

“Bikes May Use Full Lane”  
—City of Columbus street signs

“Every lane is a bike lane.”  
New billboard campaign sponsored by the Ohio Department of Transportation and the Ohio Department of Health.

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing about a recent experience with a State Trooper. On the evening of August 23, 2016 at about 7:30pm, a State Trooper (car #1407) stopped a group of about 20 cyclists riding southbound on Riverside Drive near the intersection with Home Rd. We were riding under the auspices of Columbus Outdoor Pursuits as well as the Shamrock Cycling Club. Both clubs put safety first and strongly encourage riders to follow the rules of the road, going so far as to ask some riders to refrain from joining their rides if they violate the law. On this particular night, we were riding double file and remained on the right side of the road.

The trooper made many claims while he talked to us, but these were his most emphatic points. He claimed that cyclists cannot take up an entire lane. He claimed that we need to ride single file (“especially”) on narrow two lane roads. And he claimed that on narrow two lane roads cyclists must ride at the edge of the road near the white line.

I countered that, with all due respect, he did not know the Ohio Revised Code on this matter and encouraged him to look it up. He declined to do so and claimed that he “obviously” knew the law because he has been on the force for 18 years.

This much is clear: 18 years on the force does not guarantee knowledge of an ever-changing law. Ohio Revised Code 4501.01 includes bicycles in its definition of vehicles. Chapter 4511, then, details the rights and responsibilities of cyclists on the roadways. A particular section is worth quoting in full:

**§ 4511.55. Operating bicycles and motorcycles on roadway.**

(A) Every person operating a bicycle upon a roadway shall ride as near to the right side of the roadway as practicable obeying all traffic rules applicable to vehicles and exercising due care when passing a standing vehicle or one proceeding in the same direction.

(B) Persons riding bicycles or motorcycles upon a roadway shall ride not more than two abreast in a single lane, except on paths or parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles or motorcycles.

(C) This section does not require a person operating a bicycle to ride at the edge of the roadway when it is unreasonable or unsafe to do so. Conditions that may require riding away from the edge of the roadway include when necessary to avoid fixed or moving objects, parked or moving vehicles, surface hazards, or if it otherwise is unsafe or impracticable to do so, including if the lane is too narrow for the bicycle and an overtaking vehicle to travel safely side by side within the lane.

**Section C addresses the trooper's comments directly and leads to the exact opposite conclusion. On narrow roads, cyclists can take the entire lane since it is unsafe for cars to share the lane with them.**

Please consider this a report filed against the trooper for his unlawful stop of cyclists. But the more important lesson here is that Ohio police and state troopers appear to have little knowledge of the rules of the road as they pertain to cyclists beyond what their gut instincts tell them. This is not the first time an officer of the law has told me errant things about Ohio cycling law and gatherings of other cyclists are replete with similar stories. I urge you to get in contact with any of the excellent cycling organizations around the state (two are listed below) who will no doubt be thrilled to offer in-service training of some kind about cycling, the law, and Ohio roadways. At least please join ODOT, ODOH, the City of Columbus, and other municipalities in promoting broad knowledge of Ohio law regarding cyclists and the roadways.

I ask that you respond to this letter with your actions taken.

Most Sincerely,

Paul A. Djupe  
<contact information redacted>

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