

# PBOT

PORTLAND BUREAU OF TRANSPORTATION

1120 SW Fifth Avenue, Suite 800 Portland, OR 97204 503.823.5185

Fax 503.823.7576 TTY 503.823.6868 [www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation](http://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation)

**Dan Saltzman** Commissioner **Leah Treat** Director

February 16, 2017

Bob Reichenberg, Chair  
Governor's Advisory Committee on Motorcycle Safety  
4040 Industrial Dr. SE  
Salem, Oregon 97301

Dear Chair Reichenberg and Advisory Committee Members,

I am writing to express my concern with several bills introduced in the 2017 legislative session pertaining to motorcycle drivers that I believe would legalize dangerous behaviors:

- SB 385 Lane Sharing (highways only)
- HB 2665 Lane Sharing (lane and shoulders)
- SB 680 Lane Sharing (all roads)
- HB 2599 Helmet law repeal

The helmet law is the simplest to address – helmets save lives. This fact is well studied and quantified. The Centers for Disease Control reports:

- Helmets saved an estimated 1,630 lives and \$2.8 billion in economic costs in 2013.
- The United States could have saved an additional \$1.1 billion in 2013 if all motorcyclists had worn helmets.
- Helmets reduce the risk of death by 37%.
- Helmets reduce the risk of head injury by 69%.

The legislation pertaining to lane-sharing is less cut and dry. This is due to the fact that it is illegal in 49 states, thus little data is available. California passed the first lane sharing law last year and there are few, if any facts and figures to prove it is safe and can alleviate traffic congestion.

In terms of whether lane-sharing is safe, it is widely held that vehicles and motorcycles each need a full lane to operate safely. Riding between lanes of stopped or moving vehicles in the same lane makes drivers vulnerable. A vehicle could turn suddenly or change lanes, or a hand could come out the window. There also exists the danger of vehicle doors unexpectedly opening with little to no warning. Moreover, buses and tractor-trailers require extreme care, as motorcycles may be nearly invisible to the drivers.



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These safety issues also lead to questions of liability in crashes. It is quite likely that lane-sharing will leave the driver legally responsible. "Driving safely" is always very much a judgment call. The mere fact that a crash occurred while a driver was sharing a lane is strong evidence that it wasn't safe to do so. If a driver has been involved in a crash, he or she will have a hard time convincing an insurance adjuster that the crash was not his or her fault.

With regard to the likelihood of lane-sharing to alleviate traffic congestion, transportation engineers have suggested that motorcycles are too few, and will remain too few, to justify any special accommodation or legislative consideration. Unless it becomes likely that a very large number of Americans will switch to motorcycles, they will offer no measurable congestion relief. Rather, they suggest laws and infrastructure incorporate motorcycles into normal traffic with minimal disruption and risk to riders.

In closing, Portland is a Vision Zero city. This means the City aims to eliminate traffic fatalities altogether. As the Director of Transportation for the City of Portland, I am focusing tremendous time and energy to achieve this goal. In partnership with the Portland Police Bureau, we are steadfastly focused on dangerous driving behaviors. I believe the bills referenced in this letter will contribute to dangerous behaviors and I am opposed to them.

Thank you for allowing me to weigh in on these important matters.

Sincerely,



Leah Treat

c: Elizabeth Edwards  
Sergeant Barnum