

# [BTA Policy on Bicycle Helmets](#)

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There are few topics in bike advocacy that elicit such an emotional response as helmets. We all know someone who managed to avoid serious injury by wearing a helmet. And we all know someone who reserves the right to ride helmet-free.

Just reevaluating our helmet policy forces us test our assumptions, reaffirm our core beliefs, and confront some of the hardest issues head on. This is a good thing for an organization to do, and it is important to consider input from all sides.

From the feedback that we received from our restated helmet policy, it's clear that you feel the same way. And with your input, we would like to clarify and modify our policy.

## **We believe in safer streets.**

The BTA exists to push for safer streets and to make our roads more bike-friendly. Cycling is fun. Cycling is safe. Cycling builds community. We believe that you should be able to bike anywhere in Oregon with the same confidence that you do down your own street. This is what we work for, not just because we are people who ride bikes, but because of the countless benefits that increased cycling brings to our cities and communities.

## **We think you should wear a helmet.**

Cycling is safe, but not without risk. Helmets are safety devices that make bicycling safer by mitigating injury in the event of a fall or crash. We believe that helmets can and do save lives. We believe that if you are under 16 that it should be required.

## **We will keep growing the movement.**

Our mission is clear – we work to create healthy, sustainable communities by making bicycling safe, convenient and accessible. It is unlikely that a mandatory helmet law would advance this mission. But we promise to actually read a mandatory helmet bill before opposing it. If a bill does not advance cycling in Oregon, then we will fight against it.

We love helmets because they can help in certain situations. Our larger focus remains on making our roads more bicycle friendly through infrastructure improvements, reducing auto speeds, and fighting distracted driving.

Oregon is a great place to ride a bike. But we feel there is a lot of work ahead of us to make it truly world-class. This is the hard work we do as an organization every day, and of course [we invite you to join us](#).

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## **SURVEY OF BTA MEMBERS ON BICYCLE HELMETS**

To assist in setting the policy, BTA conducted a survey of our members in October of 2011. The results are below.

### **1. How often do you wear a helmet while bicycling?**

Almost 80% of respondents say they wear a helmet every time they ride.

16% of respondents say they wear a helmet for most trips.

3% say they sometimes wear a helmet.

Just over 1% say they never wear a helmet.

### **2. How do you think the BTA should be involved in encouraging helmet use and/or supporting a mandatory helmet law? (Respondents chose “agree” or “disagree” for each statement separately.)**

“I believe that everyone should be encouraged to wear a helmet, but the choice is ultimately that of the individual. The BTA should oppose a mandatory helmet law.”

Agree: 65.9% (464)

Disagree: 34.1% (240)

“I believe adults should be required by law to wear a helmet. The BTA should support a mandatory helmet law.”

Agree: 37.1% (276)

Disagree: 62.9% (467)

“I believe the best way to change behavior on helmet use is through education and encouragement, not through legislation. The BTA should focus on education and encouragement.”

Agree: 83.5% (644)

Disagree: 16.5% (127)

“I believe that health officials are the best group to decide this issue. The BTA does not need to be involved with legislation of helmet use.”

Agree: 19.7% (130)

Disagree: 80.3% (530)

“I am not concerned with helmet use.”

Agree: 14.7% (96)

Disagree: 85.3% (557) 653

### **3. Are you a BTA member?**

Yes: 88.5%

No: 8.5%

Not sure: 2.9%