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My position with respect to Mr. Wade's proposed Council statement regarding the Bicyclist Harassment Ordinance - 7/4/09:

If Mr. Wade wants to speak to his own actions on the bike harassment ordinance and as to what he perceives to have happened at the meeting on June 15th, he has every right to do so. I would appreciate, however, that he not include me in the "we" as the subject in his following statements:

... we got caught up in the emotions of the public hearing and doing good. ... We should have explored whether the ordinance was even necessary or if there were better options such as amending existing ordinances but didn't. ... We [I believe that we] made a mistake.

Allow me to comment on the three reasons that Mr. Wade offered as the basis for his initial intention to not support the ordinance:

1. It most certainly is appropriate to craft an ordinance concerning harassment, whether between two groups or two-dozen, particularly when one or more of those groups may be physically vulnerable as compared to the other(s). However, I do believe that this ordinance ought to be amended to include at least two additional groups, i.e., pedestrians and wheel chair users. I also believe that bicycle licensing ought to be considered for bicyclists who share the roads with motorists. Although Columbia already has a bicycle-licensing program, enhancement of that program would allow the Council to extend misdemeanor harassment protection to motorists as well as bicyclists. Licensing would also allow the Council to assess a modest license fee to provide for small bicycle license plates and perhaps supplement bicycle lane striping, Rules of the Road education, etc.
2. Whether it is questionable "if this ordinance will work or make any difference", or whether "it may not even be necessary" are opinions to which of course, Mr. Wade is again certainly entitled. However, the overall effectiveness of this new ordinance remains to be seen. Apparently, Chief Burton and I did not share Mr. Wade's assessment, later affirmed with the Council's unanimous vote, that "harassment was already covered by existing ordinances". And in terms of severity, keep in mind that littering is also a Class A Misdemeanor. Generally, bicycle/motorist interactions fall far closer to littering than they do to assault, on the harassment continuum.

3. I do not agree with Mr. Wade “the ordinance will substantially contribute” to the polarization between bicyclists and motorists. I do agree with him that a polarization already exists. That was the reason for enacting the ordinance.

I suspect the polarization he describes is not the result of a “few disgruntled folks” nor a “broad based response of people frustrated with the Council”. Rather this polarization the result of many disgruntled folks who, in part because of the stressed economy, refuse to “share” their exclusive domain and firmly believe that bicycles simply do not belong on the road, despite state laws to the contrary. Many of these folks are simply not prepared to accept these changes, or any changes, for that matter, and harassment and road rage are often the result. A similar attitude can be found on any college campus where motorists must share the roads with rather assertive pedestrians, who seem to regard motorists as pesky interlopers, or worse.

The other issue confounding the acceptance of this ordinance has to do with the widespread misperception that motorists are prohibited from sounding their horns at bicyclists in appropriate ways, i.e., for purposes involving public safety.

Do I believe that bicyclists who share the roads with motorists ought to follow all of the same rules of the road? Of course I do and the Council ought to encourage the ongoing efforts of those to distribute that message. And again, I would encourage the Council to enhance the bicycle-licensing program that would facilitate equity for all of those who legally share our roads.

Finally, I certainly do not favor the suspension of the bicyclist harassment ordinance. Mitigating harassment against any group, especially any physically vulnerable group, is a basic public safety responsibility for the Council. Public comment shall, of course, be encouraged throughout the process by which the Council seeks to broaden the ordinance to include pedestrians and wheel chair users. If the working group that was proposed at the June 15<sup>th</sup> Council meeting is still necessary and is, in fact, appointed, I would suggest that they join that community discussion.

Best Regards,

Karl