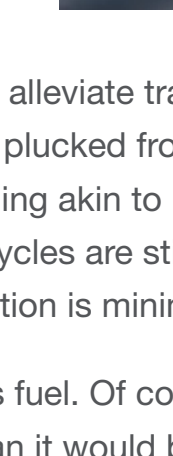


Opinion Jul 13th 2022 at 10:00AM

# Motorcycles should be allowed to split lanes | Opinion

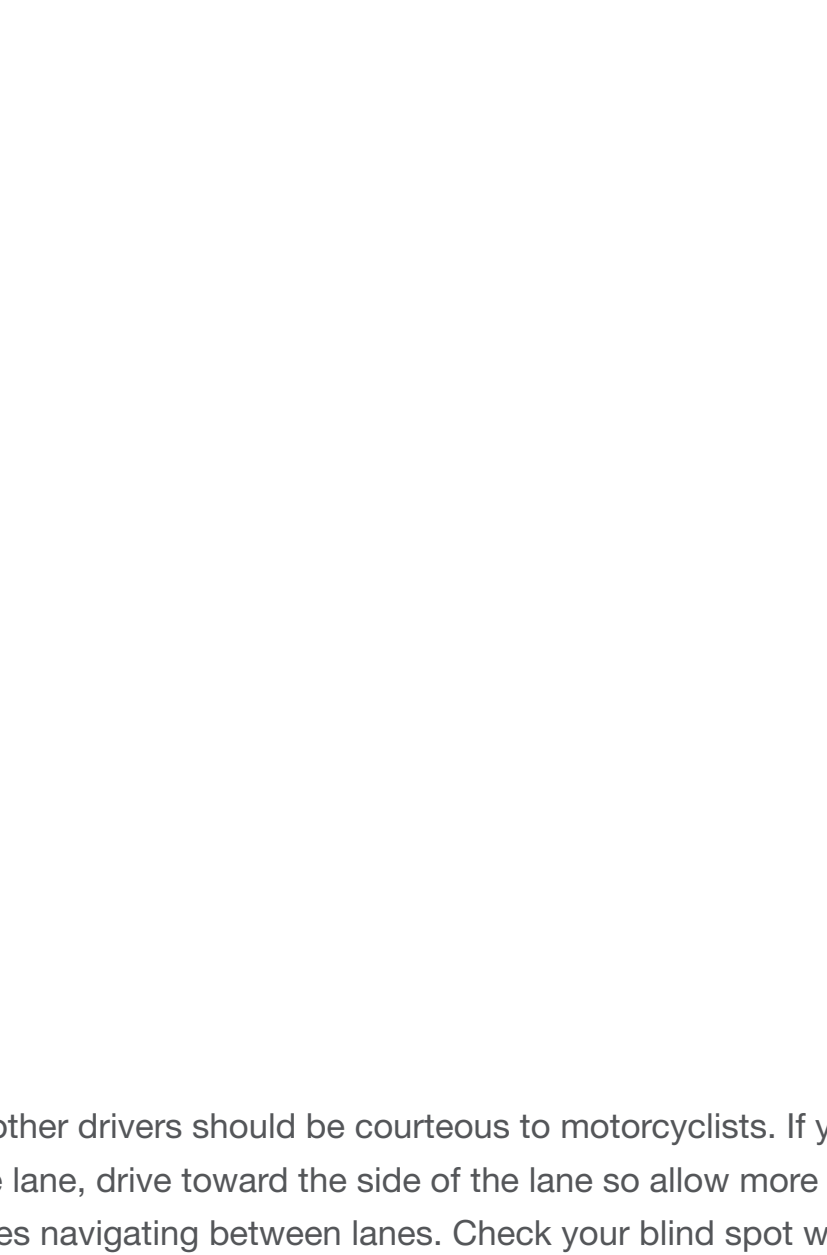
I don't want a pickle; I just want safe, efficient travel for all



John Beltz Snyder

I'm not a motorcycle guy. I enjoy having intact legs. That said, despite not riding one myself, there's one motorcycle topic about which I have an opinion: Riders should be allowed to split lanes.

Anecdotally, folks I talk to about it (it doesn't come up very often) have a sort of puzzled reaction to the idea. It just *seems* scary. I've been stuck in L.A. traffic before, and admit it seemed odd to see motorcycles splitting lanes at first. Once I knew it was legal, though, it made perfect sense to me for a few reasons.



It helps alleviate traffic. Each lane-splitting motorcycle is essentially one vehicle plucked from the traffic jam the rest of us would be sitting in. It's something akin to lessening traffic density; even though those motorcycles are still another vehicle on the road, but their contribution to congestion is minimized.

It saves fuel. Of course, the amount of fuel saved by minimizing idling is less than it would be for a car, simply because motorcycles consume less fuel to begin with. Still, lane-splitting motorcycles do save fuel for themselves, as well as for those of us who don't have to sit in traffic as long.

It's been shown lane-splitting can be done safely. In California, one of the few places where lane-splitting is currently legal (though other states are considering it), the University of California Berkeley's Safe Transportation Research & Education Center [published a study](#) about this exact topic. It found, among other conclusions, that lane-splitters were less likely to be injured in a collision than those who don't split lanes. "Lane-splitting riders were less likely to suffer head injury (9% vs 17%), torso injury (19% vs 29%), extremity injury (60% vs 66%), and fatal injury (1.2% vs 3.0%)," the researchers concluded. The likelihood of neck injuries, though, was the same for both those who split lanes and those who didn't.

If I were riding a motorcycle in congestion, I'd much rather have cars on either side of me than in front of and behind me. Not knowing if that car approaching from the rear will stop in time, if that bored driver behind is distracted by something. I'd love to hear from riders here, but I imagine the fear of being hit by a car changing lanes — a car you're more likely to see coming — is a lesser threat than getting smooched by the car directly behind you.

Of course, just as with any other driving, ensuring everyone's safety would be the responsibility of all motorists — polite [cooperation](#) between drivers and riders. Motorcycles should only split lanes in stopped or slow-moving traffic (specifically, below 50 miles per hour, per the [previously cited study](#)), and they should keep their speed differential within 15 miles per hour of the rest of traffic (more than that is where your chances of injury begin to climb, the research concluded).

Similarly, other drivers should be courteous to motorcyclists. If you're on an outside lane, drive toward the side of the lane so allow more room for motorcycles navigating between lanes. Check your blind spot when switching lanes, and by no means should you ever intentionally block the path of lane-splitting motorcycles. One would think that would go without saying, but judging from the number of people I see blocking open lanes miles ahead of a merge point, it's clear there are already far too many people that will break common-sense rules or laws to enforce their own obtuse, vindictive and self-defeating versions of traffic laws ([just do the zipper merge](#), folks!).

Again, I'm too much of a coward to ride, but my feelings toward motorcyclists are generally neutral. There's no reason, though, to subject them to sitting in traffic if they can move along safely. When it comes to traffic, I'm also concerned with efficiency, and tools like zipper-merging and lane-splitting are more efficient than their alternatives. Share the road, and make the best use of it as you safely can. My dear riders, when and where lane-splitting is legal, I'll do my best to look out for you and help you in helping *all* of us to get where we're going quicker and more economically. I will also support legislation that gives you permission to split lanes. It just makes sense.

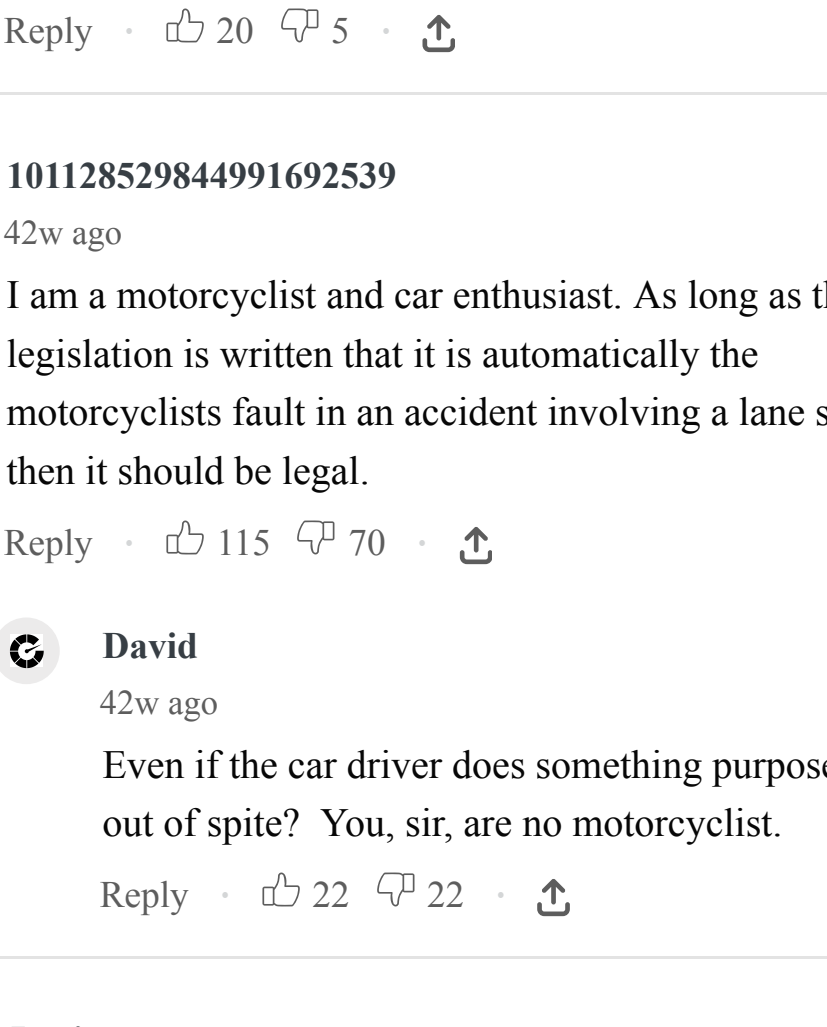
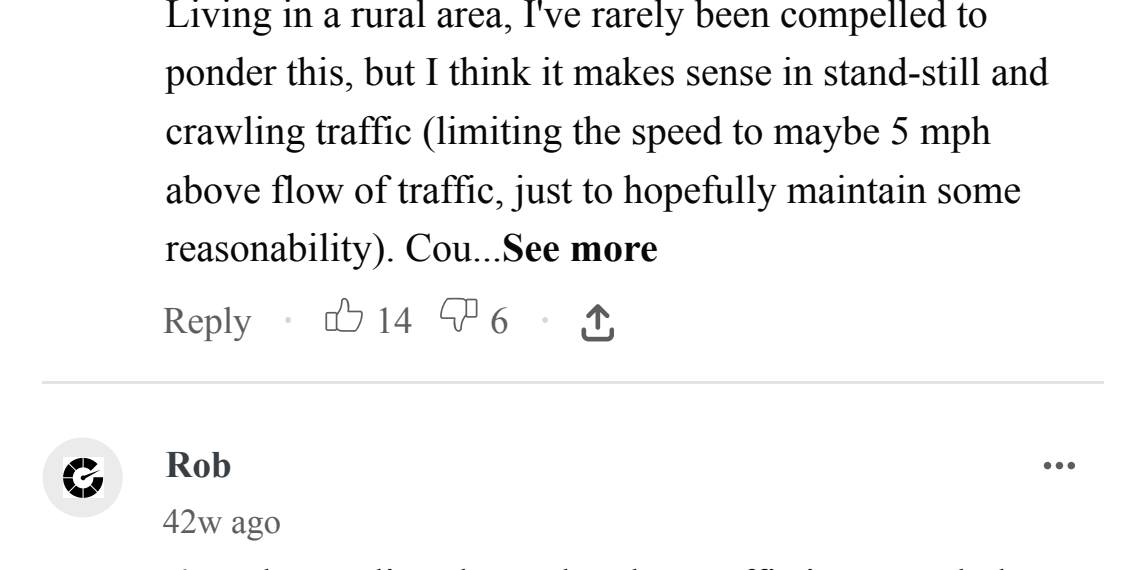
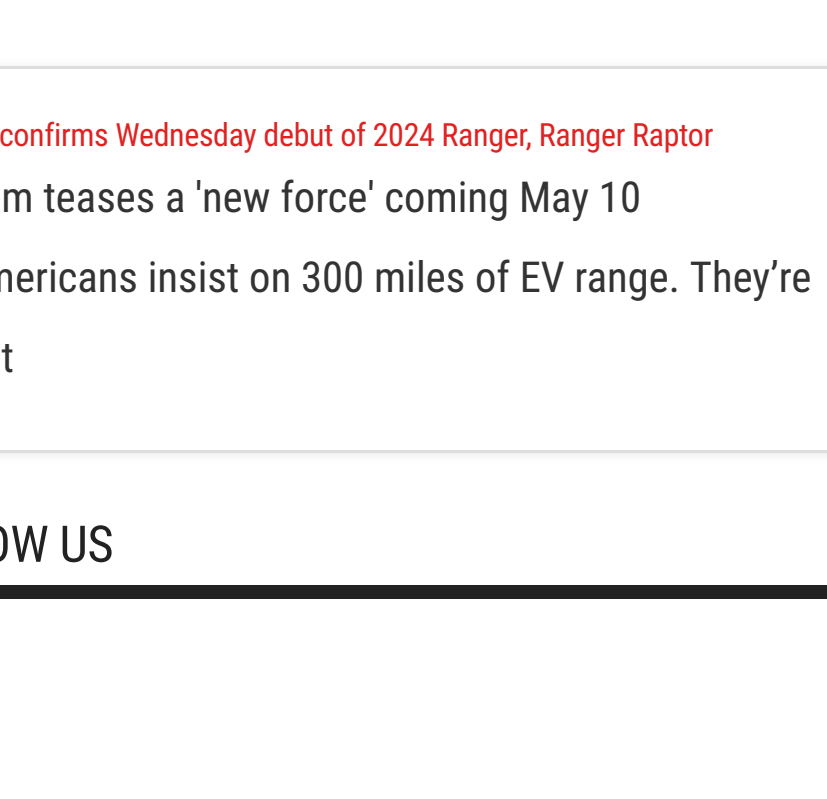
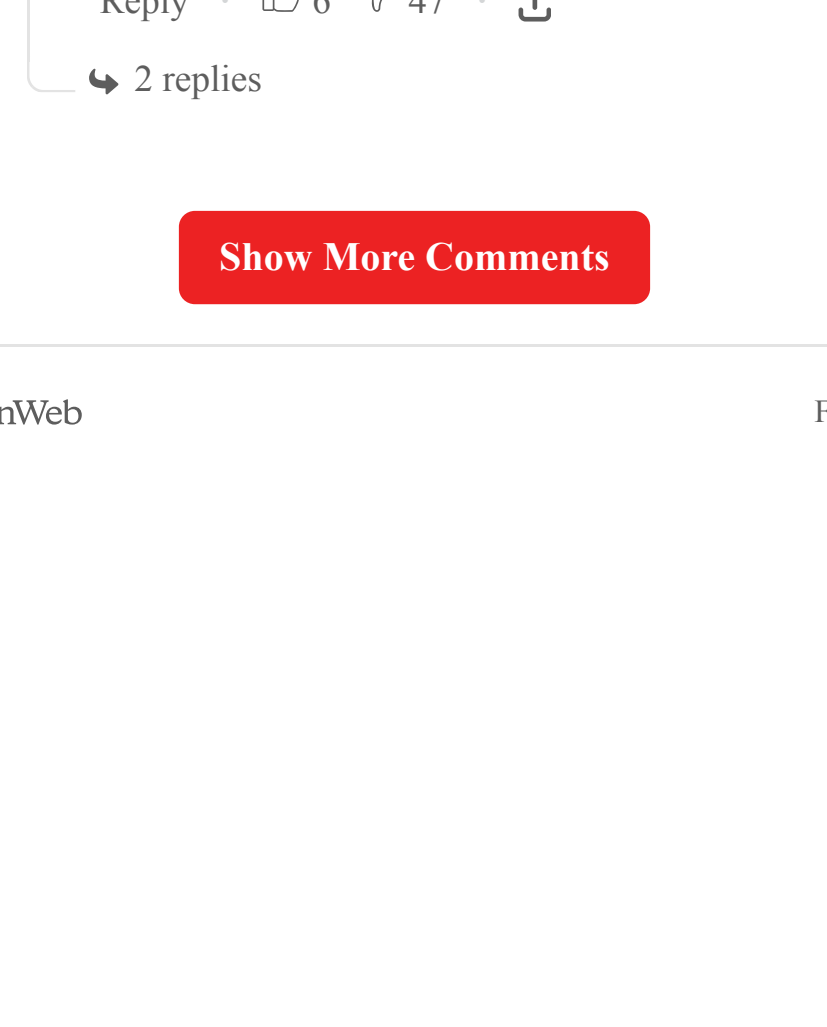


Image Credit: Getty

[Government/Legal Driving Safety Motorcycle traffic Opinion lane splitting](#)



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**Kuro** 42w ago  
As a motorcycle rider in California, there are definitely pros to lane splitting I can attest to but the reality is that many don't do it legally and it's likely because so many riders don't actually ride legally in the sense of having a p...[See more](#)  
Reply · 96 likes · 13 replies

**Matthew** 42w ago  
The vast majority of the arguments are covered in the article.  
Total speed is an issue. If while splitting lanes your TOTAL speed is in over 35-40, then it becomes more dangerous. And is less necessary.  
Speed differential is an issue. Going mo...[See more](#) (Edited)  
Reply · 15 likes · 1 reply

**Larry** 42w ago  
My problem is less with the lane splitting and more with the swerving in and out of traffic and merging at the last second. As a result cars slam on their brakes to keep from killing the motorcycle rider and end up slowing everyone behind ...[See more](#)  
Reply · 67 likes · 9 replies

**woo** 42w ago  
Splitting lane is legal, as long as you follow the rule and do it LEGALLY, do it when traffic is standing still, and do it at no more than 10mph compare to the traffic flow. I can't tell you how many time I have seen people splitting lane...[See more](#)  
Reply · 73 likes · 15 replies

I reply

**ToasterStrudel** 42w ago  
I had a bike in college. The 405 in LA was pretty much always a parking lot, so I split b/w the carpool and fast lanes. Never more than 5-10 mph faster than the flow of traffic, when it was slow or stopped. Even then I was almost struc...[See more](#) (Edited)  
Reply · 38 likes · 9 replies

**Reginal** 42w ago  
In traffic, my mirrors are aimed at the lane beside me, not down the center line. I can't tell you how many times I've almost killed someone illegally lane splitting in my state. There's not enough motorcycles in my area that it would even...[See more](#)  
Reply · 100 likes · 21 replies

I reply

**Dollar** 42w ago  
Living in a rural area, I've rarely been compelled to ponder this, but I think it makes sense in stand-still and crawling traffic (limiting the speed to maybe 5 mph above flow of traffic, just to hopefully maintain some reasonability). Cou...[See more](#)  
Reply · 14 likes · 6 replies

**Rob** 42w ago  
I'm a lane splitter but only when traffic is stopped, there is adequate room and at a very slow pace.  
Reply · 20 likes · 5 replies

**101128529844991692539** 42w ago  
I am a motorcyclist and car enthusiast. As long as the legislation is written that it is automatically the motorcyclists fault in an accident involving a lane split then it should be legal.  
Reply · 115 likes · 70 replies

**David** 42w ago  
Even if the car driver does something purposefully out of spite? You, sir, are no motorcyclist.  
Reply · 22 likes · 22 replies

**Justin** 42w ago  
Yeah, it should be. What shouldn't be allowed is the entitlement that comes along with it. Just because someone doesn't see you doesn't mean you can rev your engine obnoxiously so that a stopped vehicle somehow has to widen the lane for you...[See more](#) (Edited)  
Reply · 51 likes · 6 replies

**Boston** 42w ago  
I have revved my engine while splitting lanes on very congested freeways as a means to get drivers who were partially blocking me to move over. The horn on a motorcycle is far too weak to get a drivers attention. But straight pipes on a mo...[See more](#)  
Reply · 6 likes · 47 replies

2 replies

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