



Testimony submitted to the Joint Committee on Transportation
In support of multiple bills supporting the safety of bicyclists and other vulnerable road users
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The following bicyclist and other vulnerable road user safety bills are supported by the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA): H.3073/S.1807, H.3072/S.1808, S.1809 and H.3019/S.1810.

LWVMA positions support legislation that provides a safe and secure transportation system, efforts to reduce vehicle miles traveled and is consistent with its positions on preventive health and energy conservation.

According to the US Census, commuter and transportation bicycling is increasing. In Boston, bicycle use has increased nearly 130% since 1990. Transit use, which almost always starts and ends with a walk, is also increasing in Massachusetts, putting many more pedestrians at risk of being harmed by motor vehicles. Bicyclists being struck from behind comprise 40% of fatalities.

Many improvements have been suggested to make vulnerable road users safer, such as adding protected bike lanes, improving crosswalks and “necking down” intersections, because passing motor vehicles regularly strike and kill vulnerable road users, even when they are behaving responsibly.

The following bills address the reality that bicyclists, pedestrians, and other vulnerable road users, such as people in wheelchairs and on motorized scooters and skateboards are seriously at risk on our roads on a daily basis.

H.3073/S.1807 – An Act to protect vulnerable road users – increases the distance at which a motor vehicle traveling more than 30 mph is allowed to pass vulnerable road users, requiring more than three feet between them, even if it requires crossing the centerline. Virtually everyone is a vulnerable road user some of the time, and the bill will also protect police, first responders, construction workers, tow truck drivers and other workers on our roads and highways. This “three-feet-law” follows a precedent of a 2014 California bill, and revenue generated from penalties for violations could be used for public education about risks to vulnerable road users. MassBike rates it as a top priority.

H.3072/ S.1808 – An Act to protect bicyclists in bicycle lanes – prohibits vehicle operators from standing or parking a vehicle upon any on-street path or lane designated by official signs or markings for the use of bicycles. These lanes typically enable bicyclists, and other vulnerable users, to minimize stops, proceed on a relatively direct course, and stay out of the vehicle travel lane, decreasing the great risk they can encounter when getting around a parked vehicle.

S.1809 – An Act to protect bicyclists in bicycle paths is essentially an addendum to a 2012 law, adding the words “or bicyclists” in several places in that law. Passage of this bill will make it legal for bicyclists to do what they are already doing – ride across a bike path crosswalk, provided they yield to pedestrians and operate with reasonable caution. More important, it would require motorists to yield to bicyclists in those crosswalks.

H.3019/S.1810 – An Act to protect vulnerable road users by requiring certain vehicles to be equipped with side under-rider guards and blind spot mirrors requires side guards and convex mirrors on larger vehicles operating in Massachusetts. A significant percentage of the recent deaths and injuries of bicyclists in the Bay State have involved trucks making right turns in urban settings. This ordinance has been passed in Boston, but has little application for trucks registered elsewhere. More than half of bicyclists killed by trucks hit the side of the truck first and are then swept beneath.

Therefore, LWVMA strongly urges the Joint Committee on Transportation vote positively on the above bills and support their passage during this legislative session.

Thank you for your consideration.