

Silent Sports Sounds Off: North Suburb of Chicago Adopts New Bike Ordinances

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The north Chicago suburb of Barrington Hills has adopted new ordinances aimed at the increasing number of cyclists enjoying its roads and picturesque rural surroundings. The new rules, which the village police intend to enforce this spring and summer, mandate single-file riding only and prohibit negligent use of a bicycle.

I passed the news of the new biking ordinances on to **Bob Mionske**, an attorney specializing in bicycling law who wrote the book *Bicycling and the Law* and writes a column on the subject.

I received Mionske's response last night:

"Under Illinois law, local governments are authorized to regulate the operation of bicycles. The statute doesn't explicitly state that such regulation must be consistent with state law. However, state law should pre-empt local law where they are in conflict. The negligent riding law seems to not be in conflict with state law. The question is whether the single file law is in conflict. I'm not sure if it's in conflict or not. Argument that it is in conflict: State law prohibits riding more than two abreast, therefore cyclists may ride two abreast, and state law pre-empts local law. Argument that it is not in conflict: State law only prohibits riding more than two abreast; it does not explicitly allow two abreast. Therefore, local government may specify that single-file is in effect within their jurisdictions. I would have to research this to get a solid answer."

Barrington Hills police officer Sabras Parada, responding to an inquiry by a concerned area cyclist, wrote,

"The single file ordinance applies only to village roadways. On state and county roadways the state statute which permits two abreast riding as long as the bicyclist are not impeding the normal flow of traffic applies. The negligent bicycling ordinance would apply to people operating their bicycles in a dangerous manner. An example

of this would be bicyclist going through stop signs without stopping."

Mionske had a bigger problem with the one-sided approach Barrington Hills seems to have taken.

"I do find it annoying that the village letter states, 'These new ordinances aim to ensure that both bicyclists and motor vehicles can share the roadway in a safe and responsible manner' but nowhere is there any discussion about how motorists can operate their vehicles in ways that that help this environment."

Officer Parada insisted, "The police department is very diligent in citing aggressive drivers whenever they are encountered."

Mionske's last point is an important one, especially in light of a Barrington Hills hit-and-run last August that injured a couple cyclists. A couple weeks later, a Barrington Hills trustee asked the police chief to send a letter to the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation urging the organization to remove Barrington Hills roads from its list of recommended rides "out of concern for safety," according to meeting minutes.

According to this story and this column in The Daily Herald last June, conflict between area resident, motorists, officials and cyclists has been brewing for some time now.

The collision last August prompted the formation of a group that will discuss "new efforts to improve the cycling situation in the north suburbs" at a March 10 meeting of the Active Transportation Alliance (formerly the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation) at Alberto's Cycles in Highland Park, according to this flyer. For more information, call the bike shop at 847/446-2042.