



# Sierra Cascades/SR 89

by REN PARKER

Adventure Cycling’s Advocacy Department has been working on an issue on our Sierra Cascades route between McCloud and Truckee on SR 89, east of Redding, California, for over a decade. The Sierra Cascades Bicycle Route runs roughly parallel to the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail along the Cascade Range and Sierra Nevada from the Canadian border to the Mexican border. This route is characterized by volcanoes, long stretches of forested countryside, busy towns, deserts, orchards, and everything in between. Hundreds of cyclists travel this route annually.

Beginning in 2010, we began to receive reports from cyclists of crumbling shoulders, high vehicle speeds, and low visibility due to winding roads. Additionally, truck traffic had picked up on SR 89 due to logging in the area. Because of all those factors, riders reported feeling unsafe. We cannot minimize or eliminate every risk, but we do have the responsibility to try to make things better. First, we communicated with riders so that people embarking on the Sierra Cascades route were aware of the conditions and could plan accordingly. Bike travel does have inherent risks, and it is the responsibility of the organization to communicate about the conditions as best we can. Next, Adventure Cycling staff connected with and created resources for logging companies active in the area to educate truck drivers about how to safely share the road with cyclists.

Feedback from our cycling community was a key part in understanding that this section presented issues, and we wanted to know more from the people with firsthand experience riding the route. We sent a survey to everyone who purchased a Sierra Cascades map so that we could get more specifics on the problem. Our cartographers worked on a myriad of solutions to pull the route off the most problematic portions of the road and find other solutions where possible.

In October 2020, after months of discussion, Adventure Cycling finally got a meeting with the district safety staff at CalTrans, California’s department of transportation. Our staff discussed the safety concerns along SR 89 and brainstormed possible interventions to improve the route. Adventure Cycling staff requested a safety study to be conducted on the SR 89. As is often the case during moments of change, Adventure Cycling was told, “We’ll think about it,” and never heard back.

Undaunted by the lack of momentum, Adventure Cycling reached out again with a formal correspondence to CalTrans in August 2022 after continuing to hear feedback from riders. We requested the agency conduct a safety study with a specific focus on bicyclists. Through persistence and timely follow-ups, we finally got the answer we were hoping for. A safety study is currently underway as of December 2022. We will receive the results by mid-January 2023 and can start taking further actions with safety data to address our beloved route and protect our amazing riders.

Advocacy work is like an iceberg. The tip is a flashy announcement of a big win. The achievement of getting a safety study is certainly something to celebrate! The hulking mass of the iceberg beneath the water represents the countless hours of diplomacy, endless patience, adaptive problem solving, and immeasurable emotion and energy that happens behind the scenes. The Sierra Cascades route is no exception. It’s taken hundreds of steps, countless strategy changes based on what’s worked and what hasn’t, and admirable tenacity.

Advocacy work takes multiple people over years to create lasting change. Thank you for celebrating the wins and supporting the “hidden” work so that we can keep these things moving and create lasting results.

Did you know that the Adventure Cycling Route Network currently stands at 52,047 miles? Plus, we have a route in each of the lower 48 states! Our team of cartographers and advocates works tirelessly to keep those routes high quality by reviewing and updating each route on a regular basis. The network is an ever-evolving entity, and we’re proud of the energy we put into it so you can have a great experience on your bike trip.

Safety is a broad term, and while we’re really interested in the safety between bicyclists and motorists, we acknowledge that’s not the only way to define safety. The fear or threat of violence that stems from racism, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny, and many other forms of hate are valid safety concerns that, unfortunately, are a barrier to bike travel for some people. Making bike travel safe and accessible for everyone means taking a holistic view of safety.



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