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Bicyclist bullies try to rule the road in D.C.



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A cyclist bikes on the sidewalk near 17th and L streets NW in Washington. (John Kelly/The Washington Post)



By **Courtland Milloy** Columnist July 8

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I have to hand it to the bicyclists in the D.C. area. They've got more nerve than an L.A. biker gang. And some can be just as nasty.

They fight to have bike lanes routed throughout the city, some in front of churches where elderly parishioners used to park their cars. They slow-pedal those three-wheel rickshaws through downtown during rush hour, laughing at motorists who want them to get out of the way.

(Related: [It's time to tone down the tirades against bicyclists](#))

Now, some of them are pushing to have a “bicycle escalator” installed on 15th Street NW, going uphill from V Street to what used to be known as Malcolm X Park (until influential newcomers to the city pressed to get it changed back to Meridian Hill).

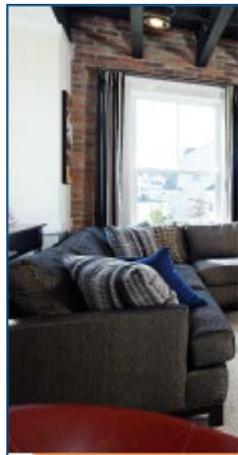
“DC will soon extend the 15th Street cycletrack north, but riders will have to puff up a very steep hill,” David Alpert, founder of Greater Greater Washington, posted on [his Web site](#) July 3. “Could that become easier with a piece of technology from Trondheim, Norway?”

With a bike escalator, called a Trampe, “a cyclist just places a foot on the platform and lets it push him or her up the hill,” Alpert wrote.

Forget about all those people who have to walk up and down that hill every day. What the city really needs is an escalator for bikers, so they won't have to “puff” up the hill.

That's nerve.

As my colleague [John Kelly pointed out](#) in Tuesday's newspaper, bikers disobey the law by riding on sidewalks. His column amounted to a gentleman's request for bikers to give pedestrians a break. They're lucky that someone hasn't put a broomstick through the spokes of their wheels.



“Are You A Bike Ninja?” Jon Gonzales posted Tuesday on the Washington Area Bicyclist Association’s Web site.

“Definition of Bike Ninja: Bicyclists who ride unlit at night, or under low visibility conditions. They can go undetected by other bicyclists and motorists . . . like a ninja. This practice puts many people at risk, and should be avoided whenever possible.”

Actually, bike ninjas are much worse. They don’t just ride without lights at night. Or ride on sidewalks and go the wrong way in a bike lane. If you demand that he show common courtesy and obey the rules of the road, a biker just might spit on your car. Kick the door. Hit the side mirrors. Bang on the hood. And dare you to do anything about it.

It’s a \$500 fine for a motorist to hit a bicyclist in the District, but some behaviors are so egregious that some drivers might think it’s worth paying the fine.

Bikers routinely worm their way to the front of a line of cars waiting at a red light. When the light turns green, they’ll poke along at a snail’s pace, holding up traffic while motorists wait for a chance to pass. Then they do the same thing at the next stop light.

I recall in the not-so-distant past when the city’s bikers weren’t newly arrived, mostly white millennials but black juveniles whom D.C. police frequently stopped — at least in neighborhoods that were being gentrified. Stopped for riding on sidewalks. Stopped for riding in parking lots.

Now that kids like them are being moved to the outskirts of the city, if not out altogether, the District government is bending over backward to make Washington a more “biker-friendly” city.

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So far, more than 72 miles of bike lanes have been carved out of city streets. There are virtually none in Ward 8, by the way, which has the lowest income and highest number of children of any ward in the city.

On Wednesday, the Washington Area Bicyclist Association’s Bike Ambassadors will ride to the NoMa Summer Screen viewing of “The Muppets” “to hand out surprise goodies to people who biked.” There’ll be kids and bikes and Muppets, as if Kermit is supposed to make us forget about the biker terrorists out to rule the road.

The WABA Web site features a photograph of a cyclist holding a sign that reads:

“Dear D.C. drivers, thank you for sharing! Love, Cyclists.”

If only they meant it.