

Opinion: Can roads designed for cars be safe for bikes?

By Tim Hauserman, High Country News

Pam Jahnke was riding her bike on a section of Highway 89 near Lake Tahoe in an area where Caltrans had just installed a new storm-drainage system.

“The minute my tire hit the drain, I was air-bound and smacked down on the pavement in the middle of the road.” she says. The crash broke her collarbone and left the rest of her body so terribly bruised that for a while her skin resembled a garish sunset.

Riders confront a series of challenges every time they get on their bikes. Many roads are built too narrow for bikes and cars, and bike lanes on the edge of roads tend to get covered in debris or overgrown by vegetation, or else get blocked by unexpected construction signs. On some roads, traffic lights only work when cars reach the intersection; then they don't stay green long enough for riders to pass through before turning red. What's worse, storm drains are designed for the width of car tires, not bike tires, and what might appear like a small imperfection in a road to a car driver can prove a deadly obstruction to someone on a bike.

Read the whole story