

Bicycle Registration & Bicycle Licensing Laws

Many Alliance organizations have dealt with the threat of or reality of mandatory bicycle registration or bicycle licensing laws. These are serious issue that normally crop up in cases where officials get upset and grasp for what they see as a simple solution. In fact, mandatory bicycle registration & licensing has resulted in:

- police harassment (Washington, DC)
- deterring new riders because it is yet another obstacle
- are more expense to enforce than the agency realized (Minnesota?)
- lack of enforcement

The Alliance generally recommends against supporting any efforts to mandate bicycle registration or licensing. Below are some resources straight from Alliance organizations on the topic including arguments for and against, places where these laws have existed or been threatened, a sample campaign to fight bicycle licensing, and some ideas for how to divert efforts to instate these laws.

Bicycle Licensing Arguments

PRO. ARGUMENTS	CON. ARGUMENTS
Many cyclists lack the skills to cycle safely; we require drivers ed, why not cyclists ed as well.	Licensing is not necessary for education, and considering how poorly some states educate their motorists, it's clear that the two have only a tenuous link.
Licensing will help enforce "same roads, same rules" by penalizing cyclists who disobey law. This will also help appease motorists who complain of lawless cyclists.	At what age do you require someone to be licensed to use a bicycle? If the age is 12, are 11-year-olds not allowed to bike? And if they are, why is a less competent 11-year old bicyclist allowed to ride without a license while an experienced adult is not?
	The core reason for licensing: to have a mechanism for removing drivers who pose a serious threat to the safety and property of others. The purpose of licensing is NOT to educate, or even to ensure good behavior. The proof is in the numbers: licensed motorists kill over 40,000 and injure over 2 million people a year. How many people do Un-licensed cyclists kill and injure per year?
	Licensing will discourage potentials cyclists by creating yet another obstacle.
	Other opportunities for positive PR exist,

	such as with the SFBC's Co-Exist and T.A.'s Give Respect Get Respect campaigns.
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Bicycle Registration Arguments

PRO. ARGUMENTS	CON. ARGUMENTS
Prevents theft and/or makes it more likely that stolen bicycles are returned to owners	Administrative costs are barely covered by bicycle registration fees.
It is a potential tool in identifying an injured or unconscious rider (assuming, of course, they are riding their own bike) that is carrying no other form of ID, children esp	This opens the door for police harassment of bicyclists that have otherwise done nothing wrong.
Potential source for additional funds for trailways, facilities or education	Mandatory registration discourages and decreases cycling by creating yet another obstacle.
A PR advantage in dealing with anti bike motorheads.	Other opportunities for positive PR exist, such as with the SFBC's Co-Exist and T.A.'s Give Respect Get Respect campaigns.

Places Where "Licensing" Laws Have Been Proposed or Repealed: (most of these proposed laws have referred to licensing bikes, not cyclists)

Philadelphia: (2009): <http://blog.bicyclecoalition.org/2009/11/city-council-to-propose-mandatory.html>

<http://blog.bicyclecoalition.org/2009/11/bicycle-coalition-opposes-proposed-bike.html>

<http://urbanvelo.org/philadelphia-council-considers-bike-registration/>

http://www.philly.com/philly/news/20091118_Council_eyes_new_bike-ride_regs.html

<http://www.ecovelo.info/2009/11/20/bicycle-licensing-and-increased-fines-proposed-in-philly/>

Oregon: (2009) See <http://bikeportland.org/2009/03/10/bta-issues-formal-opposition-to-bike-registration-bill/>

Medford, OR: (2009) "A Medford ordinance meant to help in the recovery of stolen bicycles but that fined cyclists \$195 if they didn't have a license was repealed."
<http://www.mailtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100305/NEWS/3050328/-1/rss01>

Los Angeles, CA: (2009) Los Angeles Police Department issued moratorium on the city's mandatory bicycle license program in January. In the summer, the law was

officially repealed. See <http://la-bike.org/press-releases/press-release-bicycle-license.html> and <http://la.streetsblog.org/2009/01/09/breaking-news-lapd-recommends-discontinuing-bike-license-program/> for details.

Seattle, WA: (2008) <http://urbanvelo.org/seattle-debates-bicycle-license/>
“Here in Washington State a legislator proposed legislation that would require all bicycles to be licensed. It quickly died after the Department of Licensing and the Department of Revenue told him it wasn't feasible economically and would cost the state to enforce. The Bicycle Alliance met with him and reminded him that all ages ride bicycles both on the road and off and how questioned how realistically it could be implemented and enforced. The bill died before begin introduced.” -Barbara J. Culp, Bicycle Alliance of Washington (May 2010)

Marin County, CA: (2007) “Marin County, CA, has a significant problem with drivers getting furious at bicyclists who run stop signs. One of our County Supervisors has been so annoyed by this that she's brought up the idea of creating legislation that requires all cyclists to be licensed to ride their bikes.” – Kim Banish, Executive Director of Marin County Bicycle Coalition

New York City: (2004) See the campaign story and advise from Transportation Alternatives below.

Iowa: (2007) Contact Mark Wyatt with the Iowa Bicycle Coalition for details.

Washington, DC: “One of our councilmembers wanted each cyclist to have a huge metal license plate that could be picked up by the automated red light cameras. Luckily it was a non-starter.” – Eric Gilliland, Executive Director Washington Area Bicyclist Association

Garden Grove, CA: (2009): “The City of Garden Grove has put the brakes on its bicycle licensing program. The Fire Department will no longer issue bicycle licenses, but will instead, refer owners to the National Bike Registry (NBR) at www.nationalbikeregistry.com” http://www.ci.garden-grove.ca.us/?q=fire/bikelicense_02

Toronto, ON: A licensing law was repealed in 1956. It has been considered again since: “The City of Toronto has explored both options and has recommended against either. (I've attached the report) The full report is here:

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/2006/agendas/committees/plt/plt060601/it020.pdf>

The conclusions were:

- Bicycle licences are not effective in preventing bicycle theft,;
- A cyclist operating licence is not required for police officers to enforce the existing traffic, rules,;
- Developing a cyclist testing and licensing system would be expensive and divert attention, from enforcing

- the existing traffic rules for cyclists; and,
- Providing more resources for cyclist education and training and increased police enforcement, would be a more cost-effective approach for improving safety.

Our Cycling Committee passed the following motion:

The Toronto Cycling Committee:

(A) adopted the following recommendations:

(1) Licensing of Bicycles:

The Toronto Cycling Committee requested that the Works Committee forward the following to City Council for consideration:

The Toronto Cycling Committee does not support the licensing of bicycles or cyclists and makes the following recommendations to City Council:

(a) that City Council not support the licensing of bicycles or cyclists due to the following concerns:

(i) licensing causes additional barriers to cycling

(ii) licensing is not cost efficient due to the administrative resources required and the direct costs to multi-bicycle households

(iii) licensing programs are not enforceable given the lack of police resources currently available for enforcing existing Highway Traffic Act infractions.

(v) licensing programs will not apply to cyclists entering Toronto from other jurisdictions.

(b) that City Council recognize that all of the valid reasons that the City discontinued licensing bicycles in 1956 are still present today (as evidenced by reports in 1984, 1992 and 1996) and, that until these issues change significantly or disappear, that bicycle licensing not be entertained again in the near future.

(c) that City Council recognize that encouraging more citizens to cycle benefits everyone living in Toronto by reducing congestion on our roads, improving air quality by reducing automobile use, reduces health care costs related to obesity and inactivity and that every effort must be made to remove barriers that prevent people from choosing to cycle.”

- Dave Meslin, Project Coordinator, Toronto Cyclists Union

See more information at <http://www.thestar.com/news/gta/article/639207>

Places Where “Licensing” Laws Exist: (these laws refer to licensing of bikes, not cyclists)

Salt Lake City: “Salt Lake City requires that all bicycles be licensed. If the police stop you for other reasons (like participating in Critical Mass), and your bicycle is not licensed, they can impound it. Other than that, the licensing of bicycles is a hopeless

failure. It does not discourage theft, because there is no record keeping to link a bicycle license back to its owner: if your bike is stolen, there's nowhere you can." – Michael Wise

Stanford University: "All bicycles used on campus must be licensed with Santa Clara County."

http://transportation.stanford.edu/alt_transportation/BikingAtStanford.shtml#bikereg

McMinnville, OR:

Philomath, OR: <http://www.ci.philomath.or.us/police/Bicycle%20Licensing.htm>

Santa Monica, CA: (1996) Law allows police to place a cyclist without a bicycle license in jail (for up to 6 months) and/or issue a fine up to \$1,000, even if not a Santa Monica resident. See <http://www.bikerumor.com/2009/10/04/wtf-jail-or-1000-fine-for-not-having-a-bicycle-license-resident-or-not/>. The Santa Monica law is in conflict with the CA law on bicycle licensing. See <http://garyridesbikes.blogspot.com/2009/09/illegal-to-ride-santa-monica-outlaws.html> for more details.

New Mexico: "Our community in southern NM still has it on the books but it is not enforced. We are trying to get it removed because it's not really enforceable and there are many homeless and low income riders to whom even a small license fee would be a burden. The state has a hard enough time just enforcing the insurance requirements for drivers of motor vehicles let alone cyclists." - Trina Witter, Mesilla Valley Bicycle Coalition, www.mvbike.org (May 2010)

Iowa: "We have a few towns with licensing and a knowledge exam, but when pressed, they usually don't know that the law exists. They never have an exam available for review." - Mark Wyatt, Iowa Bicycle Coalition (May 2010)

University of TX: "The University of Texas does have a mandatory registration policy. And theoretically, if you ride an unregistered bike on university property, it can be impounded by campus police.

That said, they have never done this to my knowledge. We have tried to get them to remove this policy, but they refused. We haven't pushed the issue, partly because the University police are extremely supportive of bicyclists in most instances and work hard to return stolen bikes they find." - Rob D'Amico, League of Bicycling Voters (May 2010)

Kansas: "A number of Kansas communities require that bicycles be registered and/or licensed. The specific requirements vary, but in general, the idea of registration is to make it easier for a bicycle to be identified and returned to its rightful owner if it is lost or stolen, or if it's involved in an accident." <http://www.kansascyclist.com/bicycle-registration.html>

- Arkansas Citty, KS
- Hays, KS
- Topeka, KS
- Wichita, KS

Places Where Registration Laws Have Been Proposed or Repealed:

Tucson: (2010) <http://tucsonvelo.com/news/council-votes-to-investigate-bike-licensing/>

Detroit, MI: (July 2009) “The Detroit City Council voted 7-0 Tuesday to repeal a controversial ordinance that allows police to issue tickets to people who don’t register their bicycles” <http://www.m-bike.org/blog/2008/07/29/detroits-bicycle-ordinance-repealed>

Massachusetts: “We don’t currently have bicycle licensing anywhere in MA, but there is a law on the books that gives each city and town the option to require registration of every bicycle purchased there. Which makes no sense, because many if not most bicycles purchased today are bought by people who don’t live or ride in the town where the store is located. I personally ride in at least 5 municipalities and 2 counties most days. Our current Bicyclist Safety Bill includes a provision repealing the registration law.” – David Watson, Executive Director Mass Bike

Minnesota: (2005) Minnesota had mandatory bicycle registration; it was repealed in 2005.

Places Where Registration Laws Exist:

California: Allows local jurisdictions to require licensing. “**License Requirement. VC 39002**

a) A city or county may adopt a bicycle licensing ordinance or resolution providing that no resident shall operate any bicycle on any street, road, highway, or other public property within the city of county, unless such bicycle is licensed in accordance with this division.

b) Any bicycle not licensed under this division may be additionally regulated or licensed pursuant to local ordinance or may be licensed upon request of the owner.

c) It is illegal for any person to to tamper with, destroy, mutilate or alter any license indicia (marking) or registration form or to remove, alter, or mutilate the serial number, or the identifying marks of a licensing agency's identifying symbol on any bicycle frame licensed under the provision of this division.”

Michigan: Allows local jurisdictions to require licensing but they must post signs letting people know of requirement. <http://www.m-bike.org/blog/2008/07/03/detroit-police-announce-bicycle-license-enforcement>

Ohio: Allows local jurisdictions to require licensing. See <http://www.ohiobike.org/bicycle-law-digest.html>.

Kansas: "A number of Kansas communities require that bicycles be registered and/or licensed. The specific requirements vary, but in general, the idea of registration is to make it easier for a bicycle to be identified and returned to its rightful owner if it is lost or stolen, or if it's involved in an accident."

<http://www.kansascyclist.com/bicycle-registration.html>

- Lawrence, KS
- Leavenworth, KS
- Kansas State University

Washington, DC: "In DC we have a mandatory registration requirement. The point of this is to help return stolen bikes to their owners. Unfortunately, the reality is that this is often used as an excuse to pull over people that otherwise have not done anything wrong. It is in the process of being repealed. Licensing bikes so that they could be ticketed or moving violations is another matter. One of our councilmembers wanted each cyclist to have a huge metal license plate that could be picked up by the automated red light cameras. Luckily it was a non-starter." - Eric Gilliland, Executive Director Washington Area Bicyclist Association

Madison, WI: "City of Madison Ordinance 12.78(2) requires all bicycles used by Madison residents to be registered. Failure to do so could result in a fine and fees of around \$50. City of Madison Ordinance 12.78(2)(d) requires bicycle dealers to register bicycles at time of sale"

<http://www.cityofmadison.com/trafficEngineering/bicyclingRegistration.cfm>

UC Davis: "The bike coordinator at the UC Davis campus (which requires its students to register their bikes) says it greatly increases the recovery rates for stolen bikes--from something like 2 to 3% recovery to 10-15% (don't quote me on those numbers). Registration records are maintained by the state in California, but registration is not mandatory." - Walt Seifert, Executive Director Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates. More info at http://daviswiki.org/Bicycle_License

Milwaukee, WI: "Registration is required per Section 102 2 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances which states:

"102 2. License Required. It shall be unlawful for any resident of the city to operate or use a bicycle, operated alone or in part by muscular power, upon any of the streets, alleys or public highways of the city without first obtaining from the city a license therefor, and unless said bicycle is properly registered and a license sticker is affixed to the frame of such bicycle."

<http://itmdapps.ci.mil.wi.us/bicyclelicensweb/FrequentQuestions.htm#WhyshouldIregistermybicycle>

Misc. Responses to Licensing/Registration Issue

"In my area the licensing of bicycles has been phased out. The revenue generated does not cover overhead and the premise of aiding in the recovery of stolen property has been proven false. Components are (usually) untraceable and 90% of stolen bicycles are not recovered.

When my bicycle was "stolen" the city tried to sell it as abandoned property. A valid "license plate" (issued by that city) was on it when recovered; a police report was filed but I was never notified.

The primary result of bicycle licensing is deterring the casual rider from usage. I am strongly opposed to the licensing of these vehicles and hope you feel that way also."
- Bill, wnfisk@hotmail.com (May 2010)

"Last fall the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, responding to an SFMTA board member's query about "licensing bikes", developed a pretty good little memo on the legal authority, opportunities and challenges of licensing bicycles and of licensing bicyclists:

<http://sfmta.com/cms/rbikes/documents/LicensingofBicyclesSignedMemo09.10.09.pdf> Your jurisdictional particulars may vary, but the overall conclusions tend to hold . . ." - Andy Thornley, Program Director, San Francisco Bicycle Coalition (May 2010)

"A couple years ago while running our Undriver Licensing Station, I met a man who wanted to see licensing happen for bicyclists. Last December he reported in an email that it is in the works in Britain:

'I emigrated from the USA, moved back to Britain and I am pleased to say that the British government has announced a national initiative and a national standard for cycle training called Bikeability. During the next five years, the Driving Standards Agency responsible for testing all drivers will include 14-16 year olds in pre-driver training and cycling, laying the regulatory foundation for compulsory basic training, testing and licensing of all cyclists on British roads.'

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bikeability>

<http://bikeability.org.uk/>" - **Julia Field**, Undriving Founder/Program Director (May 2010)

Redirecting Efforts to Mandate Registration or Licensing:

Transportation Alternatives (T.A.) and the **San Francisco Bicycle Coalition** both operate campaigns to educate cyclists about the rules of the road. They're important not only on their face but also because they demonstrate to government and to the public that the advocates are doing their part to help ensure cyclists

know and obey the rules of the road. You can read about T..A.'s Give Respect/Get Respect and Working Cyclist campaigns at:

<http://www.transalt.org/campaigns/bike/giveget.html>
<http://www.transalt.org/press/askta/040407working.html>

The San Francisco Bicycle Coalition also has an excellent campaign called Coexist, which encourage bicyclists and drivers to get along:

<http://www.sfbike.org/?coexist>

Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia's Experience

By Sarah Stuart, May 2010

The legislation introduced last November into City Council was designed to "register" bicycles. It required that anyone riding a bicycle must register the bicycle and display a "registration" plate. So, it licensed bikes, not bicyclists.

A second bill was also introduced to raise fines for riding on the sidewalk, riding with headphones and riding on a bicycle not "equipped with a brake." A companion bill was identical to the "fee" bill but mandated confiscation of a bike not equipped with a brake instead of a high penalty

The way it played out was that the negative reaction to the bills was overwhelming. The push back that the Councilmen who introduced the legislation received was dramatic and much more than either expected. They were pilloried in the press and blogosphere. Nevertheless, their action did touch a nerve for those who are very unhappy and angry about bad behavior and spurning of traffic rules that some bicyclists display. It was a hot button issue for a solid 6 weeks with multiple articles, columns, letters to the editor, political cartoons; bicycling was the number one civic issue for that period of time. You can see a list of all of the articles in chronological order [here](#).

After one of our two dailies featured a point-counterpoint opinion editorial from one of the Councilmen and Alex (Doty, our ED), the Mayor's Office of Transportation announced it would convene a new "Bicycle/Pedestrian Public Safety Committee" to include the Bicycle Coalition, the messenger association, City Council, the Police Dept. etc... These two events cooled things off. The Committee met in early January. The Deputy Mayor made it clear that the Mayor would never support a registration program. After much discussion, the Councilmen agreed to hold their bills until the Committee made some recommendations about how to improve safety. We announced that in an [email to our members](#) and [on the blog](#).

Unfortunately, the Committee hasn't met since. The Mayor's office of Transportation has been preoccupied with other issues and with winter in full force, the issue receded as a priority. We made a bunch of recommendations to improve

enforcement and revisions to the City's traffic code to the City's Bicycle/Pedestrian Plan, which will be coming out in June 2010. We would like this Committee to take those recommendations and take steps to implement them. We're working with the Mayor's office of Transportation to develop an agenda for the Committee to tackle.

T.A.'s Campaign to Fight Bicycle Licensing:

By Noah Budnick, Deputy Director Transportation Alternatives

In 2004, a New York City Councilmember proposed a bill that would require all cyclists over 16 to obtain bike license tags from the City of New York. As others have stated on this list, this requirement would drastically reduce cycling and undermine the safety in numbers effect and, thus, make cycling more dangerous.

Transportation Alternatives flooded Councilmembers' office with letters and faxes, the newspapers with letters to the editor and even scored a few editorials along the way to stopping the bill in its tracks. We were aided by bicycle groups around the state and the U.S., which picked up our Action Alerts and forwarded them to their members, who then wrote to New York City's legislators. It was beautiful.

In the course of this mobilization, Transportation Alternatives' membership spiked because we alerted cyclists to this threat and helped them take part in stopping it. Cyclists saw the great value and strength of our organization and donated to support our mission.

Within days of the start of our campaign, the Councilmember who originally proposed the bill called our director and said, "Please, make the faxes stop." We did. We also met with the Councilmember a few months later to discuss other cycling issues before her City Council committee, and she would call us from time-to-time to ask about other cycling issues in her district. She was term limited and is no longer in office, and her replacement is now among our strongest allies.

You can read our rhetoric laid out in our action alerts, e-faxes and magazine articles at the below links:

Action Alert! Stop the Anti-Bicycling Bill!

<http://www.transalt.org/press/askta/041116bikebill.html>

New York, Nation Mobilize Against Mandatory Bike Registration

<http://www.transalt.org/press/askta/041119.html>

Anti-Bike Bill Almost Beat

<http://www.transalt.org/press/magazine/045%20Winter/09bikebill.html>

Advise for others: If you can get out in front and immediately make the case that licensing is a malicious attack on cycling that will discourage and decrease riding, then you can really rally cyclists around the cause.

Press Articles on Licensing & Registration

- http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/transportation/344924_bicyclelicense26.html
- <http://www.examiner.com/x-3139-NY-Bicycle-Transportation-Examiner~y2009m3d11-Bicycle-licensing-shortsighted-and-discriminatory-Part-I>
- <http://la.streetsblog.org/2009/01/09/breaking-news-lapd-recommends-discontinuing-bike-license-program/>
- <http://www.ecovelo.info/2009/11/20/bicycle-licensing-and-increased-fines-proposed-in-philly/>
- <http://bikeportland.org/2009/03/10/bta-issues-formal-opposition-to-bike-registration-bill/>
- http://blog.oregonlive.com/commuting/2010/03/registration_licensing_whatveve.html
-

Should bicyclists be licensed to ride?

They share the road, so some say they should share costs

By [ANGELA GALLOWAY](#) P-I REPORTER

Motorists help pay for roads with gas taxes, tolls and license tabs. Boaters subsidize maritime programs with vessel registration and boat launch fees.

Maybe bicyclists, too, should pitch in for the costs of their trails and lanes.

It's a suggestion -- sometimes born of sincerity, other times of snarkiness -- that drivers, tax-weary citizens and others make whenever politicians and cycling advocates talk about investing public money into cycling facilities. Some raised the idea again in recent weeks after the Seattle City Council and Mayor Greg Nickels endorsed a \$240 million, 10-year plan for new bike lanes and street upgrades.

"Bicyclers are due to pay some of the costs of their special lanes and parking space removals with a 'city bicycle license' for using arterials," Seattleite Shirlee Holmes told the Seattle P-I in a recent letter to the editor. "Make the price hefty enough to cover the administration costs."

Washington cyclists already follow many of the same rules as motorists -- but not all. In this state, as in most, bike riders must obey the same traffic rules as cars. They are also allowed to travel on many Seattle sidewalks and some highways. If a cyclist violates a law, such as running a red light, police can issue the same ticket a motorist would get.

There is one key distinction, though: That ticket will not go on a cyclist's Washington driving record. That is not the case in at least one state, Florida, where cyclists can rack up points that jeopardize their driver's licenses and inflate their insurance rates. In fact, Florida establishes a "dummy record" for underage cycling scofflaws. Juveniles must pay any tickets on that record before they can get their first license, said Ann Nucatola, a spokeswoman for the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles.

Here in Washington, "In order for a moving violation to be recorded on somebody's driving record, it has to occur in a motor vehicle," said Brad Benfield, a spokesman for the state Department of Licensing. "And bicycles and boats don't count."

Numerous national cycling advocacy groups said they knew of no government that requires cyclists be licensed. But some cities do require them to register their bikes, including municipalities in California and Wisconsin.

Lately, "there seems to be a little resurgence in conversation around the country," in favor of such cost sharing, said Darryl Anderson, Minnesota state bicycle and pedestrian coordinator. "It kind of comes and goes."

The idea of charging cyclists a registration fee has been floated by lawmakers in Olympia, but not seriously considered in recent years. For each of the past several years, legislators have asked transportation officials to look into the idea of establishing such a program, said Paula Reeves, of the state Department of Transportation.

After talking with other states, the department believes the programs raise little money -- if any -- beyond what they cost to run, Reeves said. "We wouldn't see a big opportunity to improve facilities with that kind of a program," she said. "We also have some survey results that are fairly recent that show that most cyclists also own a car or multiple cars, so they're paying license fees and gas taxes."

Property taxes cover much of the costs of smaller roads and transportation facilities, added Marty McOmber, a spokesman for Nickels.

"That is something that is spread equitably around the city, and it's the funding mechanism that we have to live with in this state," he said. Mandatory bike registration is "not something that we would be inclined to pursue," McOmber said. "It's not really clear what benefit it would have and it's fraught with a lot of complications."

Cycling advocates generally oppose the idea. Not only are bike users already

contributing through property taxes, they say, but also their cycling benefits all road users and the environment.

"We want as many drivers as possible to give up driving their cars," said Gordon Black, director of the Bicycle Alliance of Washington. Required registration would create a "potential barrier" to cycling, he said. "We want we want to make the access to bicycling as easy as possible."

The question of requiring bike registration fees is "one of those perennial things that crops up here," Black added. "I always tend to believe that a lot of the times the people who are asking this question are saying bicyclists do not belong on the road. That's the kind of subtext (behind): 'Bicycles should be licensed.' "

"We don't license walkers. Should we put a tax on shoes so that we can license walkers?"

One of the nation's largest and best-known bike registration programs is in Davis, Calif., where registration is mandatory.

Many bike registration programs like that in Davis were initiated in the 1970s, but have been abandoned since, said David Takemoto-Weerts, bicycle program coordinator at the University of California-Davis. Where mandatory registration still exists, he said, "it's rarely enforced. It's hardly ever promoted anywhere either."

But that's not true at UC-Davis, where far more commuters arrive by bike than by car, bus or foot, he said. On a typical weekday, there are 15,000 to 20,000 bikes on campus, he said. Mandatory registration "works for us. I think it's a valuable tool to manage a large number of bicycles," he said. "And we do enforce it, but very mildly. We have a have fairly high compliance (rate.)"

New licenses cost \$8 at Davis and are good for up to three years, depending on when they are bought. "We raise a fair amount of revenue. It supports our bike program (and) part of my salary is paid out of that," Takemoto-Weerts said.

Still, he said, "No one is raising enough money to build bike lanes or bike racks."

In Wisconsin, state law prohibits officials from collecting more in bike registration fees than it costs to run the registration program, said Arthur Ross, pedestrian-bike coordinator for the city of Madison. The best-known

pay-off of that city's mandatory registration is also enabling police to return stolen bikes, Ross said.

"Certainly, I would not want to see program funding tied to bike registration," Ross added. "We need a whole lot more money than we ever going to raise through bicycle registration."

In Madison, about 20,000 bikes have valid registrations, said John Rider, bicycle registration coordinator. The \$10 registration lasts four years. The program helps transportation planners, "get a handle on how many bicycles we have in the city so we can have some more say in trying to have bicycle facilities," Rider said. "It gives us a voice."

It was pressure from cycling advocates that eventually led Minnesota lawmakers to repeal that state's registration program several years ago, said Anderson, the bicycle and pedestrian coordinator.

It all started in Minneapolis, where registration used to be mandatory. In a crackdown meant to curtail street confrontations during a series of cycling protests, police began confiscating unregistered bikes, Anderson said. "The bike advocates didn't like that, and so they dropped their support for the registration," Anderson said. "Until that time, there had been little or no enforcement at all on the bike registration requirement."

Under pressure from the bike lobby, the Minneapolis City Council made the registry optional. As a result, participation in fell off. Soon, the program was in a financial hole statewide. That is why the state abandoned it, Anderson said.

"It was meant to raise revenue, and some of that could go to administrative costs and some of it could go to infrastructure," he said.

The money raised, however, "never was of any significance, to my knowledge."

WHAT THEY PAY ELSEWHERE

A sampling of bicycle license fees from around the country:

\$10

MADISON, WIS.

(renewal every four years)

\$8

DAVIS, CALIF.

(renewal every three years)

\$2

SALT LAKE CITY

(one-time fee)

FREE

MILWAUKEE

(one-time registration)