

Route alterations target bike traffic

Soon after they come to the University, most students learn to move instinctively through the everyday chaos that engulfs 13th Avenue during class changes. Once they become adept at dodging bicycles, cars and other pedestrians, they can concentrate on tomorrow's history exam or the big party this weekend.

But a committee of University faculty and staff members want to change the way bicyclists interact with pedestrians, both on the heavily-used 13th Avenue and all other areas of campus where cyclists ride.

Members of the transportation subcommittee, a branch of the campus planning committee, plan to recommend to Pres. Paul Olum that some of the worst trouble spots on campus be made safer for both cyclists and pedestrians.

The committee has been struggling with the congestion problem for several years, according to David Rowe, a campus planner who has worked with the group.

"I think a lot of cyclists view themselves as quasi-pedestrians," says Rowe. "They just aren't very alert when they're riding." The result is frequent clashes between bike riders and pedestrians.

One recommendation in the draft document is that the University designate bicycle routes on campus. The routes were planned to help separate cyclists from the heavily-used walkways between buildings, according to Rowe.

Rowe believes the proposed routes allow cyclists to reach their destinations and at the same time reduce conflicts between the riders and those walking.

The routes were also suggested to be included in the University's revised bicycle regulations, which took effect in January. According to the rules, those who ride outside

the specified routes during weekday school hours are subject to fines by campus security.

However, Dave Tanner, director of campus security, says his office has neither the personnel or the money to enforce the regulations. Two students work part-time ticketing unregistered and illegally-parked bikes, but security officers don't ticket cyclists who run stop signs or fail to give pedestrians the right of way. Both are part of the revised bike rules.

Russell Fernald, a biology professor and chairman of the transportation subcommittee, believes that only a very few cyclists ride dangerously enough to cause serious hazards to pedestrians. But the small number makes it very hard on everyone else, says Fernald.

Fernald says pedestrians who feel threatened by speeding cyclists should ask them to get off their bikes, if they're causing a hazard on a sidewalk.

Another transportation subcommittee member, Charles Nordgaard, believes the routes are appropriate, but he's not sure cyclists will abide by them.

"People are going to go where they want," says Nordgaard, who is the city bicycle coordinator. "They have habits, and they won't change them overnight. But several years down the road, this map may have an impact on making campus safer. It's going to take a lot of educating by the University, though."

Nordgaard believes the problem could be solved by placing all bike parking racks only on specified campus routes. Placing racks in a central place, such as on 13th Avenue, has helped to encourage people to park their bikes and walk to class rather than to ride across campus.

But bike parking space is often scarce on campus,

especially near the law school and the EMU, according to Tanner.

The University may get some money for more racks this year, but Rowe isn't sure exactly when it will come through. "You can't enforce the rules unless you provide the facilities to do it," he says.

Meanwhile, the committee is planning safety alterations to some of the most dangerous areas of campus:

- 13th Avenue, University to Kincaid. Congestion at the two intersections is very thick during class changes, but reducing it would take more money than the University has right now. The committee recommends moving the travel lines closer to the center of the roadway, moving the bike racks to encourage pedestrian cross-traffic in more specific areas and painting

marks. Other suggested improvements are making drainage grates safer for cyclists and replacing built-up curb ramps with curb cuts at intersections.

- Lawrence Breezeway. This area is thick with pedestrians, cyclists and parked bikes. A sharp corner with poor visibility creates a turning hazard for bicyclists. Proposed improvements include installing a convex mirror on the corner of Science I, posting caution or congestion signs, possibly extending a curb ramp along the Onyx Street sidewalk and designating "clear zones" where bikes may not be parked.

- Walkway from 13th Avenue and University Street to Lawrence Hall. One idea to cut down conflict between bikes and pedestrians is to

build a bike path between the service drive behind Friendly Hall and the walkway.

- EMU Breezeway. Posting congestion or caution signs would encourage cyclists to yield to pedestrians, who have the right of way.

- 14th Avenue, east of Onyx Street. The committee proposes building a ramp at the dead end of 14th Avenue to give bike riders a continuous route between the central campus and the dormitories.

- The southeast corner of Beall Hall. The path between 18th Avenue and the library has a narrow, sharp curve with visibility blocked by bushes. The committee suggests widening the curve, painting a yellow center line and posting limited visibility warning signs.

Stories by Aleta Zak

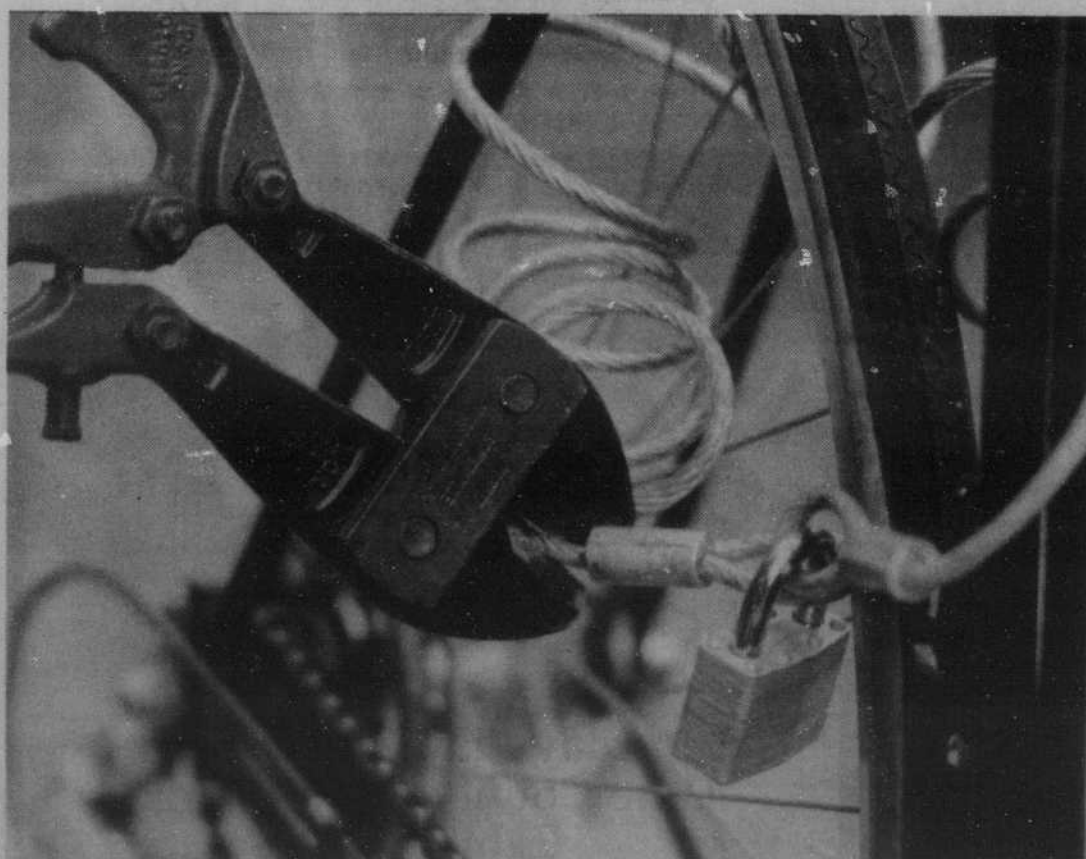
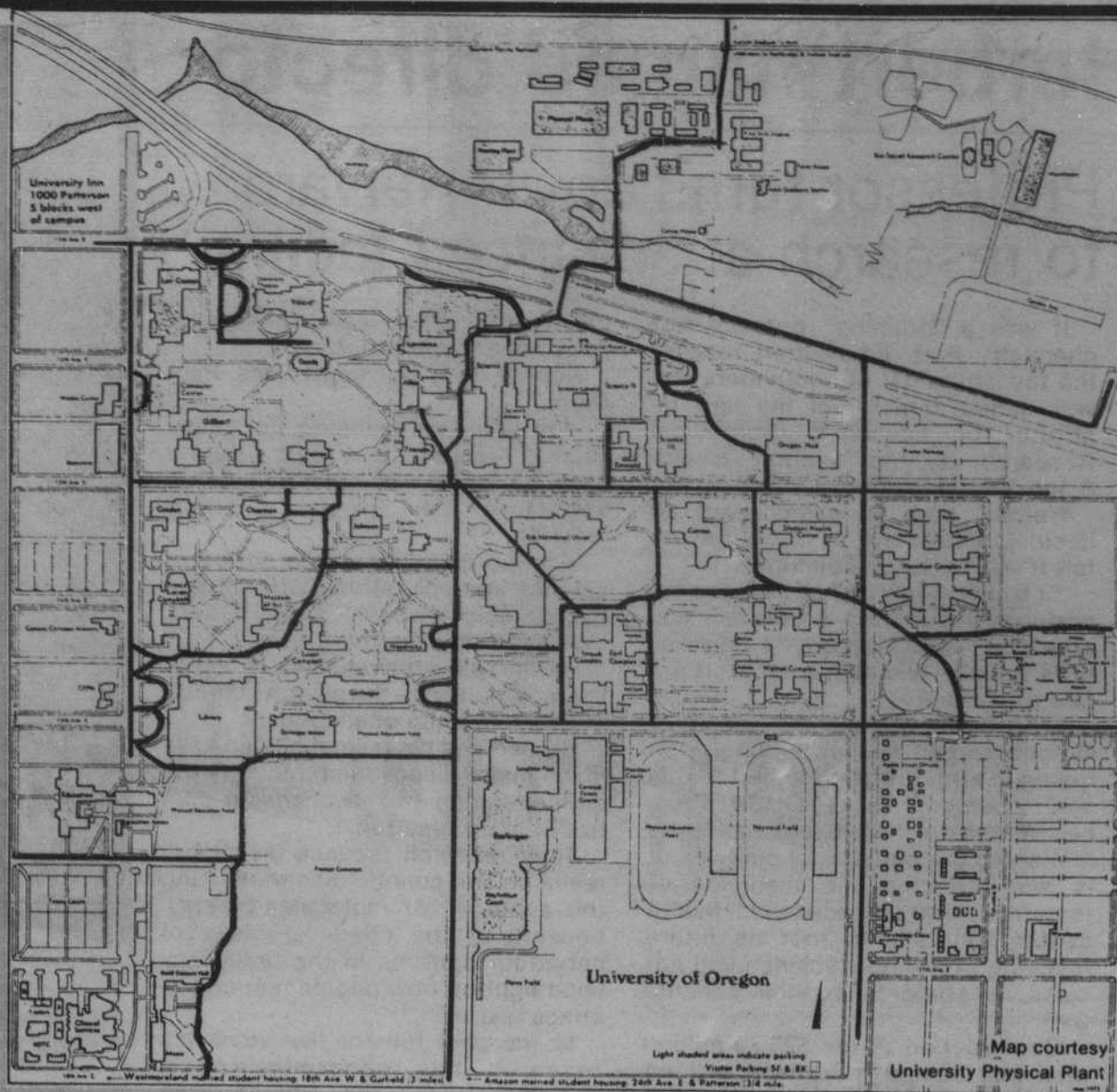


Photo by Bob Baker

Bike thefts have dropped this year, but students still should be alert for "someone who's walking around with a pair of bolt cutters at 2 a.m.," according to campus security officer Mike Larion.

Bike theft rate declines; but officers advise care

With so many bicycles in one place, bike theft is a given at the University. Each week Eugene police receive between six and 12 reports of bikes stolen from campus, many from the dormitory areas.

But the bike theft rate has fallen drastically this year, according to Officer Gary Elliott. About six years ago, says Elliott, the value of bikes reported stolen from Eugene annually came to \$750,000. He believes most of the bikes were stolen from the campus and surrounding area.

Since the beginning of fall term, less than 100 bikes have been reported stolen from campus. "Either bike theft is not as bad this year, or people aren't reporting them," Elliott says.

Failure to report bike thefts makes it harder for police to establish possible crime patterns, says Elliott. Most bikes on campus are stolen by individuals, but once in a while police find a professional bike theft ring operating in town.

Officer Mike Larion, who also works at the University, urges cyclists to

register their bikes with campus security. If the bike is stolen, police can use the serial number to trace it. Without an identifying number, the chances of returning the bike to its owner are very slim, says Larion.

Since many bikes are stolen from the dormitory areas, Larion encourages students to report suspicious-looking people in the residence areas.

"Someone who's walking around with a pair of bolt-cutters at 2 a.m. obviously should be questioned," Larion says.

Most padlocks and some cables can be easily sliced with bolt-cutters, according to Elliott. He says a U-shaped lock, made of a sturdy metal material, is impossible to cut.

"How much you spend on a lock depends on how much your bike is worth to you," says Doug Handshaw, owner of Collins Cycle Shop. Some of the U-shaped locks, though effective in deterring theft, are expensive and heavy to carry around, he says.