



By **Tim Huber** - June 21, 2017

Like 248 Share Tweet G+

Categories: [News](#), [HFL](#), [Travel](#)

How More Motorcycles On The Roads Benefits Everyone

Adding some adventure to your commute helps every vehicle on the road, no matter how many wheels

I live in Los Angeles, where out of control congestion and traffic is just an accepted – albeit massively inconvenient – part of daily life. In 2015 residents of the greater Los Angeles area spent an average of 81 hours in traffic. According to a fairly recent Los Angeles Times poll, SoCal residents ranked traffic as their top concern, even over personal safety and housing costs. Because lane-splitting is legal in California – as it is almost everywhere else on the planet outside the United States – riding a motorcycle in a major California city that’s clogged up with traffic can save you hundreds of hours per year. Not only are motorcycles cheaper to buy, maintain, insure, and run than cars, but if roughly a tenth of the population began traveling primarily via scooter, the resulting decrease in traffic and congestion would be astounding. That’s according to a recent study out of Belgium that looked at how commuting via motorcycle could reduce traffic congestion.

The Belgian consultancy Transport and Mobility in Leuven, Belgium, conducted a 2012 study that reported that if just 10 percent of all private automobiles were replaced by motorcycles or scooters that congestion would drop by a substantial and noticeable 40 percent. A 25 percent shift from four wheels to two would reportedly result in the elimination of congestion in its entirety. This study was conducted on a stretch of highway between Brussels and Leuven and showed an enormous impact on congestion. That said, those conducting this study acknowledge that gridlock is due to myriad factors that are unique to specific areas. This means that their results may not apply universally, though this study nonetheless speaks volumes as to a clear benefit in reduction of traffic.



Want to fix this? Get a bike!

While the existence of traffic on one hand is theoretically a good thing, as far as traffic means lots of people have jobs to get to and places to be where they are earning or spending money, there is a financial cost brought on by gridlock. It affects freight and deliveries arriving on time and effects the number of deliveries they can make per day, it impedes overall productivity, and it costs money via time spent sitting in traffic. There’s also an affect on businesses in high-traffic locations. Ever considered going to a restaurant or bar near a sports stadium or arena on a game day? Really? Why not?

There are quite a few additional reasons why people making the switch from cars to motorcycles benefits the road-going public as a whole. Wear and tear on roads would lessen since motorcycles weigh a considerably less than the four-wheeled contraptions they share the road with (*Well, most of them anyway. -Ed.*) With regulations in place like the strict Euro 4 emissions laws, pollution caused by private vehicles commuting would go down, especially when combined with the laws we see popping up in places like Paris where older motorcycles are being banned from use on public-roads. The same Belgian study claims that parking would become 20 percent more abundant as well if a 10-percent shift occurred.



Lane splitting explained

Car insurance would also go down for most drivers. Motorcycle insurance isn’t only cheaper than car insurance because motorcycles are themselves cheaper, but also because cars are much larger vehicles capable of doing much more damage when they crash into something. When you pay for your car insurance you’re paying for more than just *your* vehicle, you’re also paying a little more for all the less-than stellar riders on the roads who are frequently colliding with things. Fewer cars mean fewer colliders, which presumably means cheaper insurance, (though I’m by no means an expert on this so there may be factors I’m failing to consider).

While researching this article and reviewing several studies and polls related to congestion and traffic, words like “miserable and tremendously annoying” came up almost everywhere I happened to be looking. This brings us to the last factor that’s arguably one of the most important, i.e. riding a motorcycle is plain fun. Commuting can go from an unpleasant necessary evil to a truly enjoyable experience that manages to cram some adventure and recreation into your daily routine.

Riding a motorcycle for a lot of people is one of the best parts of their life, if it can at the same time be practical, economical, and beneficial to society than that’s even better. While we can’t say what the exact effect would be in major US cities without more research, we can pretty confidently assume that a larger minority of riders would mean a noticeable decrease in the universally dreaded gridlock that millions of Americans experience every day.

23 Comments RideApart Login

Recommend 1 Share Sort by Best

Join the discussion...

LOG IN WITH OR SIGN UP WITH DISQS

Facebook Twitter Google+ Name

Dwebber18 · 2 months ago

But how would you facebook stalk an ex girlfriend while texting your wife and your current girlfriend at the same time you are smoking and watching youtube if you weren't in a car? That being said I've been commuting on a nearly daily basis by bike and it's been wonderful. I look forward to my ride home and I live in a non-lane splitting state. I rarely hit the highway and when I do I really envy lane splitting because I feel like I shouldn't have to sit in the same mess as all the cars. Never thought I would want to lane split but after adjusting my spacial awareness to bike size it would be so easy to just zip in and out, cars leave plenty of space typically.

4 ^ | v · Reply · Share

Sayyed Bashir → Dwebber18 · 2 months ago

I lane split and use the carpool lane everyday in NorCal, Takes 30 minutes each way instead of an hour (or 1 1/2 hours on Friday).

^ | v · Reply · Share

jeffbricks · 2 months ago

I'm not sure how it would work out in LA, but here when I ride I take an alternate route that keeps me off the freeway and runs along country roads and around a lake. I avoid any significant traffic but it costs me about 10 minutes extra (vs. my normal 20-25 minutes). But it makes the journey more than just getting from point A to point B so the extra minutes are well spent. Keeps me out of traffic and I have fun. Win-win.

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share

nilfs2 · 2 months ago

A car is a symbol of social status, the more expensive/exotic the car is, the more it shows

"how you are winning at life", at least that's what the average Joe thinks. In order to encourage people to get off the cage and get on a bike, or at least on public transportation, a huge and clever marketing campaign is needed to change people minds, it might not be possible to change adults minds, but it is worth a try starting to teach our kids that a car is not the smartest way to go from A to B.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share

Sayyed Bashir → nilfs2 · 2 months ago

I pass by Maseratis, Ferraris, Porsches, Teslas, Range Rovers etc. during my daily motorcycle commute and don't envy them. I'll be eating dinner at home while they are still stuck in traffic.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share

Fifty_three · 2 months ago

Yesterday had the rare occasion to go into downtown LA for work. Google map estimated over an hour in traffic. With lane splitting I got there in a little over half an hour. Got there and did my business and was actually looking forward to the drive back. Traffic was worse coming home as people were going home. I got back home in about the same time. I slept great too.

What I did notice were the daily commuters using motorcycles. They are lane splitting fast, while I was just trying to go around 10 mph above everyone else.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share

eric bako → Fifty_three · 2 months ago

[Insert thumbs up emoji here re: maintaining a reasonable differential between you (the rider) and vehicles around you.] One has to have at least a chance of reacting when Stupid comes a-calling.

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share

DevonK → Fifty_three · a month ago

I lane split almost every day in Orange County and am definitely faster than some and slower than others. Just ride your ride and glance in your mirrors every so often so you can let the faster riders past.

^ | v · Reply · Share

Sayyed Bashir → Fifty_three · 2 months ago

People who lane split everyday are better at it and hence faster than occasional riders.

^ | v · Reply · Share

deanamoran → Sayyed Bashir · a month ago

Or maybe they just get more complacent? It only takes one occasion for a car to switch lanes without checking and it's game over. Riding slower is the best strategy for surviving a collision.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share

José Rodrigues → deanamoran · a month ago

Or maybe they just get better at it (practice does makes perfect). We learn how to foresee dumb/sleeping/inattentive drivers and how to act accordingly. It doesn't mean we necessarily go at 50 mph above traffic speed. 10 mph above may be too fast; 30 mph above may be safe. An experienced rider (and believe it or not, there *are* those that are more experienced than you, that have different skills than you. Shock, huh?) can tell and practice the difference.

^ | v · Reply · Share

Sayyed Bashir → deanamoran · a month ago

I lane split every working day 260 days a year and I can tell you I am not complacent. Riding slower or faster has nothing to do with lane splitting. You have to stay with the traffic or you are going to be hit from behind. Riding alert is the best strategy for avoiding a collision.

^ | v · Reply · Share

eddi_the_Bad_Hombre · 2 months ago

One other thing. Riding a bike gives you more options on how to get somewhere. Lane splitting is one thing, but those parking lots pretending to main thoroughfares in those pictures are not the only way to work usually. There are side streets and less traveled roads that may take a bit of extra time but get you there in a less frazzled condition. A driver is less likely to try something different because he never takes a drive just to enjoy it. That is the whole reason to consider a bike. Everything else revolves around that feeling. Hunting less traveled roads is a sport.

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share

don67 → eddi_the_Bad_Hombre · a month ago

Well said. In a car it's a detour which delays your arrival, but on a bike it's a little bonus inserted into your day.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share

Tony McGurk · 2 months ago

4 wheels move the body. 2 wheels move the soul.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share

daveinva · 2 months ago

All agreed, but one key factor left out: motorcycles are unforgiving and hence dangerous. All the benefits above may be real, but the inevitable downside is more injuries and more fatalities per mile traveled.

That said, if a push for commuting was accompanied by greater training, tiered licensing, etc., then things likely even out somewhat.

Alas, this is all a pipe dream-- you're not getting that many people out of their cars in 2017. Too bad they don't know what they're missing.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share

kawatwo · a month ago

Everyday I ride by people with their Harley Davidson stickers on their cars/trucks and wonder why they aren't riding. Come on people. You have a motorcycle. Use it!

^ | v · Reply · Share

Siima MotoWear · a month ago

The fact is that motorcycles can be a great and fun way to reduce traffic, pollution, stress and hassle. Each and every country/state should adapt accordingly. We want more motorcycles for a better society.

^ | v · Reply · Share

OldSmiley · a month ago

Do you have a time machine? Because how else would you be able to reduce 81 hours by hundreds of hours?

^ | v · Reply · Share

eric bako · 2 months ago

It would be incredibly costly, but I would think dedicated (possibly even protected) motorcycle lanes (separate from the carpool lane) would go a long way toward enticing people to ride.

Thumbnail

. This could really only apply in parts of the US where the weather is good enough for these lanes to get enough use year-round, of course. Otherwise the costs outweigh the benefits at some point.

^ | v · Reply · Share

eddi_the_Bad_Hombre → eric bako · 2 months ago

Just letting us use HOV lanes is a start.

^ | v · Reply · Share

Sayyed Bashir → eddi_the_Bad_Hombre · 2 months ago

Motorcycles are allowed in carpool lanes in California.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share

David Cox → eddi_the_Bad_Hombre · 2 months ago

You should be able to do that now. It is my understanding that federal regulations require it. <https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/fr...>

^ | v · Reply · Share

Home About Us Contact FAQ Privacy Policy Terms of Use Learn to Ride

Copyright © 2008 — 2017 RideApart Inc., All rights reserved.