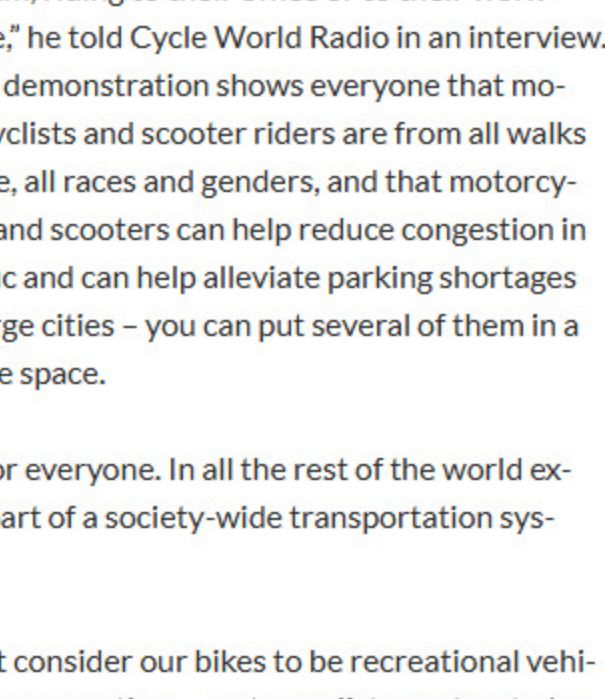


OPINION: RIDING TO WORK

© JUNE 20, 2018 MARK RICHARDSON 5 COMMENTS

Did you ride to work this week? Monday was National Ride To Work Day, after all – every third Monday in June. Did you beat the traffic on your motorcycle?

This is the 27th year of Ride To Work Day. It was created by Andy Goldfine, the designer of the AeroStich riding suit, as a way to promote both the common sense and “social good” of motorcycling. He says that on any given day in the United States, there are probably 80 million people driving to work in cars and perhaps 200,000 in the summertime riding to work on motorcycles, despite the U.S. having around 8 million registered motorcycles and scooters.



“On Ride To Work Day, we’d like to see a million people instead of 200,000 people in the traffic stream, riding to their office or to their workplace,” he told Cycle World Radio in an interview. “The demonstration shows everyone that motorcyclists and scooter riders are from all walks of life, all races and genders, and that motorcycles and scooters can help reduce congestion in traffic and can help alleviate parking shortages in large cities – you can put several of them in a single space.

“They’re more than just toys. Motorcycling is a social good for everyone. In all the rest of the world except the United States, motorcycles are seen as an integral part of a society-wide transportation system.”

I’d add Canada to that, of course, where most of us really just consider our bikes to be recreational vehicles. There’s little advantage to riding them in the city, or in poor weather – motorcyclists are treated as no different from cars in the eyes of most North American lawmakers. We’re not allowed to filter between traffic, which would ease congestion for everyone, and there are few dedicated motorcycle parking spots in many urban centres. So what’s the point? If I’m going to be stuck in traffic on a hot day, or a wet day, and paying for parking at the end of it, I’d just as soon sit inside my car and drink a coffee.



The City of Victoria designates special spaces for motorcycle parking, and charges a discounted rate for the smaller area.

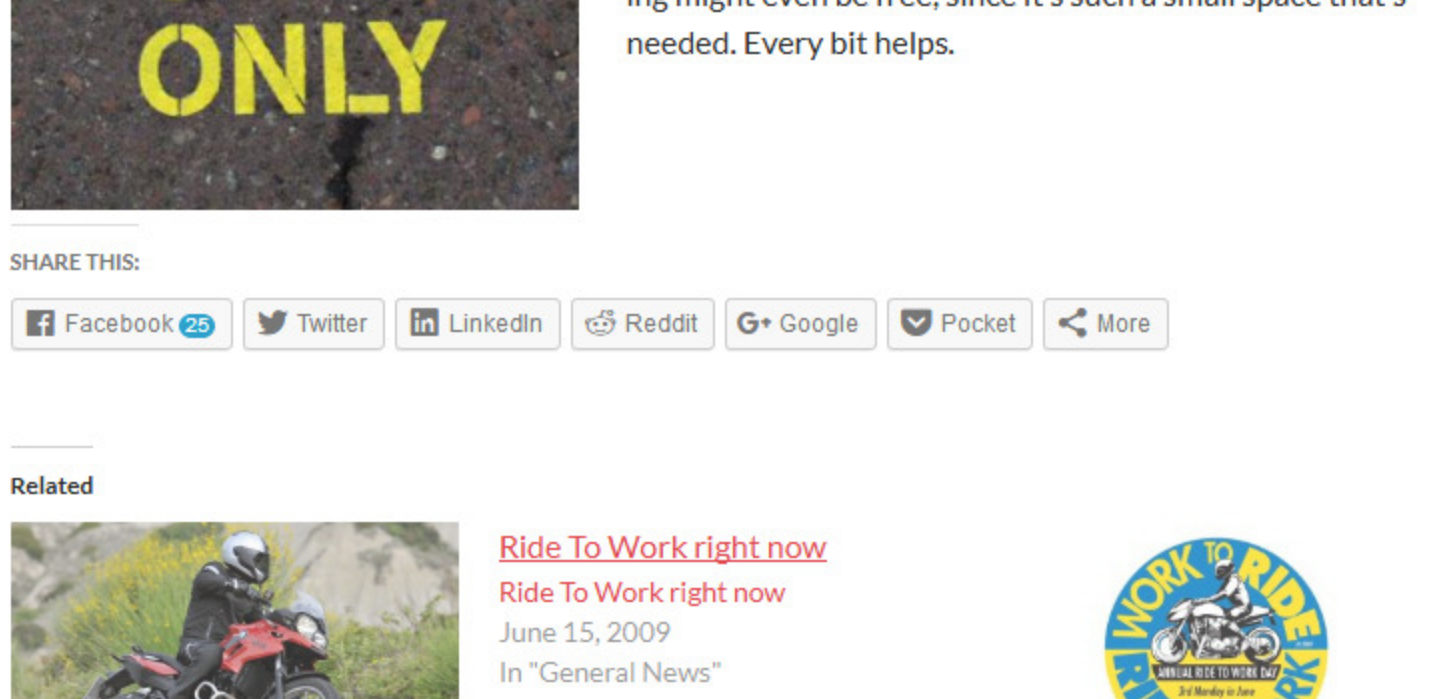
I wrote about this issue in the *Toronto Star* a decade or so ago, when I was commuting regularly into downtown Toronto from the suburbs. I suggested that if there was an incentive for motorcyclists to ride their bikes and leave their cars at home, it would help relieve congestion on both the streets and in the parking lots. I called up the manager of the *Star*’s parking lot and suggested to him that if he dedicated a few spots in unused corners just to motorcycles, it would stop the riders parking illegally in the area, and he could offer them parking at a discount. To my surprise, he shrugged and said okay, and that riders should park for free.

Not long after, the City of Toronto introduced free parking for motorcycles and scooters in dedicated street areas. Suddenly, instead of having to pay \$20 or \$30 to park a car, a rider had the option of keeping that money by just using the bike instead. Here was an incentive for dressing in rain gear and foregoing the coffee.

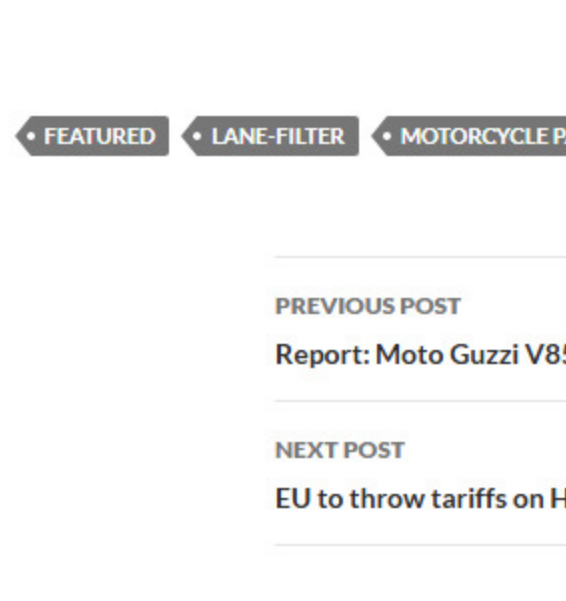


Now, this is how you beat slow-moving traffic.

Many cities in the world offer free parking for bikes and it makes a huge difference – people elsewhere already ride to work because of the far swifter (and safer) commute afforded by legal lane filtering, so it keeps the motorcycles organized and out of the way, not stuffed onto sidewalks and into back alleys. The real change will come if states and provinces follow California’s lead to change the rules and allow lane filtering. And in Ontario, of course, the new Conservative government should change the pointless and ridiculous law that prohibits motorcycles without pillion passengers in the High Occupancy Vehicle lanes. It was well-intentioned but poorly thought-out and it’s just dumb, dumb, dumb. The previous Liberal government refused to admit its mistake; perhaps the Tories can accept reality and catch up to the rest of the world.



Like nowhere else in the world, the Province of Ontario’s HOV lanes do not permit motorcycles – unless they’re carrying passengers. Totally ridiculous.

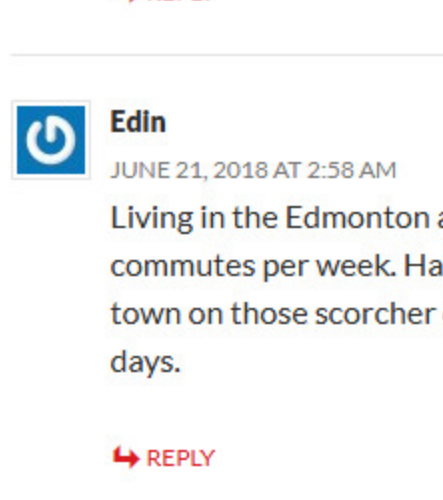


So, with all these reasons in Canada for you not to ride your bike to work this morning – did you? Did you help make a difference? If so, go to Ridetowork.org and download a sticker for yourself that tells everyone what you did, and maybe begins a conversation and helps get us all noticed a little more. Even better, talk to your employer or your local parking lot operator and persuade them to download the “motorcycle parking” stencil that provides dedicated parking to motorcycles and scooters. You never know, the parking might even be free, since it’s such a small space that’s needed. Every bit helps.

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5 THOUGHTS ON “OPINION: RIDING TO WORK”

zeus
JUNE 21, 2018 AT 4:26 PM
Great in theory but the way cage drivers are in the BC lower mainland cities it helps to have to have a death wish. ICBC driver license testers have told me that they “must pass” more drivers to keep customer satisfaction scores up and sell more insurance policies \$\$\$\$\$. I can see this snow-balling.

REPLY

Edin
JUNE 21, 2018 AT 2:58 AM
Living in the Edmonton area, I take advantage of any good day that I can. Average between 2-3 commutes per week. Half my 100km total commute is on country roads which is nice but being in town on those scorcher days can be brutal. Will never ride without full protection on commute days.

REPLY

Peter
JUNE 20, 2018 AT 12:57 PM
Toronto has free motorcycle parking for all on-street Pay & Display parking spaces, not just in dedicated street areas. They were doing a trial run of some spaces downtown which were dedicated for motorcycles only from May thru October. In December they formalized these dedicated spaces (changed the signs from yellow to white) so now a by-law is in place and green horns can (theoretically) ticket cars in m/c spaces. That same by-law removed the typical 1 to 3 hr parking time limit for m/cs in all street spaces, so we can now legally park all day. This was usually not enforced, but it’s good that it’s now legal. This doesn’t apply to no parking during rush hour on more major streets.

I didn’t ride to work on Monday. I took the day off to do a track day, so I hope that’s a good excuse. I do ride almost every day between mid-March to mid-December.

REPLY

Stwyte
JUNE 20, 2018 AT 9:59 AM
I did ride in, but only because of the nasty weather and a good rain suit. I had forgot all about it, until today. I guess I was trying to forget riding into work on that beautiful day last year, when I would have rode my bicycle instead. Five hours later, the cab backed into the bike knocking it over and took off. Parts finally came in by September.

REPLY

L.K.
JUNE 20, 2018 AT 7:11 AM
I usually know about R2W Day beforehand every year, but for some reason this year it didn’t show up on my radar? In the past, I used to ride my motorcycle to work on occasion, but gave it up ... cage drivers in my eastern Canadian city are, for the most part, a bunch of self-absorbed, cel phone, using, signal light ignoring, driving skill lacking maniacs. Riding to work here is like playing Russian Roulette; eventually you WILL lose.

REPLY

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