

by Scott Bixby, PCI #1684  
 NY State University Police, University at Buffalo

In May of 2016, IPMBA published a position paper entitled *Use of Flat Pedals by Public Safety Cyclists* (<http://ipmba.org/blog/comments/use-of-flat-pedals-by-public-safety-cyclists-board-position-statement-2016>). Former IPMBA board member Mike Harris researched and wrote the paper, and, as far as I'm concerned (and this is my opinion only), it relegated plastic toe clips and straps to permanent obsolescence in the world of public safety cycling!

While reading the paper, you will notice that Mike quoted James Wilson several times and cited some of his work in the references. Since then, James has designed the Catalyst pedal, he and his wife, Kiele, have formed Pedaling Innovations, and they have brought the Catalyst to the market.

I've been riding bike patrol since 2005 as part of my duties with the NY State University Police at the University at Buffalo. The Catalyst pedals represent the single best upgrade I've made to my patrol bike in that time, and I'd like to tell you why.

*Full disclosure:* Before I delve further into this review, I need to tell you that I have been working for Pedaling Innovations in a part-time capacity since May of 2018. The



#26aintdead

business has been steadily growing, so James and Kiele brought me on to help with customer service issues.

With that out in the open, let me also add that I paid full retail price for my first three pairs of Catalyst pedals. That includes the pair that are currently installed on my agency-issued patrol bike.

To be completely honest, I've been riding on flat pedals at work since 2013, when I switched to flats on my personal mountain bikes. I had learned of James and his company, MTB Strength Training Systems (<https://www.bikejames.com/>), through a friend. His "no BS" style and mountain bike-specific training philosophy really resonated with me, so I bought a couple of his training programs. In all his programs, he advocated for flat pedals while riding. After reading his "flat pedal manifesto" ([http://www.bikejames.com/strength/the-flat-](http://www.bikejames.com/strength/the-flat-pedal-revolution-manifesto-how-to-improve-your-riding-with-flat-pedals/)

[pedal-revolution-manifesto-how-to-improve-your-riding-with-flat-pedals/](http://www.bikejames.com/strength/the-flat-pedal-revolution-manifesto-how-to-improve-your-riding-with-flat-pedals/)), I made the decision to switch to flat pedals.

I had been riding clipless pedals on my personal bike since 1999, based on advice from my brother. I abandoned toe clips and straps on my duty bike in 2008, mainly because I hated plastic toe clips. As I got more involved with teaching, the disadvantages of clipless pedals in public safety cycling became more and more apparent. They made my back and hips hurt when I had to walk a lot. The dismounts that I practiced and taught were more difficult when trying to incorporate an "unclip". And running after dismounting could also be tricky, depending on the surface.

After all those years riding clipless, you can imagine what those first few rides on flat pedals in 2013 were like. It wasn't pretty! It was literally like learning how to ride a bike all over again. James acknowledges in his material that the transition is going to be difficult, but he encourages riders to stick with the flat pedals for ten rides. I stuck it out and in the process learned that I had no idea how to lift the rear wheel, or bunny hop, without my feet clipped to the pedals. It took three years to really get comfortable with them.

While this is a pedal review and not an article about skills progression, it is worth mentioning that the boost in confidence from riding flats changed the way I ride and enabled my skills to progress in ways I never would have imagined.



Standard pedal with toe clip vs the Catalyst

pedals I've ever seen", or a variation on that theme.

Typically, I'll respond by asking them if they've ever done any squats or dead lifts in the gym. If they respond affirmatively, I ask if they squat or dead lift while standing only on the balls of their feet, with their heels off the ground. Of

course, you don't perform those movements on the balls of your feet; you'd only be able to produce limited power that way!

Head over to <https://pedalinginnovations.com/> to read about the design process in great detail. I'll confirm that the Catalyst does allow me to pedal with more power. But for me, it's all about the support the pedal provides under both ends of the arches in my feet and the foot comfort that results during a long shift on the bike.

When I first switched to flats, I bought or tested the following flat pedals: Nashbar (unknown model); Shimano MX80 Saint; Spank Spike; Nukeproof Horizon Sam Hill; Wellgo B087; Sun Ringle ZuZu.

After the Catalyst was released, just a few back-to-back comparison rides convinced me that it delivered all the benefits that James had outlined when he released the pedals.

This past spring, I broke my patrol bike. While it was out of service awaiting replacement parts, I decided to ride one of the other bikes in our fleet. I was feeling lazy that day, so when I looked at the plastic toe clips installed in the fleet bike, I decided I didn't feel like going to get the pedal wrench to swap in my Catalyst pedals. What a mistake! I rode for fifteen minutes and my feet and lower legs started to ache so badly that I turned around, went back to HQ, and immediately installed my Catalyst pedals.

Another aspect of the Catalyst that I really like is the ability to pedal comfortably in any shoe. When I'm out actively patrolling, I wear canvas Five Ten



Five Ten rubber and the Catalyst pedal, a perfect match!

Freeriders. The Freeriders are slightly narrow on my wide feet, so if I'm at work and I know I have a pile of administrative work to do and only a few short

patrol rides, I'll wear my wide-width New Balance cross trainer/trail run shoes. They are more comfortable for standing and walking than the Freeriders, but I can still pedal comfortably thanks to the support of the Catalyst pedals. *[Note: IPMBA's guidelines call for use of purpose-built, sticky-soled shoes with flat pedals.]*

I've reached the point in the review where I feel as if I have to say something

(Continued on page 28)

(Continued from page 27)

negative about the Catalyst, so here goes! I like grip on the pedals. With the 6mm traction pins that come standard in the Catalyst, I have always felt like the grip was lacking just a little, even when wearing the sticky Five Ten's.

Fortunately, the Catalyst comes with a bag of 8mm traction pins. Just a few minutes with a 2mm Allen wrench yields grip that rivals that of clipless pedals. Through trial and error, I have discovered that if I install the long pins in the ends and leave the short pins in the middle, the shoe sole will assume a slightly concave profile that amplifies the grip even more.

If I haven't convinced you yet that you need Catalyst pedals for your police/security/EMS bike, I'll point out that Pedaling Innovations supports IPMBA and can now be found in the IPMBA Product Purchase

Program, offering 30% off MSRP. Visit <http://ipmba.org/membership/product-purchase-program> for their listing and others, including one for 50% off Five Ten Outdoor.



Pro tip: if you routinely smash into rocks, leave short pins in the corners.

When I started working for James and Kiele, I asked them if they would be interested in participating and they agreed without hesitation. James felt so strongly about supporting IPMBA that he published the accompanying post on the Pedaling Innovations blog.

Thanks for taking the time to read this review!

I can be reached at [scbixby@buffalo.edu](mailto:scbixby@buffalo.edu) if you have more questions or just want to hear me ramble on about mountain bikes.

Maybe I'll see you in Fort Worth next April? Stay safe out there!

Photos courtesy Scott Bixby.

*Scott is a Lieutenant with the New York State University Police at the University of Buffalo. He has been a member of the bike patrol unit since 2005 and currently serves as its supervisor. He has also been the lead instructor for the UB Police Bike Patrol School since 2017. Scott is an expert level mountain biker and has been riding and racing mountain bikes since 1999. He also runs a bicycle wheel building and bike repair business that can be found at [www.bluelinebicyclerepair.com](http://www.bluelinebicyclerepair.com). He can be reached at [scbixby@buffalo.edu](mailto:scbixby@buffalo.edu).*

## Why We Support Our Officers on Bikes

by James Wilson, *Pedaling Innovations*

*This post was published on the Pedaling Innovations blog, found at <https://pedalinginnovations.com/why-we-support-our-officers-on-bikes/>.*

Once a relatively rare sight, it is getting more and more common to spot an officer riding a bike through a crowded urban setting. And while you may not think about it, this is because they can be a very valuable asset to their department and the public they serve.

One of the most obvious areas that they help is in their environmental impact and cost to operate. A car that requires gas and maintenance while contributing to air pollution is a necessary evil that bikes have helped cut back on the need for.

**However, besides these benefits, a bike can actually be a better choice in some environments.** Places like college campuses and urban settings often have a lot of foot traffic and closely packed buildings, making it tough for a car to navigate and respond.

In fact, Lt. Scott Bixby (whom I spoke with for this post) told me about how he was able to respond to an alarm 90 seconds before a car showed up because he was able to ride straight to it rather than have to take the roads and deal with traffic.

Something else that being on a bike provides is the ability to see, hear and smell things that you would miss from a patrol car. A bike also provides a stealth element that allows officers to "blend in" with their surroundings in a way a car never could.

This connection with their surroundings also allows them to connect better with the people around them. An officer on a bike is usually less intimidating than one in a patrol car, which makes it easier for people to approach them and lets them become more a part of the community.

**However, these advantages come with a few trade-offs.**

First, officers are more exposed to certain dangers than they would be in a car. Responding to a situation that might involve a gun or someone behind the wheel of a vehicle requires a different type of awareness when you are on a bike.

Second, you have to learn how to navigate a bike wearing 30+ pounds of gear and body armor. This extra gear also means that you will have to deal with a higher heart rate when you arrive on a call, which also requires training and awareness.

This is why officers have to go through a certification course before being able to become a bike cop. While it varies from state to state, Lt. Bixby said that in New York it is a 40 hour course that ends with a live action drill, during which officers have to race to a spot, dismount and fire their weapons...which is shockingly tough to do for a lot of them.

One of organizations that helps support our officers on bikes is the International Police Mountain Bike Association (IPMBA). Founded in 1992, the IPMBA has become the premier organization for training and supporting Public Safety Cyclists.

Among the resources they provide are position papers (including one on the use of flat pedals for officers on bikes) and discounts on products they need through their Product Purchase Program.

We are proud to announce that Pedaling Innovations is now a part of the IPMBA Product Purchase Program. We know that the Catalyst Pedal can provide a unique level of performance and comfort that will be especially beneficial for Public Safety Cyclists and we're excited to be able to offer a discount to them through this program.

So, if you are a Public Safety Cyclist, be sure to check out the Catalyst Pedals next time you need a new set of pedals or if you just want to upgrade to a higher performance flat pedal. We've had several officers contact us to tell us how much they love them for the power and comfort they provide, and we're excited to get more officers on them.

I'd also like to encourage you to think about supporting the IPMBA in some way. Whether it is through a donation or setting up a Corporate Partnership between them and your company, looking out for the people who look out for us is always a good way to keep the karma wheel turning in your direction...plus they fight crime on a bike, which is pretty cool.

Oh, and next time you see an officer on a bike say hi and tell them thanks. They are serving a valuable role while also exposing themselves to some unique dangers. Showing a little appreciation can make a tough job a little easier.