

14. Steel Ballet

Once freed from daily commutes, Al had a chance to notice just how ridiculously dangerous motoring had become. Governments and industries don't care if replaceable minions lived or perished. Reflexes diminish among an aging population yet they live on ever longer; mixing blue haired slowpokes and hot blooded teens increases chances for collisions. Each of the annual 300,000 injuries hardly raised a coworker eyebrow. Many assume it was victim's fault. Meanwhile, in USA car emissions kill an estimated 30,000 people each year. Motoring was a cruel sort of trap; so many undisclosed costs, \$150 billion from mishaps paid across entire population, not the least of which were astronomical auto collision and group health premiums and survivors burying their dead.

Steel ballet...

screams across a stage
of a paved way
discretely lined, as if order reigned.
Swing by slowpoke grandma,
thread needle's eye
between fast closing semi
and 1/2 ton pickup. Pushing 85,
throw dice, barely survive
as darkness gathers.

Freeway knives unrestrained
through vacant valley lands
between somewhere and drab green
nowhere, where nothing stands
worth shedding light on except
100 yards beyond high beams
and smoky yards falling behind,
taillights glowing retina red.
Pink stripes tick off lives
inside an aching head.

Count deaths tolls, quiet rage
for lives less lived. Housewives
belittle self-hate seen
in misshapen limbs of sin.
Radio thrashed out, heavy sell,
flanged, fuzzed, pegged wah-wah,
acid riffs, twisted play,
tortured hymns of hell.
No calm counterpoint as in
stately chambers of those adept,
just night noise along the way.
Turn page to find
nothing dear really matters,
or so racing alone it seems.

There's not much taxpayer satisfaction in the annual \$600 billion industry that supplies roads, ribbons of smooth tossed onto a prickly landscape. What is a road? It's a dirt path amidst bramble, widened, graded, smoothed with what's left over, tarry sludge, after fractionating off benzene, diesel fuel, gasoline, home heating oil, kerosene, and natural gas from crude. Makes sense; use bottom dredges of petroleum to ensure additional consumption. Once saw a short section of road temporarily sprayed with oil prior to repaving, sort of like those who long for a perfect lawn paint asphalt green. Wasn't that bad, though, an idea other transportation departments might note, instead of leaving stripped and unhealthily dusty. Never wide enough, for 50 years roads were expanded, reinforced with concrete and steel to make an amazing network of interstate highways, 46,000 miles, far beyond the Great Wall of China as the most impressive connected man-made structure ever constructed, clearly visible from orbit day and night. Still, it was simply a space in which to perform, a theater stage, or to die, like gladiators or hapless Christians in the Coliseum. Amuses someone, but not him.

Never satisfied, motorists clamor for more, not even knowing why, half believing absurd delusions of better safety at higher speeds. The faster you go, the more likely you'll die in a crash, period. Trees are wantonly felled, wildlife displaced. Strip mines are dug for raw materials: gravel, limestone, sand, scars on the land. He recalled as a child sitting alongside US-1 and watching cars go by as amusement, and as a teen standing on a newly constructed bridge over an interstate, between errands he'd do using his bike, and watching a sudden plethora of red tail lights, squinting at them, watching them blur into long comet trails. Was charmed by its novelty, but vaguely anxious over what it meant. Indie artists Defiance, Ohio wrote a matching song, "a stream of blinking lights and the concrete strip below seems less like a noose and more like a tie that binds or at least a tourniquet". His old neighborhood had shrunk, cut off from a large public park, by this bypass they steamrolled down in name of progress despite local objections. At least his side street, parallel to a now second rate highway, was still lined with an unbroken canopy of maples and oaks busy absorbing greenhouse gases, each mature example providing enough oxygen for two people. Later, he watched them cut branches off to extend electrical and phone service without asking homeowner's permission. People agree that trees are noble lifeforms until they're in their way. You own those between your house and road, and pay for any damage they cause, until utilities need space above, then trees

suddenly become public property, weakened by cutting, which costs you later. Swamp maples and venerable oaks buckle pavement and so are replaced with dwarf varieties if at all. After these defoliating invasions, property values plummeted and families who could afford to get out did. And hardly anyone uses that bypass anymore. Even that perfectly usable bridge is closed to traffic; although its gate could easily be modified to allow bikes through, it never has been.

As soon as they are finished, roads are pounded into rubble by repeated freezes, stresses and thaws, tonnage of goods and products transported by overly laden trucks, and way too many cars. The more traffic they try to flow, the more they draw, which creates knots and snarls not easily brushed out. It's a system that isn't self-sustaining, a Tower of Babel that's falling apart even as it's being built, where nobody's responsible if bridges collapse or poor design causes accidents, and failure prowls an invisible forest poised to strike when least expected. Taxpayers laugh cynically about water seeping into tunnels engineered at enormous expense as if they expect failure but feel powerless to do anything about it, whether oppose beforehand or demand action after, when, supposedly, citizens in a democracy have all the say if they only exert it collectively. One can always just stop, put a foot down—not on an accelerator—put up with whatever's now there, rather than allow such foolishness to spiral into social insanity. Enough is enough.

Yet decreeing tax dollars for roads was a no-brainer. Roads are built ostensibly to serve commerce and defense. Stifle commerce, and funds for bikeways disappear. Driving by himself on an interstate, he wondered how many others were thinking the same. They were busy arranging deals on their cell phones, competing for position in overcrowded lanes, dodging tractor trailers, and passing illegally on the right. No point calculating what portion of the Gross National Product that auto-making occupies, trillions annually. If you're not actually making new technologies to serve real needs, you're not progressing. Advocating cycling is backwards bound, encouraging weakness. How do you reply to critics who say, if you fall behind, you become vulnerable as a nation? Fully 32% of population (eighty million) didn't work for pay: prisoners, retirees, school kids, those chronically unemployed. Another 25% worked directly for city, federal or state government, whether bureaucrats, consultants, firemen, military, police, public servants or teachers. Of remaining 43%, probably 2/3 are either directly or indirectly employed in industries serving automakers. It wasn't just assembling and fabricating, but all industries related—advertising,

insurances, publicity, registries, sales, services—and tariffs levied. Automaking and motoring ultimately paid almost everyone's salary. Hard to imagine what could replace all that as an economic engine. You probably can't have capitalism without cars.

It'd be radical to suggest that they forego spending that allows automobilists and truckers to roam about unrestricted. So why do they for amblers, cyclists, or those bound to wheelchairs, three other legal users of public rights-of-way? Interstates exist only as a boon to motorized, not human, autonomy. Cars have rights that people don't. Annual travel on nation's highways reached an estimated 2.7 trillion vehicle-miles in 2000, 4 times 1960 levels. Since 1970, travel by all mo-ves has increased 148%. Truck travel is up 231%. Biggest percentage increase, 650%, was in use of minivans, pickup trucks, and sport utility vehicles. More efficient passenger car miles had actually decreased from 82.9% to 58.6% of total. Highways may handle more vehicles more efficiently but also endanger drivers and passengers more. A freeway forces you along, hides industrial blight and ugliness in between quaint spots that tourists might enjoy and where travelers rest their weary heads. People come to identify with an area relative to its highway access. Jersey Turnpike comes to mind, where residents refer to themselves by exit numbers, and social status is based merely on a ramp location and residual stench from their predominant industry, squeezing chemicals from petroleum.

Arts give lyrical homage to fast and furious, road warriors pushing motoring to its furthest extremes, a vanishing point, in scene after scene of car chases and demolition derbies, days of thunder whose characters are born to run and ride easy in cinema, installment pieces, paintings, plays, poems, and songs. Cable hosts a hot rod reality show, where ordinary idiots dress up Trans Ams and themselves to look like Burt Reynolds. Hip hop poppers imitate mechanized motion. Some modern ballets forsake fluidity for cogwheel jerkiness. Sport sedan and SUV commercials show open tracks and salt flats, wheel spinning stunt drivers who tout "anything goes", but never gridlock, more the norm on most byways. Wild masses of flying metal on screen or through a windshield fascinate. You watch with amazed horror, morbidly curious, then suddenly realize you're not voyeur, but participant spellbound by an impatient lust go fast to nowhere. Men fill their lives with nonsense, dance in flames, barely pay their rents, chase dames. Nothing's ever free, you're on your own. Must pay the fee, or take another loan. Too many had already bought in, sold on chance, and not enough cared it was a deadly dance. You'd think human

behavior would rise above moths attracted to bug zappers for warmth.

If it's not ignoramus obstructing left lane so you can't pass, it's numskull cutting you off so you can't weave through on right. The only reason to be in left lane is to pass or take a left exit or turn. Generally, one's supposed to let those overtaking pass, not park out there and jam up traffic for miles. Motorists see an open left lane ahead and think, "Great, no reason to pay attention," then proceed to occupy themselves with whatever insentient things they do instead of driving with care. What they should be doing instead is watching ahead and modifying their speed to suit conditions. Motorists must let bicyclists and walkers cross or pass whenever they come upon them. Few do. He always stopped short of intersections when following in line. You're never supposed to block intersections, not even cross that white stop line or turn prematurely into oncoming lane. This also applies to inconsiderate merging drivers who interpret his appropriate action as an invitation to ease out and stop there. Makes traffic flow even slower. Some louts won't pull over to talk to pals on sidewalk, which not only blocks street but endangers pal's life when angry drivers try to pass. Best to avoid motoring altogether, which deprives one of serenity. People bemoan life's fast pace, when motorizing through it is mainly to blame.

Many people are just too dumb to drive. They should retest people after their first 2 years of driving, but by way of highways and parking lots. Make them prove they know how it's done, merging, parallel parking, parking squarely, taking only one space. Thereafter, 3 violations, and rip up their licenses, let them begin anew, go back to driver's education, take busses. Also retest seniors >65 years old every year. Attention span, eyesight and reflexes suddenly go. There are too many drivers anyway. Revoke or suspend more licenses, a good way to improve flow. Increase requirements, isolate the inept, and make it safer for those remaining. Why not random alcohol and drug testing? Some might consider these measures discrimination against individuals, invasion of privacy, or restriction on industry. Privacy must be preserved at home and office, but not in public places where motorists wield deadly weapons, tons of flashing steel. If a madman were to wildly swing a broadsword in a busy intersection, a SWAT team wouldn't hesitate to eliminate the threat. There are laws against carrying weapons on your person outside a gun range or home, but they don't enforce them either. Substance impairees freely speed and fatalities continue unabated. News broadcasts Chinese's ongoing

health debacle although it's clearly a HIPAA and personal privacy violation to reveal such facts about an individual. Shows that people have a right to know about public (elected, medical, non-profit, religious) officials, ministers and practitioners. So why not sex offenders in your neighborhood? Just where do you draw these lines?

Humans have messed up so many times there are laws against everything except staying home alone inoffensively, quietly, soberly. All nice people are prisoners in polite cells of their own choice. Luckily, to compensate, there were little poem fragments, gifts that span time to bring grace and fight sorrow, maybe moving, perchance too precious, slight glimpses of God, solace for survivors of victims, something similar to truth but not actually truth itself. Television personalities build careers by commiserating and hand wringing. These blathering idiots go on and on repeating banalities and nostrums. Bad behaviors endlessly repeat. People adapt to suit. With only love in your heart, streets could begin to resemble paths to liberation, places to welcome humanity. Why not change what's intolerable? Merging gracefully may be a mental balm, but it's impossible to gain grace sitting in a faceless long queue sucking noxious fumes from someone's backside.

All roads were once trails blazed for someone to get from point A to point B, generally to exploit new territory and increase business as mouths to feed multiplied. Trails that served commonwealth became roads where opportunities arose and towns were built. Roads are conduits along which people flow like electrons on wires to connect, create work, and make things happen. But roads can take many forms, from agreeable main streets to impersonal limited-access superhighways, from brick lined alleys to double wide blacktop, from parallel iron rails to skyway maglevs.

Bicycling isn't relegated to sultry days on dry dirt tracks that wonderfully widen to vast expanses of green midsummer fields. Bicycles belong *everywhere* through 4 seasons. Bicycles *can* go where cars can and can't. Technical advancements in clothing, equipment and tires permit commuting down to 10°F in downpours, mud, and snow, over long distances and varying grades of hardpack and loose gravel. People above the Arctic Circle ride bikes with studded tires on hard snow where only dogsleds and snowmobiles vie as transportation and fuel is scarce. For quick short runs, some even cycle in Antarctica. True, not as many bicyclists endure extreme conditions, but a surprisingly sizable portion do.

He backed conversions of abandoned rail lines, which usually have grades less than 3%, into *bikeways*, as distinguished from *bike lanes*, which are designated with stripes alongside travel lanes for mo-ves, or *bike routes*, travel lanes shared with mo-ves designated just by signs or possibly *sharrows*. Bikeways are useful in many ways: act as central spines between cities, get people to ride, provide opportunities for fresh-air recreation and socialization, vary in use by time of day. He'd ridden all 40 miles of detached local bikeways at all hours in all seasons. They can be closed for weeks in Winter after snow when sheets of ice form under bridges or wherever shady. They're seldom properly crowned to self clear during rains. But they're a fine alternative to breathing exhaust fumes on hot afternoons, even if baby carriages and loose dogs were sometimes in your way, but how is that any different than traffic elsewhere? You'd have to suffer from severe road rage not to submit to slight inconveniences wherever you ride. Roads are inanimate; rage against is irrational.

Complaining about bikeway impediments was even more foolish than complaining about motor gridlock; levels weren't close to comparable. Waits were timed in seconds, not hours. One could ride for miles on greenways without seeing another being. This seldom occurs while driving. Actually, people who use these facilities should favor a steady flow, since misuse, motoring, rape, theft and vandalism went up when intended use was light. There's safety in numbers provided everyone uses facilities sensibly. You always have to go responsibly, no matter what conveyance or pavement you choose. While he shared roads with mo-ves, grateful their tires swept roads a bit, he didn't want any funds earmarked for bicycling to go into road repair. Those accounts should be kept separate, as laws prescribe. Busses, cars and trucks chew up roads with wanton abandon. Not so bikes. Imagine if majority of roads were to revert to dirt? Be thankful to have so much decent pavement to ride on, but don't become so complacent as to never insist upon enhancements or put up with dangerous arrangements they allow. Be heard.

You never get anywhere without mutually beneficial solutions. Why not flow traffic of all types better yet safer? This means getting cars out of school zones, and giving side streets back to kids to play stickball, shaping backwaters for bicyclists, and smoothing flow for motorists on main streets, so all are satisfied. Problems arise where they're forced together because there's only one bridge for long distances or there are no playgrounds nearby. Communities without public spaces are hardly habitable. Ideally, some streets

should allow multiple uses, not just motoring. Naturally conserved areas, parks and sidewalks ought to be linked, as in Olmstead's vision of an emerald necklace. Isolated villages either fall below housing minimums, or increasingly exclude through deed restrictions that foster aristocratic attitudes. Bays, AMTRAK, fences, interstates and rivers all cut off routes for bicyclists and joggers, each an impassable impediment that extends trips for either, turns it into another us-them proposition, motored versus self propelled. Whatever throughways cities plan must provide for margins, overpasses or tunnels, so that bikes, pedestrians and wheelchairs are never excluded.

Avid cyclists he asked agreed they didn't want to be restricted to bikeways. Yet roads stink sometimes. Motorists wish bicyclists would disappear and vice versa. He concluded that the one compromise that might cater to everyone's interests had never been considered; he called it *bike corridors*, suitably borrowing a railroad term. They would be major spines specifying bike friendly pavement over long distances to create a flat, safe, unbroken routes. They'd consist of both bikeways and existing roads identified as the most conducive to cycling. Good corridor design would serve several purposes: a) become sites for urban renewal, b) encourage healthy lifestyles through bike commuting, c) organize flow, d) provide accommodations at difficult intersections, e) quiet traffic, and f) secure student routes by schools that would be easier to maintain and patrol. Should segments within a corridor later become too busy, bikeways can be built alongside. Ultimately, he hoped, these would provide examples or test cases of how conveyances of all types, powered or not, could coexist. Current designs and policies were hell-bent against. If motorists get cranky over roads that don't serve well, why shouldn't bicyclists? They're not only entitled but duty-bound to bitch.

Flat, quiet side roads parallel to main streets are often ideal candidates, yet they aren't usually continuous. You may have to cross over a main street at intervals or connect end points by short paved paths, small bridges that ban mo-ves, or such accommodations. Gates or stanchions at these points would let bikes but not cars through. Selected side streets would receive bike lane striping, on-demand controls, rollover islands, route signs, twisty curbstones to discourage parking. Designation would bring enhanced repair and sweeping, and increased police protection. This way you always keep *some* streets in better repair by diverting heavy vehicles onto limited access interstates and main streets. Doesn't mean you *can't*

bike on main streets, only *suggests* cyclists try these pothole-free, signed, swept, unbroken, unchallenging routes that cities *can* afford to maintain that also happen to pass cafes, libraries, parks, residences, and schools. This is not discriminatory *segregation*, this is a way of acknowledging that the vast majority of bicyclists are not experienced and might never otherwise get a chance to become healthier and more independent through riding and walking. Such planning does not restrict bicycling at all, simply flows it better. It eliminates existing restrictions, and promotes public safety. Motorists demand exactly the same for roads.

Any idea that business storefronts must face a thoroughfare to attract patrons capitulates to an assumption that every customer will arrive in a car. Motorists should be shown dumpsters and rough back sides, while pedestrians should be greeted with awnings and patio furniture. Who wants to be where noxious fumes are pumped into your face? Or sip a drink while a garbage truck loads or 10-wheeler unloads nearby? Shopping malls are more successful because they put storefronts inside, and you can walk from one to the next unafraid of motorists and weather. Interior open-air courtyards are a welcome oasis from hectic bustle and hustle. Architectural features can add expense which gets wasted as a distant splotch for apathetic passersby. Turning them inward makes for a desirable destination. A roadside sign or word of mouth is all a cafe or shop needs to draw patrons.

Lobbyists claim that any anti-motoring approach is doomed to failure and likely to result in revenue loss. All these distinctions are meaningless and phony. One uses the tool one needs to do job best: bicycle to get around, truck to haul materials. Everyone agrees that mile-square communities built as complete villages require no elevated viaducts, highways, mass transit, personal transport other than a bike and foot, or unbearable tax burden. Even metropolises can be broken down nicely into manageable microcosms. But governors feed off revenue flow, so the more damage and gridlock that occurs, the larger their campaign chests swell. While they belittle *tax and spend*, they are not above *tax and skim*.

You could designate bicycling corridors between nodes in your network. They would be administered by states under a *watershed model*, where all development within its bounds must undergo impact studies before construction begins. Anything approved within a bicycling watershed would have to favor biking:

No exclusive chunks, housing tracts, public real estate, or shopping malls without a bikeway and walkway through, no cul-de-sacs that don't stretch through to other side unless bounded by bodies of water or severe topography, such as cliffs or ledges. This would encourage multiuse development with entire community in mind instead of abusive parking complexes where children and seniors run for their lives or warrens of privilege in gated communities. Fast food franchises and gasoline service stations, with their erratic traffic, would obviously be banned from corridors. For the most part, they've been gradually merging into one another anyway.

He'd look at parking lot curb arrays placed as traffic controls and wonder why all were topped with sight-line obscuring shrubs. Trees and walkways would be better, so one could see, park, step out of traffic, and walk safely to a store. No, that might cost mall a few extra spaces and, consequently, a couple of visitors. Dirt and shrubs are cheaper than pavement, even if because of them you die. And yet, if they're paving lot anyway, why not just pave a little extra on opposite side of curbs? It's all about dumping their disrespect, expense, and unsafe practices by design onto you. It's not only developers but overeager town boards who approve such projects to increase tax base, and overseeing urban planners who should know better with access to building codes. They relented when handicap spaces were mandated by federal law, so a few, too few, are usually included. Meanwhile, healthy heirs keep dashboard signs or license plates of their deceased and use them surreptitiously. They should have expiration dates and require more frequent/stringent driver requalification based on how poorly motorists with them seem to operate. If they require handicap plates, can they drive at all? His 94-year-old mother-in-law has one, even though she never held a license; it's used by caregivers to bring her shopping, although they could drop her at door and park elsewhere. Everyone else is on their own: kids walking behind cars as they back out, seniors in wheelchairs zig-zagging out of the way of SUVs and trucks, worried heads spinning round for blindside perils. Pitiful. You'd think lot design would be an extension of a building's safety conformance. A class action suit to force better lot safety would win, even individual civil suits for losses sustained because they didn't put in a walkway, not that everyone would use it, preferring most direct rather than safest route, but at least this would exonerate developer and landlord.

Why must all design attention be given to motorists? It costs less to attend needs of bicyclists. Minor spot changes were all it would take to make moms feel safe sending kids to school along these routes. Over-engineered bike facilities can be expensive and illogical. They're a good solution between urban centers or where road grades are too severe. Urban bikeways, unless properly laid out, attract criminals. You never want to create large secluded pockets in either case. Suburban bike routes must continue directly through cities. Once you reach segment's end at city's edge, which way do you go? Most rural roads are already bikeable. Small town planners could correct terrible oversights at certain intersections, or fast descents from 2-lane bike route roads into 4-lane, shoulderless points you're not warned about. OSHA has regulations against things like sudden changes in flooring textures. Why? People slip, trip, and unsafely fall. Experts are very aware of how sudden changes take people off guard. Monotonous sameness is just as dangerous. Why tolerate pointless avoidable injuries on roads? No sane person would argue against banking turns on expressways to counter angular momentum. Yet on a designated bike shoulder he frequented there's a minefield of grates and sewer covers where otherwise he could go 35 mph. Roads are supposed to usher people along as safely as possible. Making them into obstacle courses that only the gifted can handle is folly.

Wherever bikeways and motorways intersect there are more collisions, naturally, since segregated flow doesn't meet elsewhere to create chances to collide. Critics claim crossings actually cause accidents, use this as an argument against segregation. This is illogical, since bicycle accidents and fatalities are trending downward despite an increasing number of trips. Bikeways enable additional, longer, safer trips. Engineers should avoid laying out bikeways with many such crossings, divert motorists to quiet patterns, provide over and underpasses, which are obviously superior to a surface intersections. But bikeways also need entrances and exits, preferably turning alongside for a block or so to gracefully merge with traffic flow.

Bikeways, per se, do cost a million dollars a mile, face enormous opposition, yet who wouldn't agree to fixing up a few side streets for a small fraction? Pick some that already require repair and have fallen into disuse. Designated routes could be gradually developed over time, encroaching erosion mitigated, grates properly aligned or eliminated, lighting placed at more frequent intervals, sanding restricted in Winter. If done right, all congested

suburban and urban areas would be crisscrossed with cycling friendly corridors. Cyclists would actually detour from their direct line to pick one up, gravitate toward them as they now do bikeways. Would act as a fun funnel to avoid messy spills. Cities with such arrangements are very livable. Quieted streets become magnets for coffee shops, condominiums, food outlets, small businesses. Multi-lane roads would stand apart to shelter these communities from exhaust fumes and noise. People would find living along bike routes highly desirable. Neighborhood improvement with play space for children means real estate that's easy to sell, good bang for the buck. Directed federal funding could jump start much needed urban renewal. Who in their right mind wouldn't want such developments in place of this wanton expense over confused webs of concrete wasteland known as an interstate highways?

Congress recently passed a Federal legislation that all roads, except limited access highways, must be made *complete* so they accommodate bicycles, pedestrians and wheelchairs. But complying for every existing incomplete roadway will take generations, while designating corridors with small signs is something that can be done immediately. Would solve many problems. How do you navigate area's worst traffic? What's the flattest, shortest route? How can you ride across a bay with bicycling banned bridges? Easier than trying to bridge gulf between public concern and vested interests. Once beyond urban problem spots, riding undesignated roads is fine if you know which ones go through. In his own area, he already did, but not so every bicyclist. Networks with signs would minimize such worries. Following directions for mo-ves often lands you in big trouble, into bans or unsuitable roads, although glimpses of motoring signs that indicate compass points can be instructive. Following US-1 North might be thought a way to stay on course, but it's too dangerous in sections; riding along a bikeway that crosses US-1 where a motoring sign indicates a compass direction works nicely.

Urban planning that includes cycling would be an exciting departure and a worthy mission. It's every planner's duty to encourage it, as well as state planners to urge use of public transportation. If more people bicycled or bussed to work or shopping, vehicle congestion would definitely decrease. One motorist alone in a car takes up the room of 10 bicyclists riding in a pack, both in parking and road space. Some might argue bicyclists need elbow room

around them, yet paceliners sometimes pack in five deep on each other; 20 cars driven alone take up 4 times the profile of as many bus passengers. Without nine million going by bike, Beijing would be even more dysfunctional than it already is. Garages just outside a city and bikeways or monorails between would mitigate downtown crowding. Motorists would use Park'n'Locks next to service stations with emergency phones, frequent bus or rail pickups, snacks and toilets. A mini-mart with a big parking lot would serve nicely. Designated police substations, even if manned by only one patrolman, become safe bases along any route. In cities, walkers, not cars, mean more transactions, more revenue. Malls work because of this. Currently in his nearby city, walking from retail mall—built on public subsidies for people to shop—to financial district—where majority goes to work—they must cross 12 high speed motor lanes, unless they can find a way onto mystery sky bridge through a labyrinth of hotel and mall. This poor planning could be corrected by an island in between, or an easy-to-access pedestrian level just above roadway. Around back, a pedestrian crosswalk was striped across a dark underpass just beyond a curve in road. Does that make any sense? No sooner do you step off curb, a temporarily blinded motorist plows right into you.

As it is, few bicyclists dare go into this city center, a major nexus connecting all parts of a state divided by a bay. Hardly anyone lives there anymore: nowhere to food shop, obtain services, or park, just expensive garages, offices and retail space*. The few apartments and condos are outrageously overpriced. Greedy garage owners charge by the minute. Heaven forbid if you decide to take in a show or forget to validate your ticket; they'd have to confiscate your vehicle to pay fee. Someone unscrupulous might steal some barely running junkers and fill up spaces just to spite them. Cramming as many parking spaces into center of city as they can just eliminates places you'd want to visit there. If you lived there, you'd think it might be nicer to walk to work than drive, but it isn't. Everyone fears narrow streets and heavy traffic racing through. Planners can't knock down buildings to add bike lanes, but they can designate shared pavement. Navigating his way across city, hardly ever his destination, he'd ridden all streets at great personal peril. Wasn't fun. Many are one-way with motorists shifting between lanes while doors are being flung open. Moves destroy a city's ambience as much as blight and poverty. Proper planning enriches a city, preserves its history, prevents automotive dominance that turns everything into an oil stained desolation.

* After author's public outcry, bus racks/reroutings and a supermarket were added, a start. Speak up!

Bicyclists he asked said they didn't want to be restricted. But they *already are*. Bicycling is strictly forbidden or simply impractical on at least 30% of urban pavement: bridges, certain arteries with 4-lanes each way, or 6-lane rotating intersections, high speed rotaries, or interstate highways. Not every surface road is intended as a bicycling road. Few riders will try where conditions are at all hostile. People who say, "Just let bicyclists ride anywhere!" are not only irresponsible, but they're boorishly inconsiderate of both drivers and riders. They argue as if they only desire to flow cars better, rather than supporting both. Bicyclists, especially newcomers, need more consideration than what they've been getting. Minor restrictions would work in their favor, i.e., prohibit trucks, including SUVs, from certain side streets, "No Thru Trucks", but it would seldom be enforced, just like their restriction from high speed passing lanes, where they seem to always reside.

He was in favor of anything they could do to get people out riding instead of sitting on their butts getting sickly and turning soft, then using up all his tax money in medical costs. Universal health care would be a practical goal if most citizens were healthier longer. Because they drive everywhere, and sit placidly between trips, they aren't. Motoring kills in so many ways. Ranting rock group Rage Against the Machine spit out blunt facts about cars in Los Angeles, "Baghdad is burning... Yes the car is our wheelchair... Oily silence mocks the legless, now traveling in coffins... We found your weakness and it's right outside your door... Mass graves for the pump and the price is set." Something must be done.

Why not give violators bicycles and take away their SUVs until they're no longer dependent on foreign oil and taxpayer relief? He offered his own example of graceful dancing with much less steel. Steel is real; you don't need a lot to do great things. Congress somewhat agreed and offered funding. States haven't bought in, but they will when class action suits begin, since many are now in violation of federal statutes. States profit enormously from gasoline taxes, thus choose gridlock and discourage bicycling altogether. Transportation departments wait for Advisory Committees to suggest projects, yet committee members perceive their roles not as innovators or watchdogs, but as rubberstamp bureaucrats and supporters of their own vested interests. Although they're state appointed volunteers, they work full time for organizations who pay them to be there to block any systemic changes that might reduce profits or support ones that increase. Each meeting is a farce, neither recorded for interested parties nor stenographed to pinpoint culpability. Presentations are biased and disingenuous,

never revealing what their agendas are. Experts are brought in to argue why unwanted public projects aren't possible, when it's really all about exclusivity and privilege shutting public out. They don't overtly scream, "Not in my neighborhood," but do everything but. Loud construction companies, Cripple-A, motoring lobbyists, and others aren't going to fight for sensible road use that includes bicycling. Greenway groups and Sierra Club with agendas of their own collectively constitute a whisper in support. Any notion of roadbuilding as an avenue to commerce is passé. For at least 40 years, practically nobody but private individuals has promoted pro-bicycling road building.

When a large subset of a population—fifty-seven million Americans—is ignored, mistreated, or singled out, you have to expect objections and reprisals. People aren't going to take it. They'll hold protest marches, make everyone suffer, push back. Smaller constituencies have won larger concessions. A dozen speakers bringing similar messages to each committee meeting is enough to put bicycling projects into transportation improvement plans. Planners may lose their meal ticket over this issue. With consensus as a mandate, shouldn't FHWA withhold funding on all roadwork until bicycling is adequately accommodated? It would take so little effort and time to do. Some suggestions aren't good ones, though. Bicyclists have a lot to say about a lot of things. Has to do with egos pumped with testosterone and oxygen soaked neurons working overtime. Makes bicyclists pushy and talkative, not necessarily smart, yet so thoroughly whipped they are always ready to compromise, take any bone thrown, wallflowers that they are sidelined from the concrete dance floor that supposed to grant freedom of movement for all on public pavement.

Tiny memorials dot interstates where motorists died. Grieving beloved place balloons, crosses, pictures, rubbish, all as if littering, something ordinarily intolerable. Better to leave gnarled wreckage and rotting carcasses as reminders. An underground movement positioned *ghost bikes*, wrecks slathered with white paint festooned with placards, at spots where bicyclists were hit by motorists. Begged a question: If an accident occurred there, is that the best place to add a distraction? Wouldn't positioning them at red lights, where motorists have to stop anyway, serve as better publicity? He noticed both and thought to somehow memorialize each in words, perhaps a picture and a poem, an updated river anthology. Years later, someone else did. Questioned why, after having given up idea himself. To prosper from their poor fates?

Questioned many motivations. In every case, they'd rather clean up, obliterate event, remove evidence, sanitize scene, then record somewhere for profit, like recovering a wreck's fluids and minerals for recycling. Each wreck "drips great noise" for someone's mým. In battles there's always an acceptable number of casualties. Society only thinks it has matured beyond apocalyptic human sacrifices to appease angry gods. In America's economic war, collateral carnage of a steel ballet remained profitable, a \$150 billion transfer from willing victims into the coffers of those who take advantage of death.

