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Lane Filtering: A Proven Safety Measure for Oregon’s Motorcyclists

As Oregon’s roads become more congested, motorcyclists face increasing dangers, particularly in stop-and-go traffic. Lane filtering—the practice of allowing motorcycles to move between lanes in slow or stopped traffic—is a proven method to enhance rider safety while also improving overall traffic flow. Backed by data from California and international studies, legalizing lane filtering in Oregon would protect motorcyclists from preventable collisions while making roads safer and more efficient for all.

Lane Filtering Reduces Deadly Rear-End Collisions

One of the biggest threats to motorcyclists is being rear-ended in traffic. Unlike drivers in cars, motorcyclists have no protective barrier, making even minor rear-end collisions deadly. A 2015 University of California, Berkeley study found that motorcyclists engaged in lane filtering were significantly less likely to be struck from behind than those who remained stationary in traffic. The study, based on nearly 6,000 motorcycle-involved collisions, concluded that lane-splitting riders were:

50% less likely to suffer head injuries

70% less likely to experience fatal injuries

30% less likely to be hit from behind

Additionally, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that rear-end collisions account for nearly 30% of all motorcycle crashes, many of which could be avoided if lane filtering were allowed.

Lane Filtering Lowers Overall Crash Severity

Motorcyclists who filter through traffic also experience less severe injuries in crashes. The same UC Berkeley study found that lane-splitting riders traveled at safer speeds relative to surrounding traffic, reducing the likelihood of high-impact crashes. In contrast, motorcycles stuck in traffic are vulnerable to sudden acceleration by distracted or aggressive drivers.

A 2012 study from Transport & Mobility Leuven in Belgium further supports these findings, concluding that allowing motorcycles to filter through traffic reduces their likelihood of being involved in multi-vehicle crashes, particularly in urban areas.

Oregon's Traffic Conditions Make Lane Filtering Necessary

With worsening congestion in Oregon—particularly in Portland, Eugene, and on major highways—motorcyclists face growing dangers. Slow or stopped traffic is a high-risk environment for riders, as distracted drivers fail to notice motorcycles and frequently misjudge stopping distances. Lane filtering would provide riders with a proven safety escape, allowing them to move out of high-risk zones and reducing exposure to dangerous road conditions.

Conclusion: A Smart, Data-Driven Safety Solution

Lane filtering is not just about convenience—it's about saving lives. The data from California, Europe, and safety organizations clearly show that allowing motorcycles to move through traffic reduces rear-end collisions, lowers injury severity, and protects riders from high-risk crash scenarios. With no added cost to taxpayers and proven benefits for motorcyclists and drivers alike, Oregon should embrace lane filtering as a common-sense safety measure.

Sources:

University of California, Berkeley, "Motorcycle Lane-Splitting and Safety in California" (2015)

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Motorcycle Safety Reports

Transport & Mobility Leuven, "Commuting by Motorcycle: Impact Analysis" (2012)

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Lane Splitting Safety Studies