



Advancing Bicycle Access, Safety & Education

Bicyclists Pay More Than Their Fair Share

Where Does the Money to Build Our Roads Come From? The Taxes You Pay!

As a bicyclist, have you ever been accused of not contributing your fair share of road taxes? Not only do you pay your fair share, if you don't drive a car at all you are subsidizing the motorist that tells you to get off the road and on the sidewalk.

The Rhetoric: Many motorists believe that all the roads in Texas are constructed completely with funds from the state gasoline tax. They further believe that cyclists don't pay gasoline taxes or automobile registration fees; therefore they are getting a "free ride".

The Texas State Road System & Gasoline Taxes

Background: There are 73,000 miles in the Texas state highway system that is overseen by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). While approximately 80% of the money to build the state highway system comes from gasoline taxes, only about 40% of the roads in Texas are constructed with funds from this tax. Many of the roads built with the gasoline tax are high-speed interstates that bicyclists can't use. In fact, it is estimated that only about 5% of bicycle travel is on state or federal highways.

The Reality: Virtually all cyclists pay gasoline taxes! It is estimated that 95% of cyclists own cars as well as bicycles and therefore pay the state gasoline tax on every gallon they use. A portion of that tax goes to build the state highway system, including the Farm to Market roads that cyclists love to ride. It stands to reason that some of that tax money should pay for accommodations for cyclists the same as some of it pays for accommodations for pedestrians.

Local Road System and Property Taxes

Background: Nearly half of the roads in Texas are city and county roads that are primarily built using property taxes. The demographics of Texas cyclists indicate that the average cyclist is well above the median income further adding to the property tax pool. In addition to the taxes cyclist pay on their living quarters, those who are small business owners pay property taxes on their business, which adds to the local roadways budget.

The Reality: Many folks forget that a portion of their property taxes pays for local roads. Whether a cyclist lives in a house or rents an apartment, they are paying property taxes the same as folks who haven't been on a bike in years. Almost all cyclists out on the road are paying property taxes.

Automobile Registration Fees

The State of Texas shares registration fees with local communities to help pay for our roads. Therefore every cyclist with an automobile, and again 95% of cyclists own an automobile, is paying for the roads they use to ride.

Cyclists Pay More Than Their Fair Share!

There are many costs required to enable the safe use of a road. The table below is based on costs that include direct roadway costs, traffic law enforcement and emergency services, parking subsidies and opportunity cost of roadway right-of-way. On this basis, the costs to provide services for a single passenger vehicle are 8.83 cents per mile (5.3 cents per km) while for a bicycle it costs less than .33 cents per mile (0.2 cents per km).

Road System Cost Distribution	Motorist	Human Power
General taxes for roadway services	\$400	\$400
Fuel taxes and registration fee	\$710	\$0
Total	\$1,110	\$400
Average travel (miles per year)	24,000	4,000
Cost per mile (cents)	4.6	8.0
Payment to cost ratio	0.52	24.24
Road use costs (using 8.83 and 0.33 cents/mile)	2,119	13
Net subsidized cost	+\$1,009	-\$387

The Plain Facts:

Society pays about \$1000 each year to subsidize the costs for a motorist to use the roads daily, but every citizen who walks or cycles rather than driving an automobile pays almost \$400 a year to use the same roads. While most of us fall somewhere in between these two cases, make no mistake, cyclists and pedestrians still pay more than their fair share.

Much of the information used in this resource sheet was gleaned from the Victoria Transport Policy Institute. Please visit their website at www.vtpi.org for more information.

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