

MAY 2008

ROADWAYS

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Motorcycles, Travel & Adventure

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THOUGHTS FROM THE ROAD

Shahram Shiva

NEW YORK CITY'S CRACK DOWN ON MOTORCYCLISTS TO CONTINUE IN 2008



Last year around this time, I wrote about the NYPD's Summer of 2007 crack down on motorcycles. Although initially I thought they were going to harass all types of bikes, it turned out that for the most part Cruisers were exempt. The city's focus was primarily on Sport, Naked, Sport-Touring and Scooters. Since I ride a Sport-Touring bike I also got pulled over unfairly and was ticketed.

Well, this crackdown got quite a bit of attention. In addition to many motorcycling web sites, there was coverage in New York Daily News on Sunday, June 10, 2007, with a picture of a long line of bikes that were confiscated for one reason or another. All in all, last summer the city issued about 6,000 tickets to motorcyclists and confiscated about 400 motorcycles.

The word is the mayor's office is once again prompting the NYPD to go after bikers starting with the Memorial Day weekend all the way through the Labor Day weekend. If you're going to ride in the city this summer please make sure you and your bike meet these 5 requirements: 1) A valid inspection sticker. 2) Valid registration sticker. 3) Valid insurance. 4) You have a motorcycle-endorsed license. 5) You are wearing a DOT approved helmet with proper eye-protection. If you or your bike misses only 1 of these 5 points, the city of New York will confiscate your bike.

As a daily motorcycle commuter, normally I'm for provisions that support safe riding. I wear riding gear all the time with proper DOT and SNELL approved full face helmet. I keep the paperwork on my bike up to date and I have a motorcycle endorsement on my license. However, the concentrated method in which these motorcycle-only check points were conducted last year sends the signal that the city of NY is against motorcycling as a whole.

Motorcycles are globally hailed as a green form of transportation. They occupy much less roadway - hence reduce congestion. They put much less wear on our roads, than any car, even a Compact, let alone SUV's and trucks. They offer twice the fuel economy of an average car — most motorcycles offer 50mpg — hence they not only save fuel but they also reduce the harmful emissions. They require far fewer raw materials to manufacture and most of their parts are recyclable. And they only need one-fourth the parking space of an average car. I hope that the mayor's office considers embracing motorcycles as a safe, viable and green form of transportation and offer incentives to encourage more, rather than fewer, commuters and residents to try a two-wheeled alternative.

For example motorcycles are strangely missing in New York's PlaNYC initiative for a greener, greater New York. Other large cities, such as London and Madrid, have long understood the undeniable benefits of motorcycles and they not only encourage them for daily commuting, but they exempt all motorcycles from their "congestion fee" that the city is also considering and, in fact, have created free motorcycle parking areas and also allow motorcyclists to ride in bus lanes. In California, a motorcycle-friendly state, splitting-lanes is legal and encouraged as means to not only reduce congestion and emissions, but also car vs. motorcycle accidents. FARS data from the US Department of Transportation shows that rear-end collisions with motorcycles are 30% lower in California than in Florida or Texas, states with similar riding seasons and populations.

In short, there are no inherently negative attributes associated with motorcycles and in larger cities they

provide an unquestionable benefit to growing global congestion and emissions problems. I hope both the motorcycle riding public and the city can work together in supporting a very relevant mode of transportation that surely would be beneficial in the long run to the City of New York.

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