



Testimony to the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee

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Chairman Green, Vice-Chairman Greenspan, Ranking-Member Sheehy, ladies and gentlemen of the House Transportation and Public Safety Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of House Bill 9 to make changes to the malfunctioning signal law to accommodate bicyclists on the roadway.

I would like to thank the Ohio legislature for passing HB154 during the previous legislative session, which included the 3 foot passing law and this change to the malfunctioning signal law. Our organization believes that laws should apply to users of all vehicle types on the roadway. Idaho law allows bicyclists to treat stop signs as yield signs and to treat red lights as stop signs. We do not agree with such laws that allow and encourage unsafe behavior for bicyclists. The Ohio malfunctioning signal law exists to define the rules for proceeding through an intersection when the traffic signal is malfunctioning, such as during a power outage. HB154 simply added another type of malfunction, failure to detect a vehicle.

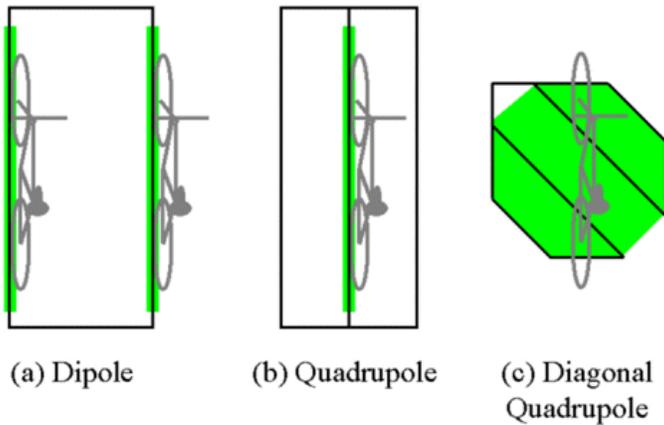
Traffic signals are either timed or demand-actuated. Most Columbus downtown signals change at set intervals, with different signal timing for rush hour and non-rush hour. Demand-actuated signals are currently of two types: induction loop or optical cameras. Inductive loops detect a vehicle when it drives over a wire loop which is installed in the pavement at the stop bar. Drivers can see the wire loop as a single or double rectangular loop (or other pattern) visible by the grey caulk filler visible on the roadway. Often these loops are not visible if the roadway has been resurfaced. Optical sensors operate by a device that looks like a camera mounted on the signal arm mast. These sensors detect vehicles optically in each lane as they stop at the stop bar. Who knows what the future will hold for traffic signals with smart city technology?

Some vehicles are not detected by inductive loop detectors because the sensors react to conductive or ferrous metals. Bicycles, motorcycles and Amish buggies often have this problem. If the bicycle or other vehicle is positioned directly over the wire, it is often detectable. Sometimes the detector needs to be calibrated so that it is more sensitive. Our organization, along with the Ohio Department of Transportation and the Ohio Department of Health, educate Ohio bicyclists how to make detectors work and to wait a sufficient amount of time to see if the signal will work properly. We also encourage them to contact engineers if signals need to be adjusted. The signal law requires the bicyclist or driver to yield to all traffic approaching on the intersecting road before proceeding with care if their vehicle is not detected.

Optical sensors can usually detect all vehicle types. But they may fail to detect a vehicle in foggy conditions or at night. Ohio law requires all vehicles to be equipped with a front light, but sometimes these lights may be too dim to be detected optically.

We understand the concern that this law has been misinterpreted to mean that impatient drivers can run red lights. We support the change to the law that it apply to bicycles. But we request that the law also apply to motorcycles and animal-drawn vehicles (the term used in the Ohio Revised Code for Amish buggies). We have reached out to the Ohio Amish community to share the information about how to trigger demand-actuated signal detectors so they can safely travel by bicycle and buggy in their communities.

Thank you for taking our recommendation into consideration.



Optimizing inductive loop signal detectors



Optical signal detector