



BIKE LOUD PDX

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February 12, 2016

Mayor Charlie Hales: mayorcharliehales@portlandoregon.gov

cc: Chief Larry O'Dea

Dear Mayor Hales and Chief O'Dea,

Last week a very serious road rage incident occurred in which a motorist repeatedly used his car to menace and harass a person cycling. According to BikePortland the police shrugged off the incident, saying they cannot do much because the cyclist was not injured. They then told the cyclist that he "shouldn't have tried to talk to [the driver]" after the motorist nearly sideswiped him. We find this response from PPB to be entirely unacceptable.

Sadly, aggression and intimidation of people cycling by people driving is not uncommon. Perhaps the most common act of intimidation is the "close pass." While it is not always clear that a close pass was intentional, many people who cycle experience close passes that were obviously intended to intimidate. It's bad enough that this type of behavior isn't taken more seriously, but let's take it one step further. Imagine that the motorist decides that a close pass is not sufficient and decides to further intimidate the cyclist by circling around and driving his car directly at the cyclist. Last week this very incident played out in SE Portland. Jonathan Maus's Bike Portland article, "Road rage assault leaves man feeling helpless, frustrated and scared," documents the incident and provides video footage of the driver repeatedly attempting to hit the cyclist on the sidewalk.

Bike Portland article describing the incident:

<http://bikeportland.org/2016/02/04/174139-174139>

The fact that the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) shrugged off this incident is completely unacceptable. Repeatedly attempting to ram a vulnerable road user (VRU) on the sidewalk is likely a violation of statutes that prohibit menacing (ORS [163.190](#)), harassment (ORS [166.065](#)), careless driving (ORS 811.135) and failure to drive within a lane (ORS [811.370](#)).

Once a person makes it clear that he is using a 3,000 pound vehicle to threaten a human being with serious injury or death, it is the obligation of the PPB to enforce laws we have in place designed to protect VRUs. The victim is now terrified of encountering the driver again and is apprehensive about riding his bike. If the driver receives no meaningful consequences, he will likely continue threatening bicyclists with his car.

We demand that PPB take harassment and menacing of VRUs seriously. Specifically, we request that the Mayor and Police Chief make it clear to law enforcement officers that the City of Portland has zero tolerance for harassment of VRUs. We also ask that a specific training program be implemented to make officers more aware of this ubiquitous problem. And finally, we request that the Mayor or Chief of Police make a public statement in support of aggressive enforcement of VRU harassment.

Vision Zero is fundamentally about providing safe street design that forces drivers to slow down, but we cannot overhaul the design of our city overnight. In the meantime, we need to have strict enforcement of our laws to tame individuals that pose a threat to VRUs. We also reject the argument that the PPB does not have enough resources to deal with harassment of VRUs. If the PPB can find the time to run Ladd's Addition stop sign stings, they can find the time to deal with violent drivers who pose a far bigger threat to public safety.

Sincerely,

Emily Guise, BikeLoudPDX Co-chair

Soren Impey, BikeLoudPDX Direct Action Coordinator