

# Leading The Way

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Earlier this year, we received a call from a cyclist in Huntington, West Virginia. That cyclist, a man named Tony Patrick, had a [hair-raising story to tell](#) about his encounter with a Sheriff's Deputy across the Ohio River in Chesapeake, Ohio. The Deputy, who was unfamiliar with Ohio law regarding cyclists, ordered Tony off the road, and when Tony asserted his rights under Ohio law, the Deputy escalated, eventually tasing Tony before placing him under arrest. At a pre-trial hearing, the Judge dismissed all charges against Tony, because Tony had not violated any laws, and thus, the arrest had been unlawful. Recently, Tony [filed a lawsuit](#) alleging that his civil rights were violated in what was described as his

*"illegal and intentional detention, attack, beating, arrest and Tasing..."*

Unfortunately, this was not an isolated case of one officer not understanding the law as it applies to cycling. As we have [previously documented](#), law enforcement officers [do not always understand the laws](#) they are charged with enforcing. And as we recently reported, that phenomenon continues in Los Angeles, where an LAPD task force is citing cyclists for [violating a law that does not exist](#).

Clearly, in many departments there's substantial room for improvement in officer training in the laws regarding cycling. And in fact, we directly addressed this issue in [Bicycling & the Law](#). In our discussion of the phenomenon of police bias against cyclists (a bias that can range from overtly hostile to a more subtle automobile-centric paradigm), Bob argues that in order to reduce anticycling bias in law enforcement, bicycle advocacy organizations will need to become involved in assisting law enforcement agencies with educating their officers

*about the statutes and case law regarding cycling, the hazards of cycling, and safe cycling practices. This education should be mandatory; if it isn't mandatory for your law enforcement agencies, it's a policy that bicycling advocates in your area should address in order to improve the cycling environment.*

Since those words were written, we've seen the fruits of several such collaborations between bicycle advocacy organizations and law enforcement agencies.

One such example is the training video produced by the San Francisco Police

Department, in collaboration with the [San Francisco Bicycle Coalition](#), which was released shortly after publication of [Bicycling & the Law](#):



Not to be outdone, the Chicago Police Department recently [produced their own training video](#), in collaboration with the [Chicago Bike Program](#), a program within the Chicago Department of Transportation.

And finally, yesterday [BikePortland reported](#) that the Portland Police Bureau (arriving fashionably late to the scene) has [produced a new training video](#) made in collaboration with the [Bicycle Transportation Alliance](#):



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And those are just the videos produced by individual police departments. In Florida, a statewide police training video on [Bike and Pedestrian Law](#) (available as a 7-part series) was produced by the Florida Department of Transportation Safety Office, in collaboration with the [Florida Bicycle Association](#).

In our final [Legally Speaking column](#), Bob reported that cycling is on the rise everywhere—

*from [London](#), to [New York](#), to [Portland](#), to [Adelaide](#), and all points between, more people are riding.*

This phenomenon shows no sign of abating, and in fact, appears to be growing, for numerous reasons. Some people ride for their personal health; others for the health of the planet. Some ride for sport, others ride because they are cutting back on expenses in a tough economy. Some ride for transportation, others ride for the sheer joy of feeling the wind in their hair. And of course, many people ride for several, or even all of these reasons, and more. For many, riding brings its own inherent gratification of traveling under one's own power, and every year, more people are simply "discovering" the joys of the bike. Because so many people from so many backgrounds are taking to the bike for so many reasons, we believe that a sea change is underway, with the presence of cyclists in traffic becoming the norm.

Increasingly, law enforcement departments everywhere, from our largest cities to our smallest towns, will be interacting with a growing population of cyclists, and increasingly, they will find it necessary to educate their officers on the law. The police departments of San Francisco, Chicago, and now Portland are leading the way, providing the example increasing numbers of

law enforcement agencies will soon be following.