



College Street boutique. “Cyclists can see and hear pedestrians and other vehicles much better than a person inside a cage of steel and glass. Being a driver as well as a cyclist, I can say that I am much more keen and aware on a bicycle.”

More than anything else, the attentiveness Salpeter describes is the cornerstone of the Idaho stop. The original law – Idaho Statutes Title 39, Chapter 7, Section 720 – states cyclists must slow “to a reasonable speed” before yielding, either at a stop sign or a red light, and only then may they “proceed through the steady red light with caution.” Note the absence of any language encouraging the asphalt free-for-all screamed about by detractors.

“There’s something to be said about being so physically connected to the operation of your vehicle,” Salpeter continues. “Cyclists are able to stop or safely manoeuvre around something more adroitly than a motor vehicle.”

Regardless, the conventional wisdom doesn’t leave much room for this sort of logic. Responding to claims like Salpeter’s, *Globe and Mail* editorials from the summer of 2009 described the problem as a domino effect: what cyclists begin, motorists are sure to imitate. As if describing the sudden unleashing of amoral, illegal activity with the legalization of cannabis, one editorial in particular suggested that cars would similarly use pollution, rather than efficiency, as a reason to do their own Idaho stops. “Few drivers stop properly now, anyway,” it said. Still, even this editorial acknowledged that “cars are inherently more dangerous to pedestrians, cyclists and other cars, and so should perhaps follow different rules.”

ZERO TO 30 Terror for Toronto cyclists until speed limits lowered

BY
ALBERT
KOEHL

There’s a good reason why 30 km/h speed limits may soon be coming to a street near you – despite furious opposition.

It’s a simple reason too. Even though drivers want to speed through other people’s neighbourhoods, they usually want other people to drive slowly in their own neighbourhood.

The science behind lower speed limits is also simple. If your loved one is hit by a car at 30 km/h, they’ll be coming home, even if they have to go to the hospital first. If your loved one is hit by a car at just over 50km/h, that person will likely be headed to their own funeral.

In Toronto, many streets have had speed limits lowered to 40 or even 30 km/h. St. George Street is one example of the latter. Ontario’s Chief Coroner and Toronto’s Medical Officer of Health have recommended lower speed limits on far more roads.

The City of Toronto appreciates the logic of slower speed limits but approaches the issue with a rather fatalistic (pun intended) attitude: lowering the speed limit alone will not get people to slow down. Instead, the city’s approach is to lower speeds in conjunction with traffic calming measures like median islands, narrower lanes, raised crosswalks and tighter right-

hand turns. The problem is that traffic calming is expensive, so the city’s approach will take decades.

The Annex Residents Association recently adopted a resolution to push for 30 km/h limits on local streets. At a public meeting to debate the topic, there was overwhelming support. Councillor Adam Vaughan then took the matter to community council and a staff report on the proposal was ordered.

Listening carefully to the arguments made by people who oppose lower limits is eye-opening. Most of the loud shouting has little substance – it’s just anger about change. On the rare occasion when opponents do articulate a reason, it’s usually that lower speed will cause more delays and congestion.

That’s weak.

Some people assert that lower speed limits will mean slower motor traffic. The problem with this car-dominated perspective is that it has failed us in getting people safely and efficiently to their destinations. The reason for optimism is that even opponents of lower speeds will appreciate the logic of these changes on their own neighbourhood roads – and that, ultimately, means most roads.

E-BIKE IRE

Toronto bylaw not being enforced

BY
COSETTE
SCHULZ

Few look like a bike, most act like a motorbike, and all are considered a motor vehicle under

the Criminal Code of Canada. In Ontario, e-bike riders must be at least 16 years of age and wear an approved bicycle or motorcycle helmet. No licence or registration is required. As long as they travel no more than 32 km/h, weigh no more than 120 kg and are equipped with pedals, feel free to hop on your e-bike and ride away.

The Ontario Highway Traffic Act (HTA) states that e-bikes are legally allowed to travel alongside bicycles in the bike lane, but are not permitted on highways, municipal roads or sidewalks.

If, however, you travel on a City of Toronto managed bicycle lane or park pathway, local bylaws state e-bikes can only be propelled by pedalling, with the motor off. The fine for disobeying this law is \$60.

This has confused both riders of e-bikes, and good old-fashioned “I power myself” bikes in Toronto. “Many times e-bikers conveniently forget the rules of the road and use the streets as both a bike and a car,” said Hyedie Hashimoto, organizer of the Toronto Cupcake Ride on her blog cupcakeride.com. “And when I talk about e-bikes, I’m referring to the ones that are like low-powered scooters, not bicycles that come with an electric assist where you actually need to pedal,” says Hashimoto. “In my hierarchy of road users that I hate, bad e-bikers come second to the selfish cell phone-using drivers. That is how much I despise them.”

In response to these concerns and questions from the public, the City of Toronto created an online survey for residents “regarding how e-bikes may be included in Toronto’s transportation mix” this spring. A summary report is expected soon.