss of Fred will result in sensible changes
to foot, wheelchair and bicycle traffic by the council. Among those
is Dona's other proposal to fix the sidewalk that forced Fred into
the street. I'd also propose A) recommendations to households to
put their trash and recyclables in the street and not on the sidewalk,
and B) better law enforcement i.e, towing, of vehicles parked
across a sidewalk.

Berkeley is a beautiful place to walk. This is one of the reasons
many of us live here. Let's make it a better place to bicycle too,
not by outlawing bicycles from sidewalks like San Pablo Ave, not
by deemphasizing cyclists' important right of way on what few bike
lanes the city has striped, but by improving both sidewalks and
streets and facilitating the use of both alternate modes of travel.

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Roger Marquis
<http://www.roble.net/marquis/>