

# Bikes

## A&M searches for way to end cycle problems

by JERRY MAZE  
Battalion Reporter  
The climbing price of gasoline has turned more Texas A&M University students than ever to bicycles for transportation.

The resulting increase of bikes on campus has placed the burden of solving bicycle traffic problems on the shoulders of Texas A&M officials. Texas A&M's enrollment hovers around 30,000. To these belong over

10,000 bicycles that are on campus every day and are not governed by any specific rules and regulations. Dr. Charles Powell, assistant to the vice president for student services, said bike riders are required to

obey regular traffic laws, such as stop signs, but the laws have not been enforced on this campus.

In January, Powell traveled to three western universities of comparable size to Texas A&M and, after studying their bike systems, arrived at a proposal for the bike traffic problem on this campus.

Powell's plan calls for closing the interior of the campus to bicycle traffic, putting bike parking lots on the periphery of the closed area and requiring bikers to either park their bikes in the lots or walk them through the mall area of campus.

Rules and regulations will be written, Powell said, and enforcement of the rules must be provided.

The streets serving as boundaries for the closed area will be changed to one-way traffic, making a more organized flow of traffic move counterclockwise around the campus.

"We hope to put bike riders back on the streets," Powell said, "or in bike lanes, and get them off the sidewalks with pedestrians. That simply will not function."

Powell arrived at his proposal by viewing the strengths and weaknesses of systems at the universities he visited.

Powell said Arizona State University installed bike lanes and moved parking of cars off campus. This relieved the congestion of traffic, but they were left with a worse problem than Texas A&M's because they did not provide enforcement of their bike laws — a problem anticipated for Texas A&M's proposed system.

The University of California-Santa Barbara, Powell said, overdid its plan. He said Texas A&M must be careful not to gradually develop a campus cluttered with traffic signs, barriers and traffic bumps, as was the

case at Santa Barbara.

A plan similar to the one Powell proposes and one that has been working effectively since 1967 is at the University of California-Davis.

He said Davis's plan reflects much in depth planning and cooperation between the university and the city of Davis.

Lon Ponsford, university bicycle officer at Davis, said their plan involved closing the interior of the campus to motor vehicles and allowing bikes to use streets on the inner campus.

Elsewhere, Ponsford said, bike paths were marked on all major

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streets and designated only for bikes.

Ponsford said enforcement of bike laws is the most extensive problem with the plan at Davis — but they have found an answer.

Ponsford said their police department is able to enforce the bicycle laws by having two officers hired strictly as bicycle officers.

He said the officers were trained specially for their jobs and are provided with lightweight racing bicycles and two-way radios.

Davis is a campus with 18,000 bikes, but Ponsford said officers use their radio, if offenders run, to call for assistance and block off the part of campus the rider is in.

Because of good bikes and equipment, Ponsford said the rider is usually caught, taken to jail and charged with a misdemeanor for running from the police.

Ponsford said the effects on these riders are increased because police records are printed in the newspaper, which adds to the embarrassment

of the offenders.

Powell said Texas A&M is following the pattern of Davis by working with the City of College Station to intersect University bike lanes with those of the city.

John Black, College Station traffic engineer, said, "We need to catch students where they come off the campus, get them across busy streets and onto back streets."

Ponsford said Davis is a city of about 30,000 where a large number of residents ride bikes. He said Davis has well been able to appreciate the completeness of its city-college bike lanes.

He said the city has around 100 miles of bike lanes of its own.

Col. Thomas R. Parsons, director of security and traffic, is skeptical of the plan and said the only way the plan will work is for bike riders to take interest in the problem and go along with the guidelines proposed by Powell.

Parsons, speaking across a desk cluttered with complaints from traffic and parking violators, said the University Police Department does not have the money or the manpower to enforce bike laws.

Much like Davis, Parsons said Texas A&M's police department will need at least one more commissioned police officer to serve as sergeant in charge of bicycles and at least four or five student helpers.

He said they will also need a truck to use for impounding bikes and proper facilities for storing bikes after they are picked up so they are not stolen.

Ponsford said the operation at Davis is mostly self-supporting. The initial money, he said, to set the system up was provided by the University. The city also financed its system.

The Davis police department is able to maintain its bike program with funds received from bike registration, fines for parking and traffic

violations and impounding fees.

Ponsford said the registration fee is \$4.50 for three years and parking tickets range from \$5 to \$10.

He said any bikes that are not registered are impounded, even if they have to be cut free of chains. The fine to get a bike out of the pound is \$4 plus registration.

The Davis department, he said, is well able to maintain its program because of the revenue from these charges.

The university built Davis's storage area for impounded bikes, which is a concrete slab with bike racks enclosed by a cyclone fence and barbed wire around the top and a building for items needing shelter.

The Texas A&M police department, Parsons said, presently has no source of funds for enforcing bike laws.

There is no mandatory registration at this time at Texas A&M and bikes that are impounded must be held for 7 months and released at auction if they are not claimed.

University Police Department ceives no proceeds from impounded bikes.

If enacted, Powell's proposal

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have advantages for bikers and the police department.

Mandatory registration of bikes will be required. Having bikes registered will make it easier to determine the owners of bikes recovered by officers and the department will have funds for enforcement and improvement of the bike program.

Powell said studies conducted at the other universities also show some definite advantages to the system of parking called for in the proposal.

He said the rate of bike thefts found to decrease significantly when bikes were parked in a centralized area.

The decrease was attributed to bikes being easier to guard than they are parked randomly on campus.

He also said bike riders were found more likely to obey regulations and park their bikes in the lots are not so close to buildings.

The only reason given for this result was that since the lots are close to buildings and riders have to walk anyway, they choose to leave their bikes in the bike lots.

On the other hand, in lots close to buildings it was found that students were more likely to park bikes in front doors and on handicapped ramps instead of in the lots.

Powell said one goal of the proposal is to do away with parking areas that exist in this form around such buildings as the Commons and the

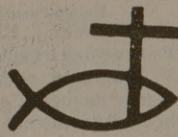
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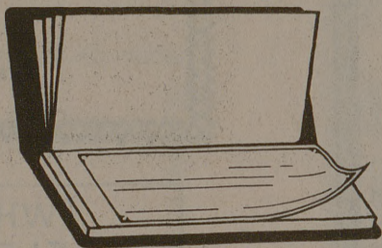
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