



A NEW BICYCLE SAFETY ENFORCEMENT TOOL



By Ed Barsotti, Executive Director, League of Illinois Bicyclists

As the thermometer rises this spring, so will the number of bicyclists on the roads. Law enforcement agencies play a role in improving safety and behavior. A new online resource, www.bikesafetyquiz.com, can help Illinois police departments educate while enforcing laws for cyclists and car-bike interactions.

By Illinois law, bicyclists have both the rights and responsibilities of other road users. Many cyclists do not know about the law as it applies to bikes, and how following the law leads to safer cycling. Other bicyclists ignore traffic laws, creating dangerous situations and causing motorist resentment toward those cyclists trying to share the road safely.

Some departments are feeling public pressure to target bicyclists for tickets, for non-compliance with traffic laws, reckless behavior, or other safety concerns. “Every year we get numerous complaints,” said Lt. Jim Clark, south district commander for the Champaign Police Department. “They run through stop lights and stop signs and go the wrong way on one-way streets.”

Police are encouraged to stop bicyclists if the situation dictates. Many officers are reluctant to issue cyclists a moving violation for a variety of reasons, ranging from lower priority to peer pressure to lack of support from the court system. But, police action can change behavior and save lives.

BICYCLIST TICKET DIVERSION PROGRAM

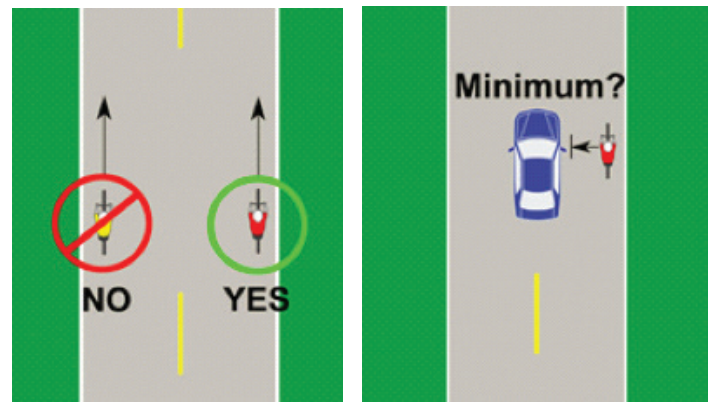
There is now an education-based alternative. The not-for-profit League of Illinois Bicyclists (LIB) has partnered with Champaign, Urbana, and Highland Park police departments to create bicycle ticket diversion programs. The pilot programs have been well-received by both officers and offenders. Here’s how it works:

- An officer stops a violator, issuing them a written warning in lieu of a traditional traffic citation with a brochure explaining their options
- To ensure the written warning is not converted into a traditional traffic citation, violators are required to take the “Adult Bicyclist” quiz at www.bikesafetyquiz.com, emailing or mailing a completion certificate to the police department
- Violators not doing so within a certain time period must pay the fine or appear in court

www.bikesafetyquiz.com is LIB’s first-of-its-kind website teaching users key safety techniques and relevant Illinois state laws in a concise, interactive quiz-based format. There are separate lessons for Adult Bicyclists, Motorists, and Child Bicyclists. In each, users progress through a total of 25-33 multiple-choice questions divided into Bronze,

Silver and Gold levels. If users finish at least one level, they may create a “Certificate of Completion” to print or email.

LIB’s nationally-certified bike safety instructors developed the questions, with review by the Secretary of State, the Illinois High School and College Driver Education Association, and others. Many questions are tough – there is no shame to missing questions on the first pass. The learning comes when the website explains why the selected incorrect answer choice was wrong. Users then get 2nd and 3rd chances to get a question right.



Illustrations from sample questions

“The online bike safety quiz is another tool to help ensure a safe and enjoyable ride for bicyclists and drivers as they share our roadways,” said Secretary of State Jesse White, who, along with Lt. Governor Sheila Simon and Highland Park police officers, helped LIB publicly launch the site last June.

“I could not be happier with the way it is going on our end,” said Lt. Clark of Champaign, where over 100 have completed the bicycle ticket diversion program. “Our officers seem to like it and are writing more bicycle violations now, since the violator is not stuck with a state ticket/fine and has the opportunity to do the diversion course. I have some officers come in on overtime...and do nothing but bicycle enforcement for 3-4 hours. That never occurred before.”

In addition to a ticket diversion program, www.bikesafetyquiz.com may be used in other ways by law enforcement:

MOTORISTS

In a car-bike crash, the motor vehicle does the most damage. Many well-meaning motorists make mistakes that could be dangerous to people on bikes. Some aggressive motorists harass and even act maliciously towards cyclists. As with cyclists, police are encouraged to stop motorists if needed, to educate, issue warnings, or write tickets. The website’s Motorist quiz lesson can be an education-based enforcement tool for drivers, too, covering relevant state laws and common crash types.

The Motorist quiz content may soon be included in a pool of questions used by the Secretary of State in the driver’s examination. Also, ILACP Executive Director John Kennedy is helping LIB explore quiz usage in online Traffic School courses for motorist violators.



TARGETED ENFORCEMENT STINGS

Sometimes police conduct targeted education and enforcement campaigns (aka “stings”) to more broadly educate the public about a particular problem or issue. Local publicity before and after the education and enforcement campaigns is a primary goal, whether violators are ticketed or merely receive written or verbal warnings.

The website could be used for education and enforcement campaigns targeting certain behaviors. For example: ILACP 3rd Vice President and Buffalo Grove Chief Steve Casstevens expressed his willingness to do this, upon learning that sidewalk bicyclists getting hit at intersections



Sec. of State White and Lt. Gov. Simon speak at LIB’s launch of www.bikesafetyquiz.com

are the dominant car-bike crash type in the village. The education and enforcement campaign focus would be motorist and bicyclist actions leading to this type of crash. Warning tickets might be issued, along with instructions to complete the appropriate www.bikesafetyquiz.com lesson.

BIKE SAFETY KITS AND REGISTRATION

Chief Casstevens also offers his Hoffman Estates experience with a “bike safety kit” as an example for others. There, police officers regularly noticed 50-60 mostly low-income workers who relied on their bicycles for year-round transportation to their jobs. These residents, many riding at dark on busy roads, were often at risk due to a lack of bike lights and reflective clothing. When witnessing such a cyclist, officers distributed a kit consisting of a reflective vest, headlight, taillight, water bottle, fanny pack, band aid pack and key holder. This low-cost program was a much-appreciated success.

Completion of the website’s Adult Bicyclist quiz could be a recommended or required as part of such a program. Towns requiring bicycle registration could do the same.

POLICE OFFICER CONTINUING EDUCATION

Police Chiefs should encourage their officers to refresh their own knowledge of Illinois laws governing bicycles and car-bike interactions, as well as safety techniques and common crash types, by completing the Motorist and Adult Bicyclist quiz lessons at www.bikesafetyquiz.com. Each takes 20-30 minutes.

SCHOOL OUTREACH AND NON-ENFORCEMENT USES

The Child Bicyclist and Motorist quizzes have functionality to be used as a “turn-key” computer lesson or homework assignment by 4th-6th grade teachers and driver education instructors, respectively. Police officers speaking about bike safety at elementary schools or driver education programs are invited to use content from the online resource in their outreach. Token prizes, such as vouchers from a local ice cream shop, could be given or raffled off to students who have completed their quizzes.

LIB is actively promoting www.bikesafetyquiz.com use to a wide range of partners, such as the YMCA and scouts, bike shops and clubs, driving schools and IDOT, municipal elected officials and communications staff, and more.

PARTNERING WITH LIB

The League of Illinois Bicyclists invites police departments in Illinois to contact us at (630) 978-0583 or lib@bikelib.org regarding any of the ideas. Also, we offer free printed materials for enforcement, including www.bikesafetyquiz.com cards, Illinois Bicycle Law cards, single-page safety sheets for children and their parents, and more. ■

MOTORIST QUIZ TOPICS

- Cyclist rights to the road
- Cyclist rules, responsibilities
- Fault in car-cyclist crashes
- 3-foot passing law
- Passing in narrow lane
- Intersection visibility, safety
- “Right-hook” mistake
- “Left-cross” mistake
- Crosswalk right-of-way
- Opening doors in parked cars
- Harassment law
- Distracted driving
- Intimidating cyclists to move
- Passing techniques
- Hints of cyclist moving left
- Right-of-way, general
- Right-of-way, 4-way stop
- Looking at stop signs
- Stopline too far back
- Correct side of road, cyclists
- Triggering stoplights
- Ride far-right exceptions
- Riding two abreast
- Bike lane intersections
- Cyclist hand signals

ADULT BICYCLIST QUIZ TOPICS

- Rights and responsibilities
- Intersection visibility, safety
- Correct side of road
- Narrow lane riding position
- Right-of-way at stop signs
- Legal left turns
- Riding two abreast
- Off-road bicyclist status
- Group riding
- Why follow rules and laws?
- Intersections – straight with and without right-turn lane
- Before merging left
- Proper helmet wearing
- Parked cars: weaving, door zone
- Ride far-right exceptions
- Being visible
- Night riding – lights, reflectors
- Bike lane intersections
- Tire pressure and saddle height
- Trail etiquette
- Triggering stoplights, “dead red” law
- Skewed railroad crossings
- Quick stop and quick turn
- Bike locking
- Cold weather gear
- Miscellaneous laws