

One Less Car[®]
Maryland Campaign for Bicycling & Walking



BILL NO.: Senate Bill 551

TITLE: Vehicle Laws - Bicycles and Motor Scooters - Exceptions to Requirement to Stay Right

ORGANIZATION: One Less Car - Maryland Campaign for Bicycling and Walking

POSITION: Supports the bill.

- SB-551 is a common-sense bill that clarifies the interpretation of the law that requires cyclists to ride “as near to the right side of the roadway as practical and safe.”
- SB-551 makes Maryland law consistent with the Uniform Vehicle Code of the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Laws and Ordinances.
- SB-551 authorizes cyclists to do what the Maryland Department of Transportation recommends on page 15 of its “Safe Bicycling in Maryland” booklet.
- Safe and effective cycling requires cyclists to be visible and predictable. Too many cyclists interpret as far to the right as practicable to mean as far to the right as possible, and thereby put themselves into increased danger.
- Cyclists learn through experience that “riding as far right as practical and safe” does not mean “hugging the curb.” There are often times when it is safer for a cyclist to move away from the far right side of the roadway. As a cyclist moves further from the curb, the cyclist becomes more visible to motorists, whether they are traveling in the same lane, oncoming, or in cross streets.
- The bill makes it clear that a cyclist is permitted to move away from the rightmost side of the road when traveling at the same speed as traffic, when avoiding pedestrians and road hazards, when avoiding right-turning traffic, or when the lane is not wide enough to be safely shared with another vehicle.
- In most circumstances bicyclists – as slower moving traffic – will continue to ride to the right of motor traffic. Many state roads have shoulders, bike lanes, or wide curb lanes. This bill addresses the exceptions to the rule – not the rule itself. This bill will help clarify these exceptions, bring our law into conformity with other states, and help to create a safer transportation system.
- SB-551 makes safe cycling unambiguous to law enforcement officers, the court system, motorists, and cyclists.

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