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Testimony regarding SB 533

Chair McKeown, and members of the committee.

I encourage you to support SB 533.

This bill would allow Oregon's two-wheeled road users the right to proceed on an unresponsive left-turn red. This bill addresses a persistent need that has existed for motorcyclists and other lighter-weight road users ever since in-road sensors have become part of Traffic Control Devices.

A large number of other states throughout the nation allow this practice, including Oregon's neighbors. States first passed these changes to traffic code and statutes over 20 years ago. Washington has enacted similar legislation. Idaho has had it since 2000. Two decades ago, arguments against enacting similar bills to SB 533 alleged that crashes would increase and that this was an excuse to run lights. In all the states with "Dead Red" laws, this has not been the case. Some of us are old enough to remember when turning right on red was similarly controversial, but now it is a universally accepted practice to enhance traffic flow and reduce congestion.

Other factors present today make SB 533 an evolutionary change whose time is overdue. For example, it is now becoming more common for the blinking yellow left-turn signal allowing all road users to proceed with caution. If every left turn signal in the state had this technology, SB 533 would not be needed. However, it will be many years, if ever, before these adaptations to existing signals can be implemented.

For a long time Oregon law has allowed a left turn on red onto a one-way street for all road users. Although this clearly a different situation than turning across a lane designated for oncoming traffic; the point is that left turn on red is not unheard of in Oregon.

So, even though eventual technological changes may eventually solve this problem, that day is many years in the future, if ever. In the here and now, Oregon's two-wheeled road users need this bill. I ask for you to support SB 533 in this committee and ask that you encourage all of the members of the House to support it on the floor.

Thank you,

With respect and regards,

Ken Ray