

Motorcycle Lane Sharing in Oregon

What is Lane Sharing?

Lane sharing motorcycles safely ride between lanes, when traffic is stopped or moving very slowly. Also known as “filtering” or “lane splitting”, the practice is legal in California and most countries around the world.

Safety Benefits

In 2015, the State of California and the University of California, Berkeley, published a study on lane sharing. The study found that motorcyclists in accidents are “considerably less likely to suffer head injury, torso injury, extremity injury, and fatal injury” than riders who were not lane-sharing.(1) Lane sharing has compelling safety benefits for riders. This study (often called the “Rice Report”) is well regarded by transportation safety experts in the government.

The Rice Report draws no conclusions about whether sharing increases or decreases the overall risk of accident, stating that “our study data cannot be used to estimate the risk of actually being involved in a collision.”(2) There are lots of strong opinions on whether or not lane sharing increases the likelihood of accident, but no published studies or reports. That said, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration suggests that lane sharing may reduce accident frequency, noting that “there is evidence ... that traveling between lanes of stopped or slow-moving cars (i.e., lane splitting) on multiple-lane roads (such as interstate highways) slightly reduces crash frequency compared with staying within the lane and moving with other traffic.”(3)

Congestion Benefits

Lane sharing reduces traffic congestion during traffic stoppages and slowdowns, benefiting both riders and drivers: each lane sharing rider is one less vehicle stuck in traffic. A 2012 Belgian traffic engineering study concluded that if 10% of all drivers rode motorcycles and lane shared, traffic delay times for all motorists would be reduced by 40%.(4) The benefits of lane sharing are free: no new infrastructure, structures, or signage is required.

The Portland metropolitan area was recently ranked as the eighth-most traffic congested urban area in the U.S., tied with Chicago and Washington, D.C.(5) Slowdowns are worst when lane sharing would benefit commuters the most: during the morning and evening rush hours.

Environmental Benefits

Lane sharing will reduce the number of automobiles on Oregon roads, and lower the time vehicles spend idling in traffic.

Lane sharing also encourages the use of more fuel-efficient alternative vehicles, including electric motorcycles. Typical gasoline-powered motorcycles and scooters travel 50, 60 or even more miles per gallon.

Details

- Lane sharing would be optional, not mandatory.
- In 2015, a lane sharing bill (SB694) passed the Senate Judiciary Committee unanimously and passed the full Oregon Senate with a 2/3, bipartisan majority. The bill required traffic to be moving under 10 mph, motorcycles under 20 mph; these are low, safe, ‘school zone’ speeds.

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References

1. For an excellent and succinct summary of the Rice Report:
<https://olis.leg.state.or.us/liz/2017R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/107350>
The full study, by Dr. Thomas Rice, PhD, Motorcycle Lane-Splitting and Safety in California, May 29, 2015, is here (see especially pages 3 and 16):
http://lanesplittingislegal.com/assets/studies-surveys/lane-splitting-safety-california_may-29-2015.pdf
2. See the full Rice Report noted in (1), page 18.
3. <https://one.nhtsa.gov/people/injury/pedbimot/motorcycle/00-NHT-212-motorcycle/motorcycle51.html>
4. http://ridetowork.org/files/docs/MCs_reduce_congestion_Travel_Times_-_Conference_Leuven_study.pdf
5. https://www.koin.com/news/study-portland-traffic-among-most-congested-in-nation_20180208092200104/960359400

Additional info: <http://lanesplittingislegal.com/resources-links>

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