**MAKING THE CASE:**

 **The ‘Missing Hand’ For** **Door Safety**

Is dooring prevention a concern in your city? If so, are you already promoting Holland's far-handed Reach, their 50 year old, commonsense, official practice for safer car door opening?

It’s easy, it works, it’s free. It’s a mindlessly safer habit:

 ***Rx: “Reach Over with your far hand, Swivel, Look, Open.”***

If like me, you had never heard of it before, please see this link. <http://nudges.org/2011/08/17/how-the-dutch-watch-out-for-cyclists/>

**Our far-hand is missing-in-action:** I urge you to add the Reach to your current anti-dooring advocacy and education – as an effective complement to infrastructure improvements, driver "Look Out for Bikes" campaigns and bicyclist safety education.

How many American drivers and passengers, have ever heard of the Reach, let alone use it? About zero no doubt. But to achieve Vision Zero for cyclists that must change. We know it’s not impossible since the Dutch already do it.

**Consider:**

1) Dooring is caused by a flawed habit we don't know we have: a bad-handed grab for the door handle.

2) The Dutch replace that thoughtless unsafe habit with an equally thoughtless safe one.

3) Once a fixed habit, you can't help but look back for bikes and on-coming traffic.

4) The Dutch have done it. So so can we. But it won't happen if we don't start.

5) Your coalition could easily lead the effort.

**Why does it work, this good-handed grab?**

6. By opening the door with your far hand, you turn and naturally face the outside mirror, out and back. It cures blind spots, counters door flinging, and slows full opening giving cyclists warning and time to respond safely. It is to be used by passengers and drivers alike.

7. With repetition this safer habit becomes stronger and stronger. A thoughtless habit so strong it counters fatigue, impatience, distraction or rashness. It protects not only cyclists, but heedless children and adults who might otherwise step blindly out into on-coming traffic.

8. The Reach is baked into the Dutch as children, by family and in school, in driver education classes, official driver manuals, licensing exams, and through social pressure and solidarity.

9. Reach campaigning does more than raise "Look Out for Bikes & Doors" awareness. It actually edits out the dangerous habit, replacing it with a much safer one.

10. Added to driver and passenger education and licensing exams, the Reach will become over time -- as in the Netherlands -- a permanent and self-perpetuating part of our road culture.

As with buckling up, wearing helmets, and banning smoking in jitneys, this is a life-style behavior change of real benefit to all concerned. It also belongs on the to-do list of Vision Zero and associated public and non-profit transportation agencies and organizations, fleet operators and institutions.

I would be most pleased to discuss this with you further should you find it worthy. More information and ideas are provided below. I am working to gather or develop support materials, graphics, video etc. to assist efforts across US cycling cities to share for this collective effort.

--- Michael Charney, Cambridge, MA

Note: As a retired physician, activist and bicyclist (car-free since 1992) I am allied with the Massachusetts Bicycling Coalition and other bicycle and safety advocates, organizations and traffic/transportation safety professionals in Greater Boston area to introduce the Reach. I am also networking with other cycling, safety, and sustainability advocates and educators around the US to learn about similar efforts and to promote the Reach. V3. 092216