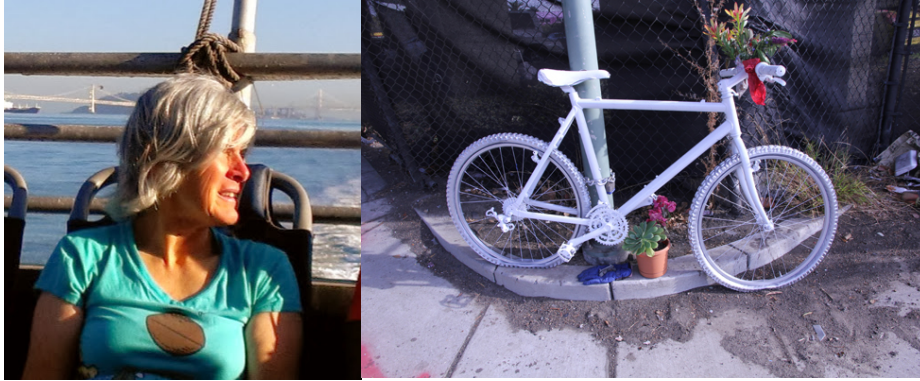


# Memorial Ride in Honor of Susan R. Watson (1/17/2014)



We are riding today to honor the memory of Susan R. Watson, a dear and wonderful friend to many, and a fellow bicyclist. A ghost bike has been placed for her at the corner of Market and 5<sup>th</sup> in Oakland and is a reminder that there is so much more we need to do to improve bicycle safety in our streets.

Susan R. Watson was from Leeds, England. She worked in a small biotech as a scientist in South San Francisco but never let work interfere with her passion for life. At the young age of 62, she rode 30 miles to and from work, motorcycled, and took a Step Aerobics class at YMCA in Albany every Saturday. She traveled to amazing places, loved telling people about her exotic adventures, but had no pretension about her. You can tell it's her on her bike from afar by her cool Stegosaurus-like helmet and bright colorful wheel lights. Susan was one of a kind. "She was such a friendly, warm person and always had a smile for you. We will miss her very much." - Ebba

On the evening of December 17, 2013, Susan got off the ferry at Jack London Square. She rode northbound on Market Street towards her home in El Cerrito, riding through an area near the Port of Oakland that is heavily used by truck drivers. Susan had all the equipment needed for safety- a multitude of bicycle lights, lights on her backpack, and a helmet. She rode in the bike lane, but she was still hit and killed by a truck driver.

The Port of Oakland is the 5<sup>th</sup> busiest port in the country and every day, numerous trucks can be found going to and from the port. Jack London Square and the ferry terminal, which is a transit hub that many bike commuters take, are adjacent to the Port of Oakland. Many bicyclists pass by the port and this creates a situation where bicycles are mixing with trucks. Moreover, nearby freeway ramps induce dangerous speeds creating a far worse situation than there already is.

We know that trucks and bikes do not mix. A disproportionate number of bicycle collisions involve large trucks or buses, and often with very serious consequences for the bicyclist.

Even though there is a bike lane going through the area on Market Street, it is not enough to protect bicyclists and the city needs to redesign this area with its unique characteristics in mind, and not just adopt a one-size-fits-all approach. Some ideas for improvement include improved lighting at key junctions and under-crossings, separation of truck and bike routes, and traffic calming near freeway ramps. Also, truck driver re-education and mandatory training need to be imposed now.

More transportation funds should be directed towards bike improvements, with the ones in hazardous areas like the Port of Oakland taking a higher priority and being expedited. There has been a significant increase in bike ridership in Oakland (a 40% increase from 2010-2012\* and a commute modal share of 3.0% in 2012\*\*) but funding for bike improvements has not kept up.

Please write to Mayor Jean Quan and your city councilman to ask them to make bicycle improvements a priority.