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CITY OF  
**PORTLAND, OREGON**

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GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

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February 20, 2019

Senator Lee Beyer, Co-Chair  
Representative Caddy McKeown, Co-Chair  
Joint Committee on Transportation  
900 Court Street, NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Beyer and McKeown and Members of the Committee:

The City of Portland remains highly concerned about the safety of motorcycle lane-splitting and opposes House Bill 2314.

Portland is a Vision Zero city committed to eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries on our streets. Over the past several years, deadly motorcycle crashes in Portland have continued to increase steadily, with motorcyclists making up more than one-quarter (nine out of 35) of Portland traffic deaths in 2018. Across the U.S., the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) found that motorcyclist fatalities occurred nearly 28 times more frequently than car-related fatalities in 2016 (the most recent year for which national crash data is available). With motorcyclists already disproportionately involved in the most serious crashes, motorcycle lane-splitting will likely increase the potential for conflicts between motorcyclists and drivers, especially without adequate education for road users.

Closer examination of Portland motorcycle crash data reveals that in the past five years, 32 people have died (an average of more than six per year) riding motorcycles, making up 17% of traffic deaths. We are concerned that lane-splitting will increase the potential for unpredictable and dangerous behavior, leading to even more serious crashes.

A UC Berkeley study, *Motorcycle Lane-splitting and Safety in California (2015)*, examined motorcycle crashes in California during a 14-month period. This particular study has been used to point to the safety benefits that lane-splitting would bring to Oregon. The study examined the difference in severity of motorcycle crashes that involved lane-splitting compared to crashes that did not involve lane-splitting. However, the study did not address whether lane-splitting lead to more crashes overall.

Most of the traffic conditions that would allow lane-splitting per HB 2314 – traffic moving no more than 10 mph and with the speed differential between traffic and the lane-splitting motorcyclist of no more than 10 mph – occur in the Portland area, where Portland Police perform traffic enforcement. Portland Police are responsible for enforcement within city limits, including on state highways and the interstate system, and have expressed serious enforcement concerns regarding the proposed lane-splitting parameters. To record travel speeds, the speed radar guns need a clear line of sight, which can be difficult to get when a motorcycle is moving between lanes of traffic. While the parameters of HB 2314 narrow the conditions under which lane-splitting is allowed, resources or practical means of enforcing those parameters are limited.

Based on research, crash data and on-the-ground knowledge, the City of Portland remains deeply concerned about the safety impacts and enforcement challenges that would come with legalizing lane-splitting on Oregon's most congested highways. Enclosed are materials submitted by the Portland Bureau of Transportation to the Governor's Advisory Committee on Motorcycle Safety.

Sincerely,

/s/Elizabeth Edwards  
Director, Office of Government Relations  
City of Portland, Oregon