

The traffic gods are punishing me for bicycling

 devblogs.microsoft.com/oldnewthing/20060719-56

July 19, 2006



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It happened again. The last time I participated in a bicycle ride that started in Seattle, I got stuck in highway traffic both going out and coming back. The 520 bridge was closed for inspection so everybody was taking the I-90 bridge instead. But traffic at the western terminal of I-90 was backed up because the Alaska Way Viaduct was closed for some sort of fundraiser walk-a-thon. And then, after the ride was over, I got stuck in traffic on the return trip as well because the Mariners baseball game had just let out, and that on top of all the traffic created by the 520 bridge being closed. This weekend, heading to the starting point for a light group ride through Seattle (which our group leader nicknamed “Crying over STP” since it coincided with the annual Seattle to Portland bike ride), there was a huge back-up on westbound highway 520 due to a multiple-car accident that closed both main lanes, forcing everybody to squeeze into the car pool lane. And then after the ride was over, I got stuck on the 520 bridge at around 4:10pm. The flashing lights were on, indicating that the drawbridge was open. I turned in to the Department of Transportation highway radio station and learned that the bridge was scheduled to be open from 4pm to 4:30pm for “boat fair traffic”. But at least we knew how long we were going to be waiting, so I turned off the car engine, got out, and walked around the bridge. (It’s not often that you get to walk on the 520 bridge. It didn’t occur to me to ride my bicycle on the bridge.) When I got home, I tried to find any information on this scheduled closure, but turned up nothing. I guess you just had to know. But at least I won’t get stuck in traffic next month when I head to Mercer Island to watch the Blue Angels perform, because I’m going to ride my bicycle there. We’ll see whether the hills have returned. **Postscript 1:** And I hadn’t known about the Elliot Bay Trail, which runs from the marina, through the trainyards, along the waterfront, to downtown Seattle. Very nice. **Postscript 2:** You can still see the after-effects of that accident on highway 520: The light barriers on the median near Hunts Point have all been scraped off!

Postscript 3: We stopped for lunch at the Elliott Bay Marina, looking for the the sushi place that we dimly remembered, but it turns out that they no longer exist. (We had lunch at Maggie Bluff’s Grill instead.) Sushi is a somewhat unorthodox bicycle food; I amused myself with the image of a support car driving up to a rider and handing over some unagi and maguro...

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