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Critical Mass cyclist suspects not charged

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Two cyclists arrested on suspicion of malicious mischief after an altercation that erupted during a Critical Mass cycling event Friday, July 25th are at this time not facing formal charges by the state.

Larry Hildes, the attorney representing cyclist David Maxwell, one of the men allegedly involved in the confrontation, says Wednesday's move in court isn't unusual.

Defense attorney Hildes hopes the investigation proves that the cyclists were reacting to an aggressive driver, "Our position is that the driver is the one that should have been charged. He is extremely lucky that he didn't kill several people."

Suspect David Maxwell hopes this incident will actually highlight cyclists' plight on the roads, "When I ride to work and from work everyday I'm almost run over by cars everyday. Critical Mass, to me, is one of the best days of the month, where I can feel completely safe. I don't have to worry about someone expressing road rage toward me, someone trying to hit me in their car. I'm here with three or four hundred people. I can be in the middle of a crowd and it's the one time I can be on the road without a threat to my life."

This case is prompting community-wide debate. The question: Can cyclists and motorists coexist in a peaceful manner?

One of the largest cycling groups, the Cascade Bicycle Club, believes both sides reacted inappropriately. "We do support a community of bicyclists that want to make their voice heard, and want to be visible, so long as it doesn't cause the kind of situations it caused on Friday night," says David Hiller of the Cascade Bicycle Club. The club is calling for a community meeting to promote safe and positive riding.

Police Spokesman Mark Jamieson, who says Critical Mass has been riding for years without incident, says no definite increase in police presence has been called for at this time, but that procedures for handling all events of this kind are being evaluated. "It is a little premature to talk about what will happen from this point forward. But the commanders in the department are certainly looking at revisiting any changes to how we approach, not only this particular organization, but any similar type of demonstrations, protests in the future," says Jamieson.