

THE BIKEALAMEDA CYCLIST

An Usual Alameda Bike Ordinance:

Mysterious Bike Law Explained

by Alex Plumb

In August, while preparing the “Let’s Walk & Roll” column for the Alameda Sun, I stumbled upon a little-known law in the Alameda Municipal Code:

It shall be unlawful for any person to ride a bicycle in the traffic lanes of any bridge leading to or from the City. Bicycles must be walked across these bridges in the pedestrian walkways. (AMC 11-4.3)

Feeling confident of my source, I mentioned in my column that it is illegal to ride in the traffic lanes on the bridges. The assertion generated a good deal of controversy, and I received many questions about the law and many strongly-worded opinions regarding its validity. Alex Helperin, a lawyer who has generously helped me sort through the issue, suggested that I write a letter of clarification. I don’t know if I can make everything clear, but I will at least *try*.

At my request, Alameda City Clerk Lara Weisiger provided me with all the existing city documents related to AMC 11-4.3. The law, it turns out, is part of Ordinance 1665, a general revision of the city code chapter pertaining to bicycles which was passed into law on April 18th, 1972. Minutes from the two City Council meetings where Ordinance 1665 was discussed reveal only that some parts of the law were suggested and strongly recommended by the police department. Because the grated metal roadway and complete lack of a shoulder on our three oldest bridges make them extremely dangerous to ride a bike on, my best guess is that the police wrote AMC 11-4.3 in response to a specific accident involving a bicy-

Calendar
Oct 14, 10AM-4PM: Valet Bike Parking, Classic Car Show
Oct 16, 7-9PM Estuary Crossing Committee Meeting @ Otaz
Oct 18, 5:30-9:30PM Bike Safety Class, 2319 Clement



Also Inside This Issue:
The Latest in Lights • Estuary Crossing Update • Rideable Replicator

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President's Message

I'd like to let everyone know that we are changing the production schedule for our newsletter. We will be printing this newsletter and bringing it to you quarterly. The board of directors and I debated as to whether this would be a benefit. The advantage of this change is that we can bring you a larger newsletter with more articles and more information in print format.

To fill the gaps, we will also be bringing you a brief, monthly e-newsletter with status updates and calendar changes.

In addition, we will be able to send you postcard updates and ideas for ways you can get involved in BikeAlameda's activities.

I hope you have been enjoying these newsletters that we've been bringing to you every other month. We have a terrific production team that works hard to bring good information to you. It is time consuming, but well worth the effort. Look for our next issue to be for Dec/Jan/Feb.

I believe this change will be a bonus, with more information coming in different forms to keep you updated and educated.

Our front page article is a great example of the terrific help we have. Alex Plumb has worked on numerous projects for us on our advocacy committee. He is terrific at getting to the bottom of an issue and expressing it in writing. Casey Larimore has been writing

articles for the BikeAlameda Cyclist since our first edition. She concentrates on getting you geared up for riding. Aside from being a great writer, she is teaching bicycle safety classes for us now as well. Look for a bike education class on the schedule in October.

Vincent and Francis Arcellana-Politzer work together to bring us information on our Alameda bicyclists. These young teens bring a little bit of fun and a new perspective into the newsletter. If you have a terrific Alameda bicyclist you'd like to read about—let us know.

The preparation in creating this newsletter is just as important as what you see on the final paper. Dan Wood is not a professional with graphics, but the chic style and layout that he creates is. Shelley Reed loves to edit and it shows in how diligently she finds our typos before the final printing. And last but not least is Eve Pearlman who contributes insight and splendid rewritten sentences to make our stories clear and fun to read.

Thanks, volunteers, for putting in the time! ☺

Lucy Gigli



clist on one of our bridges. If AMC 11-4.3 was designed to protect the lives of bicyclists, why is this law so controversial?

The most obvious problem with the law is that not all of the bridges are dangerous to ride on: the Miller-Sweeney (Fruitvale) Bridge is wide and well-surfaced. Many Alameda streets are far more unsafe.

Another problem is that, with the exception of the Bay Farm Island Bridge, only half of each bridge actually resides in Alameda. Alameda County owns the bridges, and the City's authority to regulate traffic on them only extends half way across. Oakland has no similar law. Is it legal to regulate only half a bridge?

Board of Directors Update

The BikeAlameda Board of Directors held its annual elections on September, 20.

Let's welcome a new member to the board of directors: Ricardo Pedevilla.

Thanks for your service, John McNulty, and enjoy your new adventures!

Reelected for another term were: Lucy Gigli (President), Dan Wood (Secretary) Joan Steber (Treasurer). Jeff Cambra continues on the board.

Thanks to all for dedicating your time to our future.

*There are still board openings!! If you would like to contribute your energies to the BikeAlameda board contact
lucy@bikealameda.org or call 595-4690.*

The third problem is a lot more complex. It involves the California Vehicle Code (CVC) and related legal cases. It has been legally established that the authority of cities to regulate traffic is limited entirely by what the CVC explicitly says is allowed and not allowed. The CVC allows for local regulation of bicycle traffic, but only on sidewalks and pedestrian or bicycle paths. The CVC only explicitly prohibits bicycle riding in two places: toll bridges and freeways. Based on this, it can be argued that the City of Alameda has no legal authority to restrict bicycle riding on any public roadway in town.

The CVC (21109) also says cities can make local laws regulating traffic on bridges. It can therefore be argued that 21109 gives Alameda the explicit authority needed to enact AMC 11-4.3.

CVC 21109 also states that, in order for a law regulating local traffic to be in effect, signs must be posted to notify approaching drivers. Since there are no signs posted on any of the bridges telling bicycles to stay off the roadway, 11-4.3 is currently unenforceable.

What to do?

Based on conversations with Alameda Assistant City Attorney, Byron Toma, I believe there is little chance that AMC 11-4.3 will be amended or repealed unless some person or group convinces the City Council to do it.

How important is this largely-unknown and unenforceable law to the local bicycling community? Some believe that any law that illegally restricts our bicycling rights and freedoms needs to be addressed. In my opinion, however, we should use our limited resources to tackle more important issues. ☺

Bicyclist Biography:**Greg Baron**

Greg Baron is the owner of Rideable Bicycle Replicas. The bikes made by Greg's company have been sold around the world—Ringling Brothers and Barnum & Bailey Circus, a Swiss bicycle racing team, Walt Disney and the Sultan of Oman, to name a few. We visited Greg at his shop at 2329 Eagle Avenue.

How did you get involved in this business?

This is a family business that my father started 34 years ago. I grew up in it, so I kind of fell into it. I'm pretty good at it. We're the only people in the world that make these old-fashioned bikes commercially.

How long does it take to make a high-wheeler?

That depends on the bike. I make four different models in six different sizes, and depending on the model, I can do them in a production run where I'll make twenty bikes at a time in about a three- to four-week period. A really high-end bike that I have to make by hand could take me six to eight weeks. So it depends on the bike, the size, and how much work needs to be done.

About how many do you make each year?

We make about 100 of our standard bikes a year, and then we also make probably another 20-40 custom bikes as well.

The replicas look very much like pictures of the old bikes. Do they differ from the originals? If so, how?

My top-of-the-line bike is about 90% accurate to an original Gormully & Jeffery American Ideal or American Challenge bike. It's very accurate and looks like the originals. My other bikes can use a more modern design. There are pros and cons to each. With the original bikes, you're sitting way up high on the very top of the wheel, so it made it easy to go over the front and take a "header" — a term that originated from these bikes in the 1870s. My newer bikes allow me to



Greg with a tricycle ready to be shipped to Canada

rake the fork back and put the seat a little farther back, so it makes it more stable. It's not as comfortable, but it's a more stable bike. So, there are trade-offs between the different design characteristics.

Where would someone ride a high-wheel bike?

Where would someone ride a regular bike? You've got to remember, these bikes were ridden around the world when there were no roads. People were riding these bikes in the 1870s on wagon trails. The first paved roads in the United States were

due to lobbying by the League of the American Wheelmen. That was the bicycle organization that promoted the use of bicycles, and they were tired of riding on dirt roads. So, the roads between Pennsylvania, New York and Boston were the first paved roads in the country, and they were due to bicycle riders. Bicycles in the 1870s were to people then what cars are to us now.

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That was high-tech back then. It was serious transportation. They were expensive!

Do you ride them?

I ride them all over the place! In fact, I just came back from Birmingham, Nevada, and I rode them all over the desert where there were no roads and had a great time doing it.

To find out more about Rideable Bicycle Replicas, be sure to visit Greg's Web site at <http://www.biwheel.com/>. ☺

Campaign Update:

Estuary Crossing

The campaign is continuing to build steam. Our committee is working to:

1. Ensure that the Alameda Landing project contains legal wording to have a pedestrian and bicycle water shuttle to Jack London Square. This will be through the Transportation Demand Management funds.
2. Ensure that the city completes a feasibility study within one year to assess the most viable **long-term** means for bicyclists and pedestrians to cross the estuary. This will enable us to evaluate the Transportation Demand Management funds and really push for the most viable alternative.
3. Build a coalition of organizations who feel strongly that an alternate estuary crossing for peds and bikes is needed.

So far the following organizations have joined us:

East Bay Bicycle Coalition, Alameda Point Collaborative, Pedestrian Friendly Alameda

We meet at 7PM on the 3rd Monday of every month at Otaez Restaurant on Webster Street. ☺

Bike Safety Class Coming Again, Oct. 18

Not comfortable riding on the street? Think you know all there is to riding a bike? Then you should not miss this class. This course will teach the tricks and methods of dealing with traffic and other road users. You'll be surprised at how much more peaceful (and safer) your commute or ride is after you take this class. This class teaches, crash avoidance, confidence in traffic, rights and responsibilities, new techniques and night riding safety.

Lecture-and-discussion is suitable for adults and driving-age teens. No bicycle is required unless you'll be riding it to class.

Wednesday, October 18 — 5:30PM - 9:30PM

Location: 2319 Clement, Alameda

BikeAlameda Members' Fee: \$10

General Fee: \$15 (through Oct 10) \$20 (after)

Sign up early! Register online at www.bikealameda.org or send a check to PO Box 2732, Alameda, CA 94501 ☺



Practicing hand gestures at a recent bike safety class geared to Alameda teens

The Better to See you With

by Casey Larimore

It's a good time of year: we roll the clocks back and prepare for dark commutes and moonlight training rides. To ride at night, you must have a front light, either on your handlebars or on your helmet. California law requires you to have a red rear reflector, but Alameda city law mandates both front and rear lights. There are tons of lighting options available for making your night trips safe. Here's a look at the basics of what's in your local bike shop.

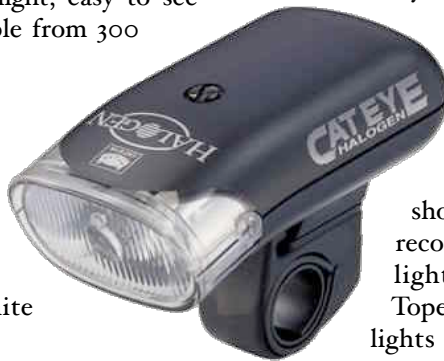
The most popular lights run on AA, AAA or C batteries and use either Halogen or LED bulbs.

Halogens: Yellowish light, easy to see what's in front of you, visible from 300 ft

- Life span of 8-12 hours
- C batteries
- \$15-\$30
- Check out the CatEye HL-500

LED: Very bright white light, highly visible +300 ft

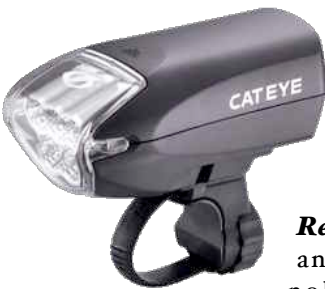
- Life span of 30-320 hours depending on model and mode



- AA and AAA batteries

• \$15-\$50

- Check out the CatEye HL-EL220



Rear Lights: LED and Halogen technologies, multiple modes of blink & steady

- Life span of 15-200 hours depending on model and mode
- AA and AAA batteries
- \$15-\$40
- Check out the Topeak Red-light

While great for cities, all these lights will probably fail to adequately light up the night if



you're

doing

evening

training rides, mountain rides

or commuting on streets like

Doolittle Drive, which is poorly

lit and has lots of debris on the

shoulder. For these types of routes, I

recommend rechargeable battery-pack


lights made by such companies as

Topeak and Light and Motion. These

lights start around \$150, but light up

your way like a thousand torches. Welcome

to Winter!

For more information, visit www.cateye.com, www.lightandmotion.com, www.topeak.com 

Not Yet a Member?

Join us and make Alameda a better community



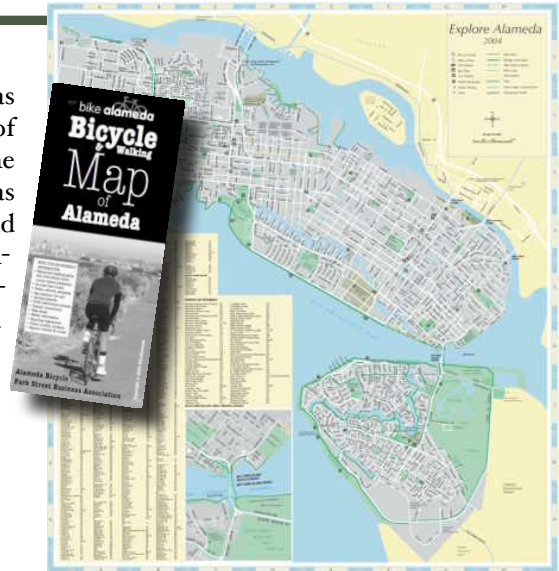
See back page for details

About BikeAlameda

BikeAlameda's mission is to encourage bicycle use as an integral part of daily life in and around the City of Alameda. Founded in 1999, BikeAlameda serves the community through education and services such as secure Valet Bike Parking at community events and its Bicycle and Walking Map of Alameda. BikeAlameda believes in safe streets, active, healthy citizens, and vibrant, walkable business districts and neighborhoods. We are a nonprofit 501(c)(3) California corporation. 🚲

Newsletter Production

Editor in Chief: Lucy Gigli
 Editors: Eve Pearlman, Shelley Reed
 Graphics & Layout: Dan Wood
 Production & Content: Casey Larimore, Alex Plumb, Vincent and Francis Arcellana-Politzer



Pick up BikeAlameda's free **Bicycle & Walking Map of Alameda** at: Tucker's Ice Cream, Stone Cyclery, Cycle City, Alameda Bicycle, Java Rama, Spritzer's, Alameda Free Library, and more!

Breaking News

Ride down to the east end

of the island and see the new lane configurations on **Fernside Blvd** near Encinal Avenue. The bike lanes were moved to the left of the right turn lane. This configuration is safer for bicyclists going straight through the intersection. Plus, bike lanes continue on down toward the bike bridge. They stop before the bike bridge to make way for the next phase of this traffic calming/ bike safety project. A forthcoming two-way bike path on the eastern side of Fernside will finally close the gap for cyclists heading south to the bike bridge. Look for public meetings to discuss the design soon. 🚲 Another rough spot in the **Embarcadero Road** Oakland commute has been smoothed out. Last time

we reported that the railroad tracks intersecting Embarcadero behind the Con Agra plant had been smoothed. Now the area around Kennedy Street and Embarcadero has been smoothed and the bike lane has been moved to the left of the right turn lane. This makes the commute to Oakland a pretty good deal once you are on Embarcadero. The Park Street Triangle reconfiguration is slow-going and still awaiting more funds to continue to the design phase. 🚲 Construction of the theater/garage will be commencing soon. As part of the construction, the City will be closing off the **Central Avenue sidewalk and parking lane** in front of the old theater and the Oak Street along the old Video Maniacs site. They will also be converting the bike lane along Central Avenue in front of the old theater and the VM site into a ped/bike lane protected with k-rail (concrete blocks) from automotive traffic. The construction is expected to last between 12-14 months. 🚲

Join Us! Become a member and help us make our city a better place to ride.

Membership Benefits

- This helpful newsletter
- Membership card for great discounts at local shops:
 - Cycle City** 10-20% clothing/accessories
 - Stone's Cyclery** 10-20% clothing/accessories and more
 - Alameda Bicycle** (see our website)
 - Zach Kaplan Cycles** 5% ...and more: See our website
- Tucker's ice cream scoop
- East Bay Bicycle Coalition reciprocal membership
- Satisfaction knowing you are improving bicycling here!



Personal Information Print Clearly

We do not share information with anyone (except EBBC).

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Membership Fees (yearly):

- Individual \$25
- Household/Family \$35
- Business \$70
- Benefactor \$100 + _____
- Volunteer 8 hours (contact us for details)

Attach a check & send to:

BikeAlameda

PO Box 2732

Alameda CA 94501

Membership dues are tax-deductible

Or...Join us online with your credit card at www.BikeAlameda.org



PO Box 2732

Alameda, CA 94501



Pass this newsletter along to a friend!