



CITY OF
PORTLAND, OREGON
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Open Letter to the Community:

Citizens of Portland contribute to our community from countless directions. Some teach or volunteer at schools and churches, some write for neighborhood publications, some plant trees, some simply keep their eyes out for their neighbor's house while they are away on vacation.

Others spend extensive time and energy organizing their peers around an environmentally friendly, physically strengthening activity such as cycling, and still others are paid to respond to emergency calls for help and enforce laws.

While our goals of a stronger, safer community are common, approaches are sometimes different, and misunderstandings likely because we are all human – regardless of whether we wear a stretchy bicycle jersey or an itchy police uniform.

The traffic stop on Northeast Ainsworth Street involving members of the Portland State University Cycling Club and a member of the Portland Police Bureau elicited strong, human reactions from both sides. Our community's law enforcement officers and bicycle riders can probably benefit from a discussion of these situations – from both perspectives.

The undersigned Club cyclists are dedicated to following the rules of the road. They appreciate the progress that has been made in clarifying and refining the City of Portland's bike law enforcement policy but are concerned that not all police officers understand the City's policy and goals. They know that, when there is confusion in the minds of diligent bicyclists between what they understand to be City policy and what they are told by an officer who has stopped them, it can make the traffic stop an unnerving, upsetting occasion. The Club cyclists ask for predictable and consistent enforcement of the rules of the road.

The Portland Police Bureau, represented here by Commander Jim Ferraris of Northeast Precinct and Acting Commander Bryan Parman of the Traffic Division, expects all enforcement to be consistent with City policy but acknowledges that some officers have not mastered all the biking laws and the City's interpretation of them. There is a particular risk of this among officers who are not assigned to full-time traffic enforcement. The Police Bureau will address this problem by producing a training video for all patrol officers and hopes members of our community who frequently ride bicycles will help the Traffic and Training Divisions with the presentation.



The Portland Police Bureau, for its part, takes this opportunity, with the approval of the Club cyclists, to communicate to the public an officer's perspective on traffic stops. While citizens at a traffic stop are often strongly affected by the intrusion of authority, the officer's focus is on tactical concerns, with the overarching goal of safety for all involved. For officers at roadside stops, this means managing people to keep them safe from other traffic, real or potential. It also means officers must be prepared to manage disruptive, emotion-driven behavior, and even occasional violence, which can erupt in an instant. To make a scene safe and give themselves physical and mental room to work on their administrative tasks, officers may ask people to stay in their cars, stand on the sidewalk, get out of street, get off a bike, and the like. They may also ask bystanders to stand back and not interject themselves into a discussion between the officer and the stopped person. While these requests may strike some as overbearing and unnecessary, the officers signing this letter feel a strong need to let the community know they are made only to complete a stop efficiently and satisfy an officer's need to guarantee safety, for the stopped citizen(s) and for the officer.

The Portland Police Bureau expects that people may express themselves at traffic stops but asks that citizens cooperate with officers' efforts to manage these scenes and keep them safe. All parties agree that the best place to express frustration or discuss application of the law is in the safe, controlled setting of a courtroom, in front of a judge, or before our elected policy makers.

Traffic stops are very human moments for everyone, and those present at the Ainsworth stop wish that communication could have been better. We look forward to better understanding and cooperation as we continue our work of making our community stronger and safer.

Mr. Reuben Vyn

Mr. Peter Welte

Officer James Pryce

Commander James Ferraris

Acting Commander Bryan Parman