

Bicyclists are encouraged to drive at least one metre out from the curb. This, in theory, compels a passing vehicle to do so only when safe, to pass only when the vehicle can cross the yellow line. When a bicyclist drives closer to the curb, the passing vehicle may try to scrape by, even when there is oncoming traffic.

Bicyclists, by legal definition, are not pedestrians, and are not to operate their vehicles in areas intended for pedestrian traffic.

But as a wise cyclist once noted, "Any cyclist who adheres strictly to the law is a dead cyclist."

The following scale rates island vehicles passing a cyclist pedaling one metre out from the edge of the road.

VEHICLES OVERTAKING CYCLISTS:

THE GREGGORIAN LINEAL SCALE

10.00

To avoid the cyclist a fully loaded commercial vehicle moves all the way across the centre yellow line, gears down, and plays chicken with oncoming traffic. On Quadra Island, the Dahlnas brothers fully qualify. Across the line, Oregon truck loggers are specialists, mainly on 101, the coastal highway and Oregon's "official bike route." They particularly like the single lane on steepest downgrades, where they throw on the jakes, swing so wide their left wheels touch that shoulder, and frighten uphill-struggling Winnepigoes with BC plates off into the toolies and bullrushes. Once assured the road is clear, the driver leans way forward to see the cyclist in his side mirror, making sure the last boomstick has been cleared, then gives a perverse wink and a thumbs up before easing back into his lane.

9.00

A passenger vehicle slows down, moves fully across the centre yellow. Usually foreigners, often non-Calgarian Albertans.

8.00

A passenger vehicle speeds up, but moves fully across the yellow. About 10% of Cortesians roaring down the Quadra Autobahn to hit the next ferry meet this rank. Since they passed the cyclist, they may as well pass a few fellow

Cortesians while they're at it. Tend to vote NDP.

7.00

Slow or fast, but the right wheels are touching the centre yellow. Quadra residents not heading for a ferry, therefore in mellow, rational moods.

6.00

Straddling the yellow. You know who you are. Small "I" liberal, but not committed. You likely smile and nod to the street people, but you're certainly not going to make eye contact or -- Heaven forefend! -- share a loonie. You struggle at election time, wishing it would just go away.

5.75

Straddling the yellow, but a spring sprung lowrider sled, coughing and spluttering up a dense grey plume. The cyclist can't hold his breath long enough, gasps in and chokes out and, eyes weeping, weaves for safety toward the bank. These drivers not only vote Green, they are Greens: candidates and politburo members, urban elitists who don't know the distinction between a mowich and a shagpoke, and would never deign to ask. They take a perverse pride in their older, heavier, ill-tuned vehicles, failing to note the irony in how deeply they consume the earth's resources. Lack humour.

5.00

Left wheels on the yellow, just creeping, sneaking past the wobbling cyclist. Particularly nasty on the Heriot Bay Road where there are no paved shoulders. If a log truck comes the other way, you'll take out the cyclist. You've no other choice, do you? Tends to vote Non-Progressive Conservative. Or in America, Democrat.

4.75

Like a 5, except always a beater half-ton, roaring past, the driver intoxicated. Once safely past, the passenger, likewise inebriated, shouts back, "Hey, you @!#&ing fool, use the goddamn bike lane!" One might get hurt trying to explain that there are no such lanes on Quadra Island. Doesn't vote.

4.25

Like a 4.25, but for another passenger, this one sitting in the truck box making sure the cooler ice doesn't melt. He hurls a beer can at the cyclist. It bounces

off the helmet. But, since this partygoer isn't about to waste good suds on some idiot on a bike, the can is empty.

4.00

Doesn't give an inch. Prides himself that on summer days he's providing the labouring cyclist a refreshing breeze. Very confused on election days, as still trying to vote Socred. Except for the Cortesians: they're from California, think well of themselves, and vote Green.

3.00

Fours, but just a-flying. They usually blow the bike off the road, the cyclist off his bike. Younger Californians and older Calgarians. If they trail a plume of dope, likely Walcan commuters from offshore. The US versions vote Republican; the Canadians might vote if there were a neo-Nazi party.

2.00

The low blow. Passenger side mirror catches the cyclist just above left kidney, kicking cycle and rider into the blackberries. Usually commuters, the same ones who roll onto the ferry with a cellphone plastered to an ear and a coffee cup tucked into a snout. Just as they don't understand why their habits might annoy ferry workers, they're oblivious to the low blow -- and don't stop to check the cyclist for lifesigns. They are important people; they vote Liberal, both federally and provincially.

1.00

Hospitalization. It's the cyclist's fault. Though he had proper headlights, blinking tail light, reflective jacket, glistening helmet, blazing bike tights, all the proper gear, he or she should have not been riding at night. These people subscribe to the North American cult of victimization: it's genes, environment, poor parenting, whatever, but it couldn't possibly be their faults that they're obese or addicted to tobacco or other drugs, nor that they ran down a cyclist at night. They'll vote for anyone who promises to shoot the criminals.

0.00

Dead on the scene.

John Q Gregg (who's experienced it all down to and including 2.00)
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