

## Craig McInnes: Cyclists' wish list goes beyond sharing the road

Coalition wants rolling stops, room for buddies and big investments

BY CRAIG MCINNES, VANCOUVER SUN COLUMNIST MARCH 19, 2013



Cyclist passes a stop sign on the bike route in Vancouver. A cyclist's organization is suggesting that cyclists be allowed to treat stop signs as a yield.

Photograph by: Ian Lindsay Ian Lindsay, PROVINCE

The urge to exercise only temporarily overcomes the urge to stop — or not stop, when riding a bike.

Even though I ride my bike for exercise, I have an involuntary urge to keep my momentum going at intersections. I want to keep going even though it adds to my exercise quotient if I have to stop and then persuade my legs to supply the extra juice needed to get my wheels rolling again.

I know I'm not alone in this because I see cyclists rolling through stop signs and red lights with great regularity.

Now the B.C. Cycling Coalition wants to make the practice legal. Or **more precisely they want the B.C. Motor Vehicle Act changed so that cyclists can treat stop signs as yield signs.** It's just one of the changes they would like to see to the rules of the road that apply to cyclists and motorists alike that they believe shouldn't apply to bicycles.

The changes are part of a provincial cycling strategy the group is trying to push into the spotlight of the provincial election.

In it, they make the case for all levels of government to invest \$175 million annually in cycling infrastructure in the province, which they calculate works out to be a bargain cost, based on the benefits cycling brings, of about \$40 a head.

But they also want a more bicycle-friendly legal environment. They want some recognition that bicycles aren't the same as motorized vehicles so they shouldn't have to obey all of the same rules.

At the same time, they want more room on the road.

I think it's going to be a hard sell.

In an interview Tuesday, Richard Campbell, president of the B.C. Cycling Coalition, outlined some of the changes the cycling advocacy group would like to see.

They start with a change in the name of the Motor Vehicle Act, to recognize that it covers the operation of more than just cars and trucks, a fact that he concedes many cyclists and motorists on the road today don't understand.

The coalition would **also like cyclists to be allowed to ride two abreast**. You may not have known that is illegal. Many cyclists don't seem to, either, especially those who ride in some of the weekend pelotons that have started appearing on popular cycling routes — groups of riders who often seem to believe that as a group they are immune to both the rules of the road and the need to share it.

Campbell says it's safer for groups to ride in pairs than to string out over a long section of road because of the longer the group of riders, the longer a following car has to pull into the oncoming traffic to give them room. It's certainly more convivial.

The coalition would like to see a definition of what is safe passing room written into the law, with a minimum of a metre at low speeds and a metre-and-a-half when cars are going faster than 50 km/h.

Safety is also given as the reason for wanting bicyclists to be allowed to roll through stop signs. Curious about this, I looked at the study cited as evidence that it's more dangerous for cyclists to stop than keep going.

It's a study that looks at accidents in Idaho, where cyclists have already been given licence to roll past stop signs. It notes that cyclists with foot cleats or toe straps are at risk of falling down and injuring themselves when they stop.

So the solution is to allow them not to stop? How about simply having the sense not to wear foot cleats or toe straps if you don't have the agility to take them off in a hurry?

Stop signs are annoying for motorists, too. Many traffic engineers will admit that stop signs are often put in places where yield signs or no sign at all would do nicely. They are used for traffic calming, often to appease local residents.

And sit by any stop sign for more than a few minutes and you will see any number of variations of the rolling stop by drivers, some of whom will barely even slow down.

It's also true that bicyclists have a greater incentive than motorists to ensure that the road ahead is safe before plunging ahead. They will get the worst of any collision.

**But given the confusion on the road by both cyclists and motorists over what is legal now, creating a new set of rules just for bikes may only add to the mayhem.**

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