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Laying down the law for cyclists and drivers

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In the aftermath of July's Critical Mass ride, which left drivers and cyclists feuding over the rules of the road, we asked readers what questions they had about state and local laws for bicyclists.

We received nearly 400 questions, comments and observations.

The top irritants for drivers: cyclists who ignore red lights and stop signs, and jump from sidewalk to roadway. Biggest frustrations for cyclists: drivers who pass too close or make right- or left-hand turns in front of an oncoming bike, and roadways that aren't adequately designed for bike traffic.

The law is pretty simple: All traffic laws that apply to motorists also apply to bikes, says Jeff Kappel, spokesman for the Seattle Police Department. "Operate your bicycle as if you were driving a car."

"If you act like a vehicle, you will be treated like a vehicle," echoed Chris Cameron, commute director of the Cascade Bicycle Club.

Show a little courtesy and common sense behind the wheel or on your bike and someone else may show you the same respect, Kappel says. "When you're courteous, it's contagious."

And Cameron urges cyclists to be predictable — don't dart from road to sidewalk and back again. "When cars don't know what you're going to do, confusion begins, and motorists become frustrated," he says. "It's our responsibility to be predictable."

— *Katherine Long, Seattle Times research editor*

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