

OPINION PACES

Our VIEW

Street smarts

Bike lanes would wreak havoc downtown

Last Friday, a ragtag mob of cyclists descended on downtown Lincoln at 4:30 p.m. to demonstrate to motorists why we need bicycle lanes.

Not only was the rolling obstacle in poor judgment, but so was the cause it supported. Obviously, riding in busy traffic can be dangerous, but so would the effects of expanding downtown streets to include bike lanes.

"Bike lanes and intersections don't mix," remarked Rick Dockhorn, an Effective Cycling trainer certified by the American League of Bicyclists.

He offered an example: You're riding north on 17th Street, and the bike lane is on the right hand side. You want to go straight when you encounter an intersection. The car next to you wants to go right. A collision is likely.

Or, you want to turn left, which would require you to veer across lanes of traffic from the bike lane on the far right side.

This would be in addition to the utter chaos the installation of bike lanes would wreak upon downtown streets. The proposal is far from realistic in a downtown comprised solely of one-block units.

Bike lanes would push back sidewalks, confuse on-street parking and pose complications with every intersection - which means every single block.

The answer: Be a better cyclist.

In this case, it means behaving like you belong on the road.

"If you act like you are in a car, you will more than likely be treated like it," testified Dockhorn, who says he rides through downtown nearly every day.

Dockhorn says courtesy and confidence go a long way when riding through traffic. Among other things, he said, don't ride through red lights, stay in the appropriate lane of traffic and don't ride in between lanes.

Still, most people fear riding alongside speeding traffic, which is why classes such as the one Dockhorn teaches exist. He educates people on simple rules and tips that can make cycling on busy streets safe and comfortable.

Exactly a year ago today, The Daily Nebraskan ran an editorial espousing the need for bicycle lanes as a reaction to a city ordinance banning bicycles from certain downtown sidewalks.

Now, we recognize the necessity of cyclists acting responsibly. Bicycles are vehicles, which usually require three feet to each side of its two-foot handlebars for safety.

It is simply unrealistic to have them flying through crowded downtown sidewalks and speeds of up to 25 mph.

Mobs of young renegades on bicycles holding up rush hour traffic make only one point: It's us against you.

And that attitude may be the most dangerous aspect of all when you ride down a busy city street.

Mook's VIEW



DN LETTERS

Punt the bums

Your editorial staff seems to think "the homeless pose no threat. ..." Having spent countless hours studying and working in the Nebraska Union since 1991, I offer evidence to the contrary, with the observation it has gotten worse since then.

I have seen the following occur in the union and surrounding areas: bums conning or accosting students for money or favors; a vagrant verbally abusing and intimidating students by the big-screen television; the same vagrant suddenly and without provocation beating a much smaller inoffensive transient. Couldn't it just as easily have been a student? I personally had to stop this attack. I have seen a low-life insulting a Chinese girl as she walked by; transients gratuitously yelling the "N-word" and threatening to shoot people. When I looked their way, one postured to beat me, and then he tried to hit me with a large rock. He later beat up a Lincoln teenager. I have seen a vagrant continuously uttering threats in the general direction of students; riffraff smoking in non-smoking areas; bums sprawled out in choke points of the union; vagrants littering lawns and burglarizing my house (on university property); an illegal alien stealing cell phones from cars in UNL parking lots (he was apprehended); bums using loud and vulgar language around students; a woman loudly and frequently abusing her caregiver; incredibly filthy and smelly bums rolling around on the same furniture students use; people who drift in and out of sanity ranting and raving to the point where students can't study anymore.

I could continue. Some of these incidents are logged in with the campus police. I'd also like to note I've heard dozens of students say they avoid the union because the non-students there make them feel unsafe. This is why Daryl Swanson and the Union Board are trying to make the "Husker Flophouse" a better place.

What kind of an impression does the union now make on visitors? Would you want your kids going to a school that has such a collection of human flotsam? I wouldn't. I'd send them to the University of Nebraska at Omaha, where the union is immaculate and where there are no bums, just nice students like the ones at UNL, who your insulting cartoonist puts in the same category as the people just described. By the way, you also owe those "bloated" (that's not politically correct) Husker fans an apology for your insulting comparison of them to the UNL bums.

I hope the Association of Students at the University of Nebraska is ready to rethink its position on the issue as

well. Otherwise, the student body should recommend that most resign, as they are not looking out for the students' interests. By the way, "homeless" is a term that properly describes those who have lost their home in a catastrophe, and should not be used for those who are too damn lazy to perform honest work and contribute to society.

But if such people wish to use the union, they might, as long as they behave properly like the students.

Dr. Al Koenig
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UNL and UNO

Greek chorus

Last week in the DN, fevers flurried over the value of the greek system. Some were prepared to condemn based on what appeared to be false implications of profiled misdemeanors. The greeks were quick to supplant these rebellious hostilities with a more reasonable, holistic assessment of greek life. However, neither pro- nor anti-greek columnists were able to mount a reasonable argument for their cause. Fever and fervor have placed both greek and non-greek in arch opposition, but neither have a substantial, logical backing to be so dogmatic.

Here's one critique of this greek "system" that is difficult to refute. The average greek at UNL is a white, Christian, middle-upper class, mid-westerner. Within the greek system, socialization, dating, obtaining friends, group studying and partying almost wholly occur with other greek affiliates. This is common sense. Most people know this to be true.

The implications elude us. As a campus with perhaps 100 nationalities and thousands of ethnicities with uncountable different cultural world views, the greek "system" is an isolated island of closed network American life. By planning the majority of their social events with other greeks who are, for all intents and purposes, identical to themselves, they systematically discriminate against the remaining 99.9 percent of the other human types on campus. This practice further enforces the rigid group mentality that is so prevalent and racist on the American college scene.

As leaders of the community (which they will no doubt profess to be) with their powerful backing of the great American mass, they are ultimately responsible for breaking down the American profile of the foreigner; the same profiling system that portrays greeks to be a mass of rude lusher. They can begin breaking these barriers down by simply planning to

socialize more often with any of the thousands of human types at UNL regularly. Integration removes prejudices of greeks, non-greeks and all foreigners; separation produces them. Until they take this initial baby step forward, they deserve to be criticized.

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Union matters

Well Mr. Eickman, you certainly got one thing right in your article: "Eickman needs to quit whining." Maybe you could at least yell about something that matters. You say we have shelled out \$20 for a hazard. Would you rather have the union closer to the schedule or asbestos removed? Hmm, what is the bigger hazard? Perhaps you can control the weather also. I know, when I worked as an electrician I didn't like to be standing in or have water running near me.

Construction sites are hazards, that is why OSHA mandated those fences around the union. They are there to keep people from sneaking into a place that may contain hazards that could injure them. We all know what happens then. They sue. I would rather pay for that fencing than for the lawsuit that could follow.

You say you could pay for beer and pizza with the \$20. That really shows where your priorities are. When I first started college, I was attending the University of Missouri-Rolla on a partial academic scholarship. Soon after I arrived, a tuition increase was announced. It was only 60 to 90 percent over the next five years. It was then cheaper for me to return to Nebraska on no financial aid than to pay \$17,000 (this year's costs) a year for school. You see, we have it good here. Ask people from California why they are here.

You also don't want to pay for your brother's or sister's education. That means you are advocating a return to the Dark Ages. Besides, I assume you own a car. Go look at the registration. You will notice you pay property tax. That means you are paying for someone's education.

If all else fails, go to a tech school and become a licensed construction worker. They probably are making more than we will straight out of school.

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