

CITY LIVING

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Riding over parking laws

Some bikers won't pay at meter, saying city rules aren't fair

BY DALE W. EISINGER

Special to amNewYork

Rusty Munro commutes on his motorcycle, from Williamsburg to SoHo, every day, even in winter. He dresses in layers beneath his leather jacket, throws on a neck warmer and pushes off into the cold. He dismounts and parks his bike at a meter.

But before he heads into work, he tears his license plate from the back of his bike, where it's attached with Velcro strips.

Munro is one of many New York motorcycle and scooter riders who illegally remove their plates and park without feeding meters — and usually get away with it.

"I do it all the time. If you take your license plate off, it's too much work for a cop to ticket you," the 30-year-old graphic designer said.

Like many bikers, Munro believes motorcycles should have different parking rules and fees than other vehicles — especially since the advent of Muni-Meters. In 2005, the city began replacing coin-operated mechanical parking meters with the digital, receipt-dispensing models.

Cheryl Stewart, head of the New York Motorcycle and Scooter Task Force, said Muni-meters don't work for motorcycles, which don't have a secure spot to display the receipt.

"Motorcycles are not getting ticketed and bikers aren't paying parking fees. There would be no cost to the city to implement a legal parking alternative to the current system," Stewart said.

The Department of Transportation and the NYPD did not respond



Rusty Munro of Williamsburg routinely removes his cycle's plate to avoid parking fines.

(BRIAN DRISCOLL)

to requests for comment.

But cops and traffic agents said it's too much trouble to climb around a motorcycle looking for the VIN, or vehicle identification number.

"It's a hassle to find," said one traffic agent in the West Village.

In London, motorcycles and scooters park in unused public

spaces without penalty. In San Francisco, bikes have metered areas. Toronto bikers park for free.

"In the space of one car length seven motorcycles can park," said Stewart, who likes the Toronto model.

Our viewpoint is that motorcycles are green, fuel-efficient, congestion-relieving vehicles,

actively discouraged in New York, rather than encouraged as they are in more forward-thinking places."

Bikers say inequity of space is part of a bigger problem.

"I've had my motorcycle knocked over too many times to count," said Stewart. "If a huge SUV even brushes a standing motorcycle, it will be knocked to the ground."