

FAST COMPANY

Does The NYPD Think Bikes Are More Dangerous Than Cars?

No pedestrians were killed by bikes in 2012, but for some reason, citing cyclists on sidewalks remains one of the city's favorite pastimes--and local precincts are doing it at a far higher rate than ticketing speeding cars.

If you've been caught by a cop while riding your bike on a city sidewalk, you're not alone. For the second year in a row, bikes on sidewalks ranked as the third most common summons offense with roughly 25,000 citations issued in 2012, according to the Criminal Court of the City of New York's annual report.

Speeding, meanwhile, which was the number one cause of traffic mortalities last year, only received 19,119 tickets from local NYPD precincts, as highlighted by transportation watchdogs Streetsblog.org. Tens of thousands more city speeding tickets were issued overall, but they came from highway patrol, rather than neighborhood precincts. In 2012, no pedestrians were killed in collisions with cyclists.

"I would say I get an average of 70 phone calls a week," **Daniel Flanzig**, a New York City cyclist advocate and crash lawyer told me over the phone. "I have no idea why the police have chosen to enforce this section so aggressively, other than it might be easy. It's a lot easier and safer to write a cyclist a ticket than to pull a vehicle over with tinted windows and an unknown operator," he said.

The NYPD did not respond for comment.

Flanzig also points out that getting a summons for riding your bike on the sidewalk means you can't just plead out and send in a fine, unlike riding your bike

through a red light. Instead, sidewalk biking is governed by another part of the administrative code, which sends cyclists to criminal court. Still, showing up and duking it out with a district attorney or assistant district attorney means you have a better chance of getting your citation dismissed or reduced. “It’s the only place you have the opportunity to have a plea bargain,” **Flanzig** said.

As the *New York Post* pointed out earlier this month, a majority of those summonses are ditched simply because the officer wrote up the wrong administrative code. When a ticket with bad labeling comes through, it gets sent to a review board. An unnamed source told the *Post* that some “Ninety percent of the bike summonses that come through the review board are thrown out.”

So while sidewalk biking remains a popular summons, the city’s method of dealing with sidewalk cyclists is convoluted at best. “You have much better chances of pleading out if you get [a sidewalk] summons, but you have to show up in court,” **Flanzig** said. “This one really wrecks your day.”

Not as often as drinking in public, however. Consuming alcohol on the street ranked as the number one most common summons last year, with an astronomical 120,000 citations issued by the police.

<http://www.fastcoexist.com/1682548/does-the-nypd-think-bikes-are-more-dangerous-than-cars>

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