

Madalyn Letellier

From: Derek DuPont [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, June 22, 2024 12:40 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Stop Overpolicing Bicyclists - Vote Against Municipal Road Safety Grant

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Hello City Council and Mayor Ballantyne,

Thank you for collaborating to pass the Safe Streets Ordinance. The recent heat wave is a timely reminder that we must reduce carbon emissions by shifting modes of transportation -- we can't accomplish this if people don't feel comfortable using our streets. I look forward to all the positive change our city will see as a result of your work!

In the spirit of encouraging more residents to use bicycles instead of cars, I want to draw your attention to the **Municipal Road Safety grant** (<https://somervillema.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6700437&GUID=D6BD99DA-9E0C-47FC-9543-11E6278D9321>).

Last year, City Council passed a resolution requesting the Police Department adopt a policy of **de-prioritizing traffic enforcement against cyclists who perform "Idaho Stops"**, i.e. yielding at stop signs and red lights and then proceeding when safe (<https://somervillema.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=6285560&GUID=6A422A99-D567-47A2-B46C-95BA8CE3771E>). Many of you spoke about your own cycling experiences and we heard from local experts how the Idaho Stop is a common-sense and immediate means of making our streets safer.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has found that **legalizing stop-as-yield "showed added safety benefits for bicyclists in States where they were evaluated, and may positively affect the environment, traffic, and transportation"** (<https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/2022-03/Bicyclist-Yield-As-Stop-Fact-Sheet-032422-v3-tag.pdf>). They even found that **"there is no evidence showing bicyclist stop-as-yield laws have increased bike conflicts with other bikes or pedestrians"**!

How does this relate to the Municipal Road Safety grant? The Police Department used the funds from this grant to issue citations to bicyclists performing the Idaho Stop. The police stationed themselves at high-bicycle-traffic corridors like Beacon St and pulled over bicyclists who did not stop at red lights even if it was safe for them to do so. This led to the creation of last year's Council resolution, but because the citations continued, it's not clear to me whether the Police Department ever acknowledged it.

Now, the Municipal Road Safety grant is back. Again, its application indicates that funding will go toward policing bicyclists who are following safety practices that are recommended by our federal government!

Mayor Ballantyne, please work with the police chief to rewrite this application to exclude enforcement against bicyclists performing the Idaho Stop. It will not produce safer conditions for anyone who uses our streets and may instead discourage or miseducate bicyclists.

City Council, please vote "no" and reject the grant funds until the application has been rewritten. You passed the de-prioritization resolution last year and we need your help again to ensure its intended goal is met.

We should not penalize bicyclists for keeping themselves safe. Shockingly, our community has seen two bicyclist deaths in the past two weeks (<https://www.cambridgeday.com/2024/06/07/bicyclist-dies-after-being-hit-by-truck-in-cambridge/>, <https://www.cambridgeday.com/2024/06/21/second-bicyclist-dies-in-cambridge-in-a-month-following-crash-in-an-intersection-with-a-truck/>). Both deaths occurred at intersections where a truck driver turning right did not see the bicyclist going straight. These are conditions where the Idaho Stop can provide meaningful safety benefits: it increases the visibility of bicyclists before the traffic light turns green and lets them get a head start before drivers begin turning.

Please help keep our streets safe for everyone!

All the best,
Derek DuPont



Madalyn Letellier

From: Sam Caveny [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, June 24, 2024 1:42 PM
To: Public Comments
Cc: All City Council; Mayor
Subject: Vote Against Overpolicing Bicyclists

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Hello,

My name is Samantha Caveny, and I am a Somerville resident. I am writing to ask that you vote against the Municipal Road Safety grant and rewrite the grant application to exclude enforcement against bicyclists performing the "Idaho Stop."

Last year, the Somerville Police Department used these funds to issue citations to bicyclists who follow best safety practices like the "Idaho Stop," which many states allow, and which the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has personal safety benefits for bicyclists and environmental, traffic, and transportation benefits for the public at large.

Last July, City Council passed a resolution requesting Somerville PD adopt a policy of de-prioritizing grant-funded enforcement against cyclists who perform "Idaho Stops". Somerville PD ignored this request and continued issuing citations. We cannot accept another year's worth of grant funds to discourage bicyclists from keeping themselves safe.

Do the right thing: stop penalizing bicyclist safety and vote "no" on the Municipal Road Safety grant!

Best,
Samantha Caveny

[REDACTED]