

Seattle P-I Blog, 7/29/08

No more Critical Mass?

It's a familiar pattern: Whenever a long-running event [causes trouble](#), people ask if it should still be around.

But this [isn't the first time](#) the bicycle rights demonstration known as [Critical Mass](#) has resulted in someone going to jail. And now one of the largest bicycle clubs in the country says [Seattle's most visible bike event is not doing any good](#).

We have to ask: Is Critical Mass worth it?

The managers of [Cascade Bicycle Club](#), a 9,000-member-plus bicycling group issued their statement Monday. They criticized Critical Mass for "undermining any potential to create positive community exchange ... to draw focus to improving conditions for bicycling in our city" (read the [full statement](#)).

That, of course, is the opposite of what the event intends. Yet on the Critical Mass Web site, an event leader responded with a [statement](#) acknowledging that damage was done:

... When an incident like this happens, a few violent cyclists have irreparably damaged us all. It doesn't matter that most Critical Massers around the world or even on this particular ride were non-violent. Because of this incident, no matter how few cyclists were actually responsible, the result is that thousands of people now think of Critical Mass as a violent gang of thugs.

Maybe it isn't fair to judge the whole event by one incident. A permanent banner on the Critical Mass home page has long told participants the event is a celebration, "not an opportunity to cause trouble." But to our readers, actions speak louder than intentions. The "thug" term caught on, too.

[nothin' personal](#): Critical Mass? Sounds more like Thugs on Bikes.

[Ted Fleming](#): I would be much more sympathetic to the plight of cyclists if not for the thugs in Critical Mass.

[SSC](#): Juvenile, childish behavior that puts everyone at risk rarely accomplishes anything positive.

[ravetek](#): Their days are over.

Popular blog Seattlest has already [called for an end](#) to Critical Mass. Dylan Wilbanks of [Seattle Metblogs](#) says the ball's in CM's court: "Stop acting like anarchists and start acting like a protest movement."

But the P-I editorial board [defended](#) the event, acknowledging that it draws attention to a healthy, green mode of transportation and to cyclists' rights. "The message is sound and vital, one that ought not be lost in the coverage of the fight," the board wrote.

So where do you stand? Would you shut down Critical Mass in Seattle?