

BACKROADS

Motorcycles, Travel & Adventure

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THOUGHTS FROM THE ROAD

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LOOKING FOR THAT SPOT

No matter what we ride, many of us routinely find ourselves legally discouraged from riding, especially in NYC and its environs. Discouragement comes in many forms, some of it inadvertent, and some quite deliberate.

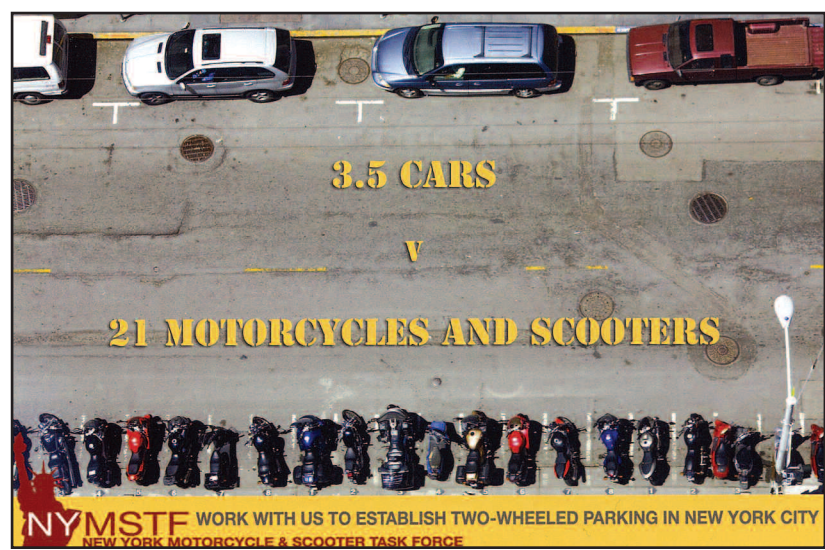
Who hasn't had their bike knocked over while legally parked on a NYC street? Two friends actually had their bikes totaled by errant parkers last year. Luckily for both of them, they were insured. Unluckily for all of us, that becomes a public cost when insurance companies raise all of our rates in response.

NY State riders are exempted from no-fault coverage. While many have very legitimate complaints about the no-fault system, it's currently the law in NY State. Why, then, are we riders the only class of people not covered under the no-fault policies we're all obliged to purchase? My no-fault policy would have covered my passenger had I had one when I was seriously injured while hit from behind in 2002. The car driver who hit me could have claimed some injury and collected money to stay home. I, however, was obliged to use my private insurance for medical care, and had no income while I healed my broken parts. Worse yet, I was forced to seek redress in court which is a place I would normally choose to avoid. There are so many ways in which we're discouraged that it's a tribute to the joy of riding that so many of us continue to do so.

What if we lived in a place where our vehicles were considered an asset? What if we were actively courted and encouraged to ride? This is not a fairy tale. Wise city planners have long recognized the advantages of our fuel efficient, congestion reducing vehicles in places as diverse as San Francisco, Toronto, London and Sydney, just to name a few. Toronto exempted all motorcycles and scooters from Muni-Meter fees within the city limits in recognition of the fact that we have no place to secure the receipt. San Francisco has extensive two-wheel parking areas with steeply reduced parking fees at their paperless Muni-Meters. Sydney provides slick O-rings embedded into the street so that we can secure our vehicles in their dedicated parking zones.

Wise city planners in London U.K. saw increased two-wheeled vehicle usage as one of the key elements in their congestion plan, and commissioned a 24 page study to outline ways in which motorcycles and scooters could be enticed to ride into and around their city. An important part of the London Congestion Pricing Plan is a toll exemption for two-wheeled vehicles. So why did Mayor Bloomberg eliminate that exemption when he attempted to impose an otherwise identical Congestion Pricing Plan in NYC? That was the moment when I knew we had to have a new kind of motorcycle advocacy group in New York.

The New York Motorcycle and Scooter Task Force became a reality almost one year ago. One of our projects has been NYC parking. We have



a two pronged agenda which includes getting NYC to follow Toronto's example exempting us from paying Muni-Meter fees, and establishing dedicated two-wheeled parking areas throughout the city. Legal, set aside motorcycle parking in NYC? Haven't we seen our parking areas taken away one by one? Yes, we have, which is one reason why we started the Task Force. Parking is an issue best addressed at the Community Board level. It's tedious but it can be done. As a matter of fact, we're already doing it.

We've also worked to defeat Int. 1086, a proposed NYC law so poorly written that it would have exposed any shop or individual selling or servicing any motorcycle or scooter to huge fines. This bill was aimed at loud pipes, but the ignorance of its author put us all at great financial risk, particularly the shops upon which we rely.

The Task Force did not oppose Int. 1086 because it attempted to regulate loud pipes. We opposed it because it was stupid. We support rational noise legislation equitably enforced, such as the AMA model legislation based on real world decibel testing.

Other items on our agenda include restoration of safety funds raised from two-wheel registration fees, which are routinely sucked into the general NY State budget. We are in favor of legalization of lane sharing as practiced in California and throughout Europe. We advocate for an end to unconstitutional motorcycle-only traffic stops on public highways, full express lane and ferry access, and an end to no-fault exclusion of motorcycle and scooter riders.

Visit our website to find out more or to join in our efforts • www.nymstf.org