**Bike registration proposal**

Our goal is to encourage bicycling. Not only that, but at least some of us would like Honolulu and Hawaii to be a global leader in a bike- and pedestrian-friendly culture rather than a straggler, as it currently is [citation needed].

One barrier to a flourishing local bike culture is the current registration, theft prevention, and stolen bike recovery system.

Let’s look at each of these areas in turn and consider options for improvement.

**Registration and taxation**

Hawaii’s current bike registration system also doubles as a tax. As a result, the system is not effective at either registration or taxation. Let’s consider the two processes separately.

**Taxation**

* **In general, it is not effective to tax a behavior one wishes to encourage.** Bicycles should not be treated as simply a smaller version of mopeds or cars. The time may soon come when the government will be paying people not to drive cars. Let’s at least stop taxing bicyclists now.
* **The current spotty enforcement of the tax leads mainly to extra worry and stress among bicyclists.** Police have used the absence of a yellow sticker on a bicycle as a reason for confiscating bikes from homeless encampments, from critical mass bike riders, and even from bicyclists who have been hit by a car. [citations needed]
* **There is no other state that taxes bicycles. There is no other country that taxes bicycles.** [citation needed] Therefore it is unrealistic to expect visitors and newcomers to be aware with and to happily comply with this law. Many will resent this unusual example of Hawaii’s uniqueness and fail to comply.
* **Compliance is miserable.** An informal survey of bicycles on the streets and in the bicycle racks of the county shows that a majority of bicycles do not have yellow stickers. [citation needed]
* **It is difficult for a homeless person to register a bicycle.** It is difficult for someone without a stable mailing address to obtain the yellow sticker. [citation needed]
* **It is difficult to resell bicycles and transfer the registration.**
* **It is at least one extra bureaucratic step getting in the way of people feeling safe and secure while using bicycles.**

**Are their upsides to the current process?**

* **Police have an additional way of punishing people who use bicycles.**
* **Income is generated which may be used for bicycle-related education and infrastructure.**

**Is there a better way to tax bicycling?**

* **Collect the tax only at the point of sale and use a percentage of the sale price of the bicycle rather than a flat rate.** The current tax is extremely regressive with the lowest income bicyclists bearing the brunt of the tax (as a percentage of income) and bearing most of the punishment for not paying the tax.

Now let’s look at bicycle registration

**Registration**

* **The current registration system is not effective.**

It can take up to 3 months for a recovered bike to be looked up in the registration system and returned to its owner [citation needed]. It can take up to three months for a newly registered bike to be entered in the police’s paper filing system of bicycle registrations. [citation needed]. The odd situation is: if a thief steals a bike with a yellow sticker, that thief is less likely to be bothered by police! [how would you even check if a bike someone wants to sell you is stolen??]

The ineffectiveness of this system may contribute to lack of compliance with the tax.

**Is there a better way to register bicycles?**

Bikeindex.org is the main registration system used by Portland, OR and several other cities [more data needed]. Anyone with access to the internet can register their bike there and lookup bicycle serial numbers. Bicycle ownership can be easily and instantly transferred. Yes there is a better way to register bicycles.

**But:**

* Is there a danger that bikeindex.org will fail and all the data will be lost? [Let’s investigate this more.]
* Is bikeindex.org actually usable? [I had difficulties using chrome web browser on the public library computers to register my bicycle. . .]

**In summary:**

**Our recommendation is to introduce legislation for the 2016 legislative session to repeal the mandatory bicycle tax and registration system. Citizens and police will be encouraged to instead register and lookup bicycles at using bikeindex.org.** Existing bicycle registrations can be ported to bikeindex.org using the api. . . if the police and the department of customer service have the wherewithal to do this [how can we get that data ported?? Should we even bother?].

**We need to begin working with legislators to develop and sponsor this legislation in August of this year.**

Now, lets consider theft prevention:

**Theft prevention**

HBL or the newly formed bike cooperative can run bike registration campaigns. Cameras attached to selfie sticks can be used to photo and perhaps even OCR bottom bracket serial numbers. If the bike is not in the bikeindex database, it can be added and photographed and a method for allowing the owner to claim their bike registration can be developed.

Everyone who buys a used bike can look up the bike’s serial number and verify it is linked to the person they are buying the bicycle from.

**Stolen bicycle recovery**

Currently bicycles impounded by the police are shipped to the mainland and auctioned off.

We propose that a newly formed bike cooperative take over the role of managing this sale and then also use proceeds from this sale to help fund the cooperative where adults can come and work on their bicycles and learn how to do so.

They could perhaps even be tasked with managing the warehouse of impounded bikes until the time when bikes are to be auctioned. (In the Netherlands, you’ve only got two weeks to reclaim your bike before it can be sold!).