

HEAD TO HEAD

Street cycling creates hazards



Emily Battmer

Many city and campus ordinances — Kirksville and Truman State included — mandate bicyclists ride in the road rather than on sidewalks.

This column is not about my deep-seated road rage. My plea for a change in the practices of bicyclists at Truman is motivated instead by common sense and one major principle — justice — for those driving motorized vehicles and those cycling on campus.

A common defense for riding in the streets is that street riding is safer than riding on sidewalks, but the numbers don't quite add up.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, collisions with moving motor vehicles are the third most common cause of cyclist injuries, following falls and collisions with fixed objects. Collisions with motor vehicles are the most deadly bicycle accidents, according to the NHTSA.

These accidents commonly are caused by the cyclists themselves. "It is not surprising that the precipitating events that lead to crashes are basic violations of the rules for operating bicycles," according to the NHTSA. In fact, the NHTSA states failing to yield to a motor vehicle accounts for almost half of motor vehicle-bicycle collisions among child cyclists and nearly a quarter of collisions among adult cyclists.

Additionally, falls are the leading cause of cyclist injuries, and many of those falls are "due to poor road surface conditions ... there is more likely to be debris and other hazards [on roads]," according to the NHTSA.

Despite the dangers of street riding, bicyclists have fought fiercely for their right to share the road, and legally they can. However, with right comes responsibility, and cyclists are expected to follow the same laws as their motorized counterparts. Yet, many cyclists ignore some of the basic laws protecting motorists' safety.

Common law violations include wrong-way riding, failure to yield, failure to obey traffic signals and riding at night without required equipment. As common as these offenses are, one does not often see a cyclist stopped and issued a citation for failing to abide by traffic laws.

To drive a motorized vehicle on public streets, motorists are required to be knowledgeable about safe road practices and obtain a driver's license. They must carry identification with them at all times, and must register their ve-

hicle and obtain license plates for their vehicle. Cyclists don't have any such requirements.

The government also has taken action to protect motorists' lives by enforcing seatbelt laws. Helmet laws for cyclists, when they exist, are not nearly as strict. In more than 80 percent of fatal cyclist accidents, those bicyclists were not wearing a helmet, according to the NHTSA.

Most students who ride on the streets simply use bikes as a cheap form of transport — most of us probably are not serious enough to self-educate about cycling laws and safety measures. But cyclists are not solely to blame.

Distracted driving is rampant among young people. Drunk driving is the leading cause of death for college-aged students, according to a Campus Explorer article. According to the article, almost 3.4 million students between age 18 and 24 drove while intoxicated during 2009. Texting is another common distraction college drivers face while operating vehicles, making sharing the road with cyclists more dangerous for all involved.

If the Department of Public Safety mandates that people ride bikes in the street, there need to be more designated bicycle lanes. Cyclists should be required to wear safety equipment and traffic laws need to be enforced for bicyclists as well as motorists. Students should be required to register their bicycles, be knowledgeable of laws and carry identification. Maybe if the stakes were higher for cyclists, they'd be more likely to ride responsibly and campus would be a safer place for everyone involved.

Emily Battmer is a senior communication major from Kansas City, Mo.

Bikes belong on the road



Robert Overmann

Like many Truman State students, I ride my bicycle every day. I ride to class, work and just about everywhere I need to go, as long as I'm not hauling cargo or passengers. As a driver, I also understand the vexation that can result from finding yourself trapped behind a slow-moving bicyclist.

I have bad news for you, miffed motorists of Kirksville — bicyclists have just as much right to the road as you do. Bicycling is a responsible and safe alternative method of travel, especially on streets near campus where the speed limit ranges from 20 to 30 miles per hour. Cyclists on the roadway deserve the same respect operators of motor vehicles expect from one another.

Bicycles, regardless of being propelled solely by human power, and thus not able to travel quickly, still are afforded the same rights as motorists, as stipulated by RSMO 307.188: "Every person riding a bicycle or motorized bicycle upon a street or highway shall be subject to all of the duties applicable to the driver of a vehicle."

Read that again. According to Missouri

law, bicyclists are entirely within their rights to bicycle on the road, as long as they follow applicable laws.

In fact, Missouri law encourages riding on the roadway. According to RSMO 300.347.1, "No person shall ride a bicycle upon a sidewalk within a business district," and if a "person is riding a bicycle upon a sidewalk, such person shall yield the right-of-way to any pedestrian."

This means, legally, you cannot ride a bicycle on the sidewalk around The Square, and if you ride on sidewalks in residential areas, you must give right-of-way to pedestrians.

However, there are times when it might be prudent not to ride on roadways. If traffic is especially heavy, or if the road has a high speed limit, one should consider not riding on the roadway. Safety always should be put first — a bicyclist colliding with a car at almost any speed is sure to result in injuries to the bicyclist.

But it is the responsibility of the conductor of any vehicle to recognize hazardous conditions and adjust to them. For example, the operator of a car is putting themselves in danger by driving through a flooded street. It is incorrect to blame a mode of transport for a person's poor reaction to hazardous conditions. All vehicle operators are responsible for recognizing hazards and making judgments that are most beneficial to one's own safety, as well as the safety of others.

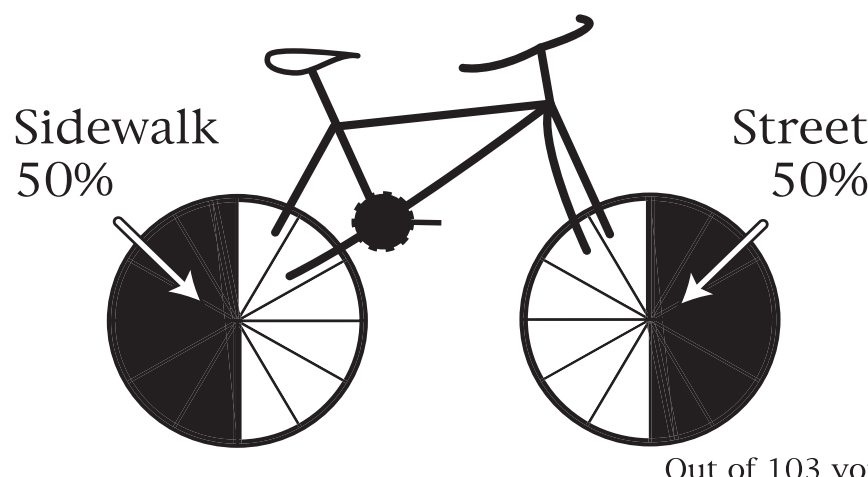
Many individuals get upset with bicyclists because they exercise their right to ride on the roadway while neglecting their responsibilities as a vehicle operator. Bicyclists, your responsibilities include, but are not limited to, obeying signaling laws, ensuring your bicycle is properly lighted at night and stopping at intersections. These laws are put in place to ensure the safety of all on Missouri roads — you must obey them if you choose to ride on the road.

I encourage Missouri law enforcement to enforce these laws. Bicycling can be dangerous, and bicyclists must understand that they have responsibilities as vehicle operators on the roadway. If roadway safety laws were enforced for bicyclists, not only would roadways be safer, there also would be greater mutual respect between motorists and bicyclists.

In the meantime, bicyclists, continue to ride on the roadways. If done so safely and responsibly, you're doing the environment, your health and your wallet a favor.

Robert Overmann is a senior English major from Cape Girardeau, Mo.

Web Poll Barring legal restrictions, should bicyclists ride on the sidewalk or the street?



How do you use Twitter?

"[I use Twitter] mostly for entertainment purposes. For me, it's just for laughs."

Sean Jackson
Freshman



"I use it [as] a mix between a blog and a professional tool. I Tweet anything from fantasy football to articles on music education."

Jacob England
Senior



"[I use Twitter] ... to stay connected with friends. Mostly I use Facebook."

Amanda Klopoc
Sophomore



"[I use Twitter] just to update my status. I post what I'm doing. Also [for] quotes ... from books and music."

Sadie Gerau
Junior



AROUND THE QUAD

Tweeting can be mundane or artistic



John Riti

I often check my phone and scroll through my Twitter feed. Amid the usual Tweets from my friends complaining about school and providing "Throwback Thursday" links to Instagram, a Tweet from a writer such as Nathan Englander or Joyce Carol Oates will pop up. For a moment, two different worlds fuse together, an unusual blend of seemingly high

and low culture all occurring on this social medium.

I think there's more to Twitter than some people realize. Perhaps it's because I like to write and I follow many writers on Twitter, but the parallels between composing a Tweet and any other piece of writing fascinates me. Twitter for me has an unseen side to it, a side that mirrors the workings of the mind and the creation process.

During an age when anything too accessible or mass-marketed appears low and unsophisticated, there are incredible moments I've witnessed via Twitter that exemplify higher-level thinking and offer glimpses into how others function.

For starters, Twitter is all about delivery. Word selection, intentional structural choices and overall tone of Tweets all are elements of delivery that come into play during the writing

process. For example, some of Joyce Carol Oates' Tweets read like prose to me, like this one from December 2012 — "Tweets are the pulsing of a great brain that never sleeps."

In addition, Tweets are an immediate outlet for your thoughts. They're like quick bursts of whatever is happening in your mind at any given time. Twitter allows people to get thoughts out — albeit informally — and present them to the world. To me, this is similar to the more formal aspects of the writing process.

Comedians like Chelsea Peretti hilariously master this, like this Tweet from March 2013 — "What's going on with the pope and could someone bring me hummus."

Writer Thomas Beller commented on this relationship in a June 18 New Yorker article, testifying how he composed a short piece by writing a series of Tweets, looking at them af-

terward and then re-assembling them into a short story that eventually was published in "The Paris Review."

Beller is quoted as saying the experience was "strange, exhilarating, outrageously narcissistic, frightening and embarrassing. In other words, like writing."

Beller's examination of the creative process in conjunction with a popular medium like Twitter describes how this social outlet offers more than meets the eye.

The New Yorker Tweeted an entire short story from Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jennifer Egan throughout the course of 10 days during 2012. The effect of Egan's Twitter delivery is it achieved a rare glimpse into the mentality of her character. Its fragmented nature has a dazzling and disorienting effect.

What's even more fascinating to me, however, is that the same place

where you can find your friends Tweeting about their favorite TV shows or complaining about the weather also is the location of a piece of art being presented to the world. Low and high cultures almost become one and the same. I don't see such things happening on other social media such as Facebook.

I like to construct a persona different from myself when I Tweet — just like writing, there are no set rules. And if there are rules, then they're made to be broken and that's when things get exciting. For some, Twitter might just be a place to rant their daily musings, but I've found it to be an exciting and surprisingly intellectual outlet that demonstrates the creative process at its best.

John Riti is a senior English major from St. Louis, Mo.