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204 Eastgreen Drive
Chapel Hill, NC 27516
June 18, 2001

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**CHAPEL HILL
ENGINEERING DEPT.**

Flicka Bateman, Town Council
Town of Chapel Hill
306 North Columbia St.
Chapel Hill, NC 27516

Dear Flicka:

I write concerning lines demarcating bicycle paths on Chapel Hill streets. I have lived mostly in Chapel Hill since coming here to graduate school in 1966 (I moved to Southern Village three years ago and will be once again a Chapel Hill citizen on July 1) and have ridden a bicycle over most of those years. After being hit by a construction truck at the corner of Estes Drive and Airport Road in 1976 I did not ride for five or six years and now ride mainly on bicycle paths, sidewalks, or side streets. I no longer ride on main thoroughfares with heavy traffic.

The specific aim of this letter is to address the issue of whether to paint lines to indicate bicycle lanes on major streets. Examples of what I am referring to are the lanes that were once painted along West Cameron Avenue and are now present on Pittsboro Street. I understand some cyclists have argued against painting such special lanes. I strongly disagree. West Cameron Avenue was once one of the streets I felt comfortable riding on. Even with the chronic problem of students parking illegally in the bike lanes at prohibited times cars tended to stay away from the sides of Cameron Avenue and did not pass by close to me when I was on my bike. Now that there are no special lines after the resurfacing last winter, cars now seem more likely to hug the sides of the street rather than the yellow lines in the middle. I have had many more close calls since the lines were removed than previously. In contrast, I regularly ride the bike lane on Pittsboro street between W. Cameron Ave. and Vance Street (where I peel off and ride through Westwood before joining South Columbia Street on a dirt path at Coolidge Street) and do so during the heavily traveled hours between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m. I am very cautious about cars, trucks, and busses at all times and especially so when riding my two or three blocks in the bike land on Pittsboro Street. Still, I am safer with the lane than without it. Cars simply do not drive in the five or six feet next to the curb and I have only to avoid busses that also use it when picking up and discharging passengers. Without

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that painted bike lane there is no way I would ride Pittsboro Street at anytime, much less at rush hour. The painted lane makes all the difference in my safety and ability to use that more direct route home. I look forward to the day when I'll have a safe route all the way to the Southern Village greenway. In the meantime, when indicated I get off and walk on the shoulder or use dirt/grass paths or sidewalks above the roadway.

Having been hit once and spent several days in the hospital I am definitely a cautious rider. I know that the greatest risks come at intersections, side streets, and driveways and always assume every driver coming out of one does not see me. My greatest delight is riding on the separate bike paths (e.g. those in Southern Village and Meadowmont developments and along Bolin Creek or the Libba Cotton path to Carrboro. Painted lines marking off a few feet on the sides of thoroughfares is not the same thing as a separate path but it is definitely better than nothing at all. Please consider returning the striping to Cameron Avenue and adding it to other streets. I am sympathetic to cyclists who believe we should have the right share the road with motor vehicles and argue against being separated. The simple physics of cars, trucks, busses and bicycles, however, tells me than abstract rights mean nothing in a collision. The cyclist loses every time, which is why I ride with a constant attitude of vigilance.

Thank you for passing along my thoughts on this topic to the rest of the Town Council.

Cordially,



Joseph Lowman
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