

## **Uneasy riders Bicyclists forgotten in road plan brouhaha**

*By Rick Maier*

Why is it that when I'm driving down the road, I get aggravated at people on bikes, but when I'm out riding my bike, I get aggravated at the drivers?

Are local motorists inconsiderate? No, Bibb County drivers may be the kindest in the world. And on the other side, cyclists are trying their best to stay out of the way of cars. The problem is that our roads aren't safe for bikes. One slip and the old Woody Woodpecker helmet will undergo a live crash test.

Through all the bickering between DOT and CAUTION about trees and medians, we forgot the kids, the young people who should be pedaling to school or the store. We've allowed Nintendo to replace Schwinn. Boys today wouldn't know how to clip a Pokemon card to their spokes even if they could find a clothespin.

And no one has been representing crazy people like me who ride long distances for exercise. I would go nuts making dozens of laps around the neighborhood, so I pedal all over Middle Georgia.

Please join me and I'll take you for a little spin downtown.

I live off Northside Drive, so the first segment of our trip is on the section near Rivoli Drive that has been recently widened and improved with curbs and sidewalks. Great job DOT!

Hold on! In a few minutes we cross over Wesleyan Drive and face the more typical Bibb County road – hilly, winding, cracked and narrow.

It's early on a Saturday morning so there's not much traffic. But watch out or we'll end up flatter than that squirrel on the side of the road! Certain menacing motorists may be lurking about! Stay alert for yard sale fanatics rushing from one sale to the next, good ol' boys who think of cyclists as urban deer that make fun vehicular targets, and teenagers who have yet to learn that fooling with cell phones and stereos can seriously reduce the amount of time one has to react to unexpected things in the road – like a bike.

We continue on Northside to the intersection with Forest Hill. Are six-plus lanes really necessary here? They should have used some of this asphalt to add a couple feet to the narrow sections of the road. Hope this street design does better for the proposed new mall than it did for Foodmax, Beaches and Shows To Go.

Do you feel like Goldilocks riding along Three Bears Boulevard – too wide, too narrow and just right – all in the last two-mile stretch of Northside?

We take Riverside Drive (not a bad route because it has a small shoulder) to Luther Williams Field and stop for a bottle of water, then turn around and head up Walnut Street.

At College Street we face a dilemma. It's 8:30am and the traffic is picking up. What route should we take home? Let's not go back the way we came – there'll be too much traffic on Northside. Taking Vineville Avenue is suicidal, and Ingleside Avenue is worse. The safest road north out of town is Napier Avenue. Then we take our chances on the new five-lane Forsyth Road, which like Zebulon Road, must be what cycling on an interstate feels like.

Let's make a right on Rivoli Drive, a popular route for runners and bikers. It's a beautiful road, but far too narrow. Cars pass within inches unless they swerve into the oncoming lane. Drivers slow down behind us waiting for a chance to pass, shaking their heads in aggravation as they speed by.

We wave to two young boys walking their bikes in the tall weeds in the ditch, traveling from one neighborhood to the next. An older woman waits for cars to pass before she can safely reach her newspaper at the end of the driveway.

What we need to do is form a new group called BLADDER – Bikers Lobby with Aggravated Drivers to Demand Expanded Roadways. We'll go to the next road-planning meeting and unload on CAUTION and DOT!

Our platform will be - no more multi-lane highways for a while, spend our money widening roads (just a foot or two on each side) or adding small shoulders! BLADDER will invite the members of CAUTION and DOT for a bike ride to show them how to move fast and keep their balance.

Rick Maier is CFO at Wesleyan College  
Reply to [rmaier@wesleyancollege.edu](mailto:rmaier@wesleyancollege.edu)