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Santa Barbara News-Press

“WITHOUT FEAR OR FAVOR OF FRIEND OR FOE”

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Motorists must ensure safety of bicyclists

With regard to the recent bicycle/car accident on Highway 101: If bicycles and cars cannot safely coexist on Highway 101 or on any other local road, the simplest solution is to ban cars until the problem can be solved.

Absurd? Perhaps. But no more so than the News-Press article entitled, “Bicyclists warned to avoid 101 stretch” (May 29).

A number of points must be made:

1. Bicyclists’ legal right to be on that stretch of Highway 101 is every bit as real as the rights of motorists.

2. Both accidents on Highway 101 in recent years have occurred due to gross negligence on the part of the motorists. It is motorists who have primary responsibility for making roads safe, not bicyclists.

Your article does a grave disservice to safety by sending a “blame the victim” message to motorists that absolves them of a sense of responsibility.

3. Bicyclists are statistically in

far more danger from riding on surface streets in town, per mile traveled, than they are on Highway 101.

Your article unjustifiably tells bicyclists that they should avoid 101 for safety reasons, yet implicitly gives a false sense that they are safer on surface streets.

4. Bicycling as an alternative to motorized recreation or transportation is a positive activity that should be encouraged through real safety improvements, not discouraged through sensationalist scare tactics.

5. Bicyclists don’t run people down on our highways, pollute our air, consume vast amounts of untaxed land area or cause wars over oil.

If motorists had to pay their way for these expenses, gasoline would cost more than \$4 per gallon. If bicyclists have to subsidize motorists’ indulgence, the least they can ask for is a little respect and some hard cash for safe, convenient bike routes.

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