

7450 SW 162nd Place
Beaverton, OR 97007

May 12, 2015

TO: Chair McKeown and Members of House Committee on Transportation of the House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development:

RE: Testimony in support of SB694 for 5/15/15 hearing

I wish to add my testimony in support of SB694. I am a native Oregonian born in Eugene, raised in Albany, living in Beaverton for the last 25 years. I am a father of six and grandfather of 10. I am an experienced motorcycle rider and enthusiast. I've been riding for more than 40 years with the last 20+ years being solid, near year-round riding.

As a motorcycle rider I accept primary responsibility for my choice to ride and I make an effort to constantly be alert and aware of my surroundings. This has helped to ensure my safety while riding and has also helped to improve my overall driving skills while in an auto since I employ the same practices.

Yet, my experience has shown me that those in automobiles often treat motorcycles as a second-class vehicle, somehow due less consideration. This is evident in how I am often tailgated by a motorist or have an auto pull up very close behind me at a stop because they are "looking past" my motorcycle to the auto in front of me.

Last year, while commuting to work, I had an auto in the lane to my right accelerate quickly from a position behind me, and then pull in from the right into my lane in front of me. There was barely room between the auto ahead of me and the front wheel of my motorcycle. This driver wanted to turn left at the next intersection and, for whatever reason, hadn't made it into the left lane. I don't know why she chose to pull in front of me rather than slowing to merge behind me, but I remain convinced that this would have not happened were I in an auto rather than on a motorcycle. I believe it was the perception that I was due less consideration that gave this driver the feeling that she had the right to this choice.

Just last week, I was parked legally in a parking spot and someone illegally parked her automobile in front of my parking space, blocking my motorcycle. I was unable to exit and had to go into the store and have them page the person. When she was located and came out, she explained that she had done this because "There was more shade" there. I replied that, "If I was a car, you wouldn't have done that." Her response: "Well, motorcycles are more flexible. You can get out."

There continue to be too many motorists who simply do not see motorcycles, bicycles or pedestrians. Too many motorists look for a car, and when they do not see a car, they proceed. They don't see the motorcycle, the bicycle, or the pedestrian because it is not a car; it does not fit what they expected to see so, in their mind, the way is clear.

I believe these points demonstrate the second-class status attributed to motorcycles and other non-autos by motorists. There is the perspective that a motorcycle can "get out of the way", is maneuverable enough that the motorcyclist can avoid the motorist's poor choice to turn left in front of them, etc.

How does this relate to SB694? I believe this attitude, whether conscious or only behavioral, leads to the many instances of motorcycles that are rear-ended by a autos when traffic has stopped or is moving very slowly. Clearly, these motorists are distracted or inattentive and, thus, the motorcyclist is left with sole responsibility to take action and avoid death or maiming. By allowing motorcycles to move responsibly between autos when traffic conditions warrant (as identified in SB694), and not leave this to only an emergency situation, it will reduce the risk of these rear-end accidents. By allowing the motorcycles to continue in motion rather than stopping, it removes the motorcycle from the danger of a rear-end collision – and avoiding a collision in the first place is always the first step towards safe riding.

My #1 rule for riding is "Cars always win". I try to remind myself of that regularly. Yet, while this is true, any effort to reduce the opportunity where the car "wins" is an effort to helping motorcyclists remain safe on our roadways.

On behalf of all Oregon motorcyclists, I urge you to vote yes and pass SB694 to improve safety on the road for those riding.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rodney L. Barnes". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name below it.

Rodney L. Barnes