



Testimony before the
Ohio Senate Transportation, Commerce and Labor Committee
Tuesday, December 6, 2016 in the North Senate Hearing Room
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Chairman LaRose, Vice-Chairman Manning, Ranking-Member Cafaro, ladies and gentlemen of the Senate Transportation, Commerce and Labor Committee, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on behalf of House Bill 154 to make changes to traffic laws to improve safety for bicyclists on Ohio roadways.

I am Chuck Smith, Chair of the Ohio Bicycle Federation (OBF). We in the OBF represent all Ohio bicyclists at the state level. House Bill 154 enjoys the solid support of Ohio's cycling community. Over 3,000 Ohioans have signed our electronic petition supporting the 3-foot passing clearance provision in House Bill 154, and several bicycle clubs and metropolitan planning offices across our state have passed resolutions of support for HB 154.

HB 154, sponsored by Representatives Mike Henne and Mike Sheehy, would make two improvements to Ohio law:

1. Require that Ohio motorists pass bicyclists leaving at least three feet of clearance. (ORC 4511.27)

Twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia have passed laws requiring that motorists give bicyclists at least three feet of clearance when passing. These states include Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Louisiana, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania (4 feet), South Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

The Ohio cities of Cleveland, Columbus, Cincinnati, Dayton, and Toledo already have three-foot passing ordinances. Thus, passing HB 154 will make Ohio law uniform regarding motor vehicles passing bicyclists.

While Ohio law currently states that motorists must pass bicyclists leaving a “safe” clearance, specifying three feet establishes a concrete frame of reference that motorists can use when coming upon a bicyclist from the rear and deciding whether there is sufficient room to pass the bicyclist safely. While the 3-foot requirement is enforceable, the greatest value of the 3-foot concept is educational. As an educational tool, it will save lives in Ohio.

Secondly, House Bill 154 would

2. Permit all Ohio vehicles to proceed through an intersection after stopping and yielding right-of-way, even when not detected by the device designed to move the signal from red to green.

I commuted by bicycle from my home in Vandalia to my job at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base for 22 years, logging over 50,000 miles.

To precede the rush hour traffic, I left my home about 5 am each morning.

Two traffic lights along my route did not detect my bicycle. That early in the morning, I would have a long wait for a passing motorist to move the light from red to green for me. Thus, I was legally required to leave the roadway to press a pedestrian button at the corner. At many intersections, there are no pedestrian buttons to push.

With HB 154, I could stop, look both ways, yield right-of-way, then proceed with caution.

Sixteen states currently permit non-detected vehicles to proceed at intersections after stopping and yielding right-of-way.

The American Motorcyclists Association (AMA) has partnered with the Ohio Bicycle Federation in supporting HB 154 because motorcyclists, like bicyclists, are often not detected at intersections. Motorcyclists do not have the option of pressing a pedestrian button.

Non-cycling organizations supporting HB 154 include the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (AMATS) and the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments (TMACOG).

The two provisions of HB 154 are both listed in the 2015 Bicycle Friendly State Report Card given to Ohio by the League of American Bicyclists. Passage of HB 154 promises to improve Ohio's Bicycle Friendly State standing from the current ranking of 16th among our 50 states. The Bicycle Friendly State rankings are well-publicized and considered by industries and businesses looking for new locations. Thus, a higher Bicycle Friendly State ranking may enhance our Ohio economy.

I encourage you to approve HB 154.

I would be happy to answer any questions.

Thank you!
