

LEAGUE OF AMERICAN BICYCLISTS

Testimony submitted to

**MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS**

in Support of

**SENATE BILL 551
*Vehicle Laws - Bicycles and Motor Scooters -
Exceptions to Requirement to Stay Right***

APRIL 1, 2005

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Introduction

The League of American Bicyclists was founded in 1880 as the League of American Wheelmen, when cyclists from across the United States joined together to advocate for paved roads. Their efforts ultimately led to our national highway system. Although America's dominant form of transportation has changed, in many ways the goals of the League remain the same.

Today, the League represents the nation's 57 million cyclists and works through advocacy and education for a bicycle-friendly America. Currently, we have over 300,000 affiliated members, including 3,500 in the state of Maryland.

Support for Senate Bill 551

The League encourages the House to adopt an amendment to HB 1408 which expands the exceptions to the requirement for bicyclists or motor scooters to stay as near to the right of the roadway as safe and practical. By doing this, and ensuring that all road users are familiar with the law, Maryland's roads will be safer for all.

The League is committed to help improve the safety of Maryland road users through education. We train instructors all around the country to teach safe cycling to children,

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adults and motorists, through a program funded in part by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Currently, we have 14 certified League Cycling Instructors in Maryland. As the law stands today, they cannot teach cyclists in Maryland to act in the manner we know to be the safest. Our BikeEd program recommends that:

- Cyclists should avoid debris and other obstacles close to the curb; Motorists should look for and expect cyclists who may have entered the center of the lane to avoid a pothole or other surface hazard;
- Cyclists should not weave in and out of parked cars, because they appear unpredictable to motorists entering the roadway;
- Cyclists should signal their intention to proceed straight by moving toward the center of a lane in an intersection, to prevent a crash with a right-turning motorist;
- Cyclists should avoid right turn lanes if they are proceeding straight;
- Cyclists should ride 3-4 feet from parked cars to avoid being 'doored;'
- Cyclists should ride toward the center of the roadway in a lane too narrow to safely share.

Codification of existing practice will assist all road users. It will clarify to motorists that they should not force their way around a cyclist in a narrow lane with oncoming traffic, where they often misjudge the speed of the cyclist and nearly cause head-on crashes between two cars. It will clarify to cyclists when they are supposed to ride to the right and when it is safest to ride in the center of the lane. It will discourage roadway users from trying to overtake others unsafely, whether it is a motorist trying to overtake a cyclist on the left or a cyclist passing slower motor vehicle traffic on the right. It will help prevent one of the most common crash types involving cyclists, the "right hook." Cyclists are hit and killed by motorists making right turns into riders proceeding straight ahead at intersections. Straight-through riders who move further toward the center of the lane at intersections help prevent the right-hook by making motorists aware that they intend to proceed straight-through the intersection. Adoption of SB 551 will amplify the legality and safety of League BikeEd program teachings in Maryland.

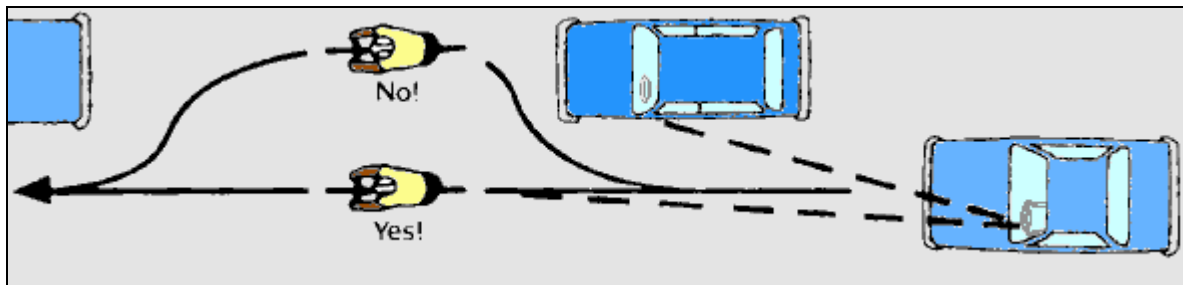
Conclusion

The League is committed to providing the tools necessary to educate everyone about bicycling and safety, including motorists. We teach children how to ride safely to school. We teach bicycle commuters that they must not pass on the right, and that they sometimes need to take the center of the lane where it's narrow and unsafe for cars to pass. We are also committed to teaching motorists to expect bicyclists in the middle of the lane on occasion. Most importantly, we are committed to encouraging all users to obey traffic laws. By educating everyone about bicycle safety, you improve the health and safety of your communities.

Transportation policy that supports bicycling is transportation policy that promotes quality of life in our communities. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony before this distinguished Committee.

Supporting Diagrams

Bicyclists should not weave in and out between parked cars



Bicyclists should not ride in the Door Zone

