

Dear Chair Prozanski, and members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary,

I would like to ask your support once again to protect Oregon motorcyclists. If you have a sense of deja vu here, that's understandable -- you saw this bill in 2021 as SB 574, when it passed through both sides of the legislature, but was vetoed by Former Gov. Brown. However, Gov. Kotek was Speaker at the time and voted in favor.

Now, it's been two years, and I'm told the legislature has other business, so I understand you may have forgotten some of the reasons why this is a good idea.

SB 422 presents a very modest and elegant solution to a real problem, developed by examining the data. UC Berkeley conducted one of the largest studies on motorcycle safety in history, specifically on this subject.[1] Researchers discovered that motorcyclists experience far fewer fatalities or severe injuries when they are travelling between lanes.

For instance, the frequency of head injuries dropped 47% in accidents experienced by motorcyclists who rode between lanes compared to those who did not. The risk of fatality dropped 60%. Our bill narrowly focuses on the exact circumstances where these safety benefits were maximized: slow-moving traffic.

Some people mistakenly believe that it is possible and lawful for riders to move between lanes if they believe their lives are in danger. I'm afraid this is not realistic. Few riders can react swiftly enough for this to be practical. Those who succeed still receive traffic citations. I refer you to the written testimony of Nicholas Mokey on SB 574 in 2021, who received a citation for dodging his bike between lanes when he felt his life was in danger.[2]

All told, between this bill and its 2021 counterpart, the legislature has heard from over 1000 riders who have testified in support of this bill. The bill has Republican and Democrat sponsors, from urban and rural districts, and all over Oregon. I think that speaks to the sincerity of our bill.

We often hear questions about how this can be enforced. I will refer you to the written testimony of retired Klamath County Sheriff Tim Evinger. Tim has over 24 years of law enforcement experience and he explains very clearly that these rules can be effectively policed.[3]

Another question is, what about training? The answer is, riders in this state are already trained to locate safe escape routes in traffic and proactively navigate into them. This bill is entirely consistent with that training. For more on this, I refer you to the written testimony of Brian Edwards, a retired Oregon motorcycle safety instructor.[4]

This bill will make roads better for all road users. Removing bikes from lanes of traffic in high congestion thins traffic for everyone. A Belgian study found that when just 10% of drivers switched to bikes and began filtering, total time loss for all vehicles decreased by 40%. [5] This is significant for Oregon, as we struggle to find solutions to improve capacity and fleet average speed through increasingly congested highways.

Every year, this bill becomes more and more needed. Oregon's roads are getting more crowded, and for motorcycles, that creates more and more danger. And that's why you've seen us, session after session. Committee, I hope you will please move this bill -- and the safety of Oregon riders -- forward.

Sincerely,

Jonas Acres

- [1] <https://www.ots.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/67/2019/06/Motorcycle-Lane-Splitting-and-Safety-2015.pdf>
- [2] <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2021R1/Downloads/PublicTestimonyDocument/9402>
- [3] <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023R1/Downloads/PublicTestimonyDocument/58395>
- [4] <https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2023R1/Downloads/PublicTestimonyDocument/57977>
- [5] <https://acem.eu/component/phocadownload/category/3-mobility?download=7:commuting-by-motorcycle-impact-analysis-i-yperman-transport-and-mobility-leuven-2011>