

Cascade supporter spotlight: John Duggan

by Diana Bryant, Writer & Editor



John Duggan in Mount Rainier National Park, cycling on the Sunrise Road while it was closed to car traffic.

At Cascade, we have a long list of supporters and community partners that help make our work possible. At the top of that list is Seattle bicycling attorney John Duggan. A daily bike commuter and supporter of cyclists' rights, Duggan has represented hundreds of cyclists in the fight to make Seattle streets safer.

One highlight of his work is spreading awareness of the Vulnerable User Law (VUL). Enacted in 2011 and made effective in 2012, the law institutes stiffer penalties for negligent drivers who injure or kill vulnerable road users. While the law doesn't criminalize negligent driving, it does outline a series of monetary fines, license suspensions, driver education and/or community service projects as deterrents.

Before the law was enacted, a negligent driver could simply walk away from a fatal collision with a minor citation or, worse yet, nothing at all. Now, negligent drivers who commit traffic infractions resulting in the injury or death of a vulnerable user may face an automatic fine of up to \$5,000 and a 90-day license suspension.

But there are still measures that need to be taken to make more people, including law enforcement, aware of the law and how to apply it. Duggan says that "while the law itself and the intent behind the law is good, there needs to be a massive public relations effort aimed at educating the police, the prosecutors and motor vehicle

drivers."

Duggan thinks the law has potential to make a significant difference in the safety of cyclists if properly utilized. He says that of his nearly 100 active cases involving cycling incidents, close to 75 percent involve serious injuries in which the VUL should apply. However, it has only been invoked in a small handful of those cases. "I think there has been an unfortunate communication failure regarding the law," Duggan says.

But he remains hopeful. "This work is important to me because the bicycle needs to be an important tool in our overall transportation system. That is, every mile that someone uses their bike for transportation makes the world better for everyone—less congestion, less parking hassles, better environment, better health, etc. As a society, we need to encourage more people to ride their bikes for transportation and to give them the infrastructure and incentive to do so."

Thanks to Duggan and other supporters of the VUL, we hope to see far fewer traffic injuries and fatalities, eventually reaching our goal of Vision Zero.

Next time you're riding the I-90 trail from Bellevue to Seattle, look for Duggan and say hello. It's his favorite commuting route.

To learn more about Duggan's practice, email him at john@dugganbikelaw.com.



Spend 2016 with Cascade & Washington Bikes! p. 6-7

cascade.org

improving lives through bicycling

cascade courier

January 2016 / Vol. 46 No. 1