

Imagine airplanes flying without transponders. Like riding a bike without flashing lights?



GCN (Global Cycling Network) might be one of the reasons we see, or don't see, so many cyclists on the road. It can be dark and drizzly, and GCN is out there, promoting black kit (apparel) and no flashing lights either front or rear.

Ah, winter. The time of year it's darker, drizzly if not raining, and we see so many cyclists up on Skyline in black kit (apparel) and no flashing lights. As it warms up and gets sunnier, they move to their "team" kits that are often brightly colored... but still, of course, no lights. Not everyone; there remains a pretty goodly number of people who keep wearing black as long as they can, probably giving up only when they feel that wearing black on an 80F degree day leads to overheating. However, I'm pretty sure there's a widespread contest to see who can wear black on the hottest day of the year.



Another frame confirming the lack of daytime lights.

I don't get it. Sure, in the finale of Star Trek Picard, the USS Titan, piloted by Seven of Nine, buys enough time for Picard to save humanity by using a cloaking device. Being invisible can have its advantages. But not when out on a highway shared with cars moving at even moderate speed. Whether you want to be seen or not, you need to be seen.

In this area, we ride our road bikes almost exclusively on shared roadway, shared with other bikes, cars, trucks & motorcycles. We cannot expect a carefree, bucolic experience, yet we can still have a pretty darned safe and enjoyable ride, if we take just a few simple steps to make it easier for people to see us, if we use technology to know what's behind us, if we ride actively aware that not everybody on the road is being careful.

Should you have to do that? Sure, it's a choice, but why would you exercise less care riding a bike than you would driving a car? Think about how many times you avoided a collision, had a near miss, because you saw someone merging into your space on the freeway? Or racing to get through a just-turned-red light? It happens frequently.

I used to think it was being paranoid to have not just one, but two or three flashing lights on the back of my bike. On my commute home it is frequently three; a helmet light, my Garmin Varia 715 radar w/light, and an older flashing light that I attach to my seatbag. The most-important is the sturdily-mounted Varia 715, because it's at the exact right angle to be seen by a motorist behind

me. The others will attract attention from varying angles as they move around a bit. For my longer, "recreational" rides, just two lights, the Garmin Varia and the seatbag mounted.

And on the front, a single bright Bontrager headlight set to flashing mode. Some cyclists still wonder, do you need a light up front, since you can see what's in front of you? Absolutely, yes! I've seen so many double-takes when somebody didn't initially see me, then caught my flashing light. Cars coming from intersections are more dangerous than you think, because you're making a (logical) assumption they're not going to jet out right as you pass.

I don't think having to do all this is an "I'm asking for it if I don't" mentality. It's just trying to stay safe and make it home in one piece so I can keep on having great rides for a long time to come.