

Four Types of Cyclists

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Despite all the considerable advances Portland and the region have made in facilitating bicycling, concerns about the safety of bicycling still loom large. Riding a bicycle should not require bravery. Yet, all too often, that is the perception among cyclists and non-cyclists alike. No person should have to be “brave” to ride a bicycle; unfortunately, this is a sentiment commonly expressed to those who regularly ride bicycles by those who do not. There are many cities in modern, industrialized nations around the world with a high bicycle mode split. They have achieved these high levels of bicycle use through adherence to various cycling-promoting policies and practices. But, one thing they share in common is they have substantially removed the element of fear associated with bicycling in an urban environment. They have created transportation systems in which bicycling is often the most logical, enjoyable and attainable choice for trips of a certain length for a wide swath—if not the majority—of their populace. For residents of these cities, concern about personal safety associated with bicycling is rarely a consideration, and certainly not to the levels we experience here. In these “fearless” cities septuagenarians are able to ride alongside seven-year-olds safely, comfortably, and with confidence throughout the breadth of the cities¹. Making bicycling a more widespread and mainstream means of transportation in Portland will require substantially addressing concerns about personal safety.