



July 20, 2014

Steve McLean, Chief of Police
Santa Paula Police Department
214 S. 10th St.
Santa Paula, CA 93060

Dear Chief McLean:

As a weekend patron of the RV parks north of Santa Paula, I enjoy the quiet streets and low-key vibe of your town. In fact, if given a choice I would spend time in Santa Paula than, say, Ojai. (I get enough of the gloss here in Beverly Hills.) And when I visit I bring my bicycle to ride around town; the few miles up to the campground is an easy ride. If I come with friends we'll just load up the bikes on the hitch and save your town the car traffic.

So I'm disappointed to learn that one of your reserve officers, Laura Weintraub, thought to make such insensitive and downright stupid remarks (on video no less) about wanting to harm cyclists. Whatever her motivation, her thoughts are offensive to me and to whomever else puts volunteer time into making our streets safe for road users. Here at home, I lobby my city hall for bike lanes and via the web I educate riders about the law; after all we need to share our roads.

Ms. Weintraub's unvarnished take reconfirms that those of us who do choose to bike don't necessarily enjoy the same privileges as those who drive. In her view, we're simply a nuisance. But from the riders' perspective, such sentiments may contribute to a presumption among some officers that riders are somehow ordinarily at fault in crashes. Or that we assume the risk of injury when we ride and so a contributing factor like driver negligence is handily dismissed when it comes time to write a report. I myself have pressed my local PD to accept an amended statement in a crash, for example, so that my remarks at the scene about the driver's behavior were included. In that example, the responding officer accepted that the driver was 100% at fault but the driver was not even cited.

As both a driver and a rider, it is important to me that law enforcement views me as simply another road user no matter the means of conveyance, but I know that everyday practice is not nearly so tidy. That's why it's critical that those who hold views like Ms. Weintraub are weeded out. I do appreciate your disavowal of her comments and, going forward, hope that you'll agree that this particular reservist no longer need take time away from her fitness business to do public safety duty. Drivers and riders alike will be better off for her dismissal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mark Elliot'.

cc: Mayor Richard C. Cook, City Manager Jaime Fontes

Better Bike

Mark Elliot, Organizer
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