

Enough is enough. We need a 3-foot passing law.

Me riding on a Saturday is as unusual as someone getting me out of the shop for lunch. One of those things that just doesn't happen. One of those things that, when it does happen, is an indication that the universe is a bit out of place.



Lauren Ward's memorial ride, for which the skies miraculously cleared at the start, but cold rain returned before reaching the spot where she was hit.

The universe is out of place. But by a lot more than just a bit. Today's ride was a memorial for Lauren Ward, the cyclist who was killed 10 or so days ago at the Alpine Road/280 intersection. Mother of two high school kids, wife of Bob Ward, longtime cyclist, racer and customer of Chain Reaction. Good people. How could this have happened to them. Why them.

Why anybody? We still don't know what happened, we still don't know if it's relevant that the driver of the truck had previously been involved with one other accident resulting in the death of a cyclist, we don't know if it's just bad luck that the truck driver had also been involved in a head-on in which a woman whose car had drifted into his path was also killed. A horrible thought that comes to mind is whether the odds favor any truck driver with enough miles under his or her belt being involved in such tragedy. I hope not.

What we do know is that there's not much extra room in that intersection when you've got motorists in the right lane getting onto the freeway, a cyclist in-between and more cars to the left. Motorists are in the mode of thinking about the freeway they're getting onto as their highest priority. That needs to stop. Motorists need to pay more attention to the cyclists they encounter, and that's why we need a 3-foot passing law. Not just because we need more room, but because we need motorists to be seeing cyclists well ahead of them and be thinking about how they're going to safely deal with them. Requiring 3 feet to pass a cyclist will almost always mean moving over in the lane, and while cars might not be too concerned with being injured from a collision with a bicycle, they're certainly going to be slowing down and become more cautious when they have to deal with oncoming cars.

That's exactly what I saw happen in France, where they have a 5 foot (1.5 meter) passing law! In fact, you could watch oncoming traffic move to their right as you approached, allowing the car passing you to have more room.

One of the biggest arguments against a 3-foot passing law comes from law enforcement and auto-associations (CSAA being one) claiming that there's no way to measure 3 feet between moving vehicles, and thus no way to enforce it. And if law enforcement people can't do it, how can you expect the average motorist to? Well guess what? That ambiguity is the reason a 3-foot law is going to make it safer for cyclists, because FUD (Fear, uncertainty & doubt) will likely make the motorists more aware of and cautious around cyclists that would otherwise be the case. It's not going to be the 3 feet that matter, it's going to be a feeling that cyclists are supposed to be traveling with an invisible protective zone around them. What's not to like about that?

You can see more info about efforts to pass a 3-foot law in California [here](#), and I've sent in the suggestion to California State Senator Joe Simitian. When you call or write your elected representatives, it does make a difference. Please consider supporting this effort and help make it safer for all of us out on the roadways.