

Remarks by John Schubert • June 3, 2010

To the Pennsylvania State House Transportation Committee:

As a Lehigh Valley resident for 31 years, I thank you for coming here today.

While I want the Lehigh Valley to have good transportation in all modes, my professional focus is on bicycle and pedestrian accommodation.

By way of introduction, I have been on the state bicycle and pedestrian advisory committee since 1990; I am the author of three books about bicycling and running; and I regularly serve PennDOT as an expert witness in bicycle accident reconstruction.

First, let's celebrate what our state has done well:

- In 1997, under the leadership of Rick Geist, Pennsylvania ushered in a five-cent gas tax increase. It was a rough job, politically—but the benefits were immediate. Many roads got repaved and widened. These road improvements benefit bicyclists.
- At the risk of giving Mr. Geist a swelled head, I note that he also led some excellent reforms to the state vehicle code in 1995 and also in subsequent years.
- In 1999, Pennsylvania became the first state to use the book Street Smarts as its bicycle driving manual. Since then, four other states have followed suit. It's a wonderful manual, and it actually tells cyclists how to ride safely.
- Under the leadership of PennDOT engineer Brian Sanders, Pennsylvania developed a bicycle/pedestrian checklist for all construction projects. Better still, Sanders developed an excellent training program for implementing the checklist. This program provides the framework to have bicycle and pedestrian accommodation build into every project, not added on in the 11th hour.
- Former Safety Bureau Director Tom Breyer wrote a wonderful strikeoff letter in 1994, forbidding the future use of no pedestrian crossing signs.
- Pennsylvania has largely avoided faddish bicycle facility designs. Look at the nonstandard center of the road bike lane on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington DC and . . . just watch cyclists improvise ways of making normal maneuvers like right turns. . . or their frogger-like moves to get into the bike lane.

Here's what I'd like to see more of and what I'd like to see changed.

- We need more infrastructure repairs to existing roads and bridges. Good roads benefit all road users. If there's a tax issue, let's get the residents of Pennsylvania to understand that nothing is free, but we owe it to our children to maintain the infrastructure that our parents and grandparents built for us.
- Watch it on the rumble strips. They are hell for bicyclists, and are likely to cause loss of control accidents.
- Expand PennDOT training and use of the bicycle and pedestrian checklist and checklist training. You have an excellent training program in place. Anyone who designs so much as a parking lot should have had that training within the last three years.
- Bear down on the district offices that pretend they didn't get Tom Breyer's strikeoff letter. No pedestrian crossing signs are an affront. Do not sever pedestrian access. Roads are for people, whether they are in cars or not.
- You will be under considerable pressure to make our cities' bicycle facilities look more like Copenhagen. Don't do it. Just one intersection design in Copenhagen has caused a 154 percent increase in collisions. The European cities that are so fashionable have documented a litany of injuries and deaths directly attributable to their facility designs. Instead, look to the city of Bethlehem, where use of the shared lane marking, properly positioned, has given all road users correct instruction on the safest place on the road for cyclists to ride.