



City of Portland

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Deputy City Administrator Public Works Service Area Priya Dhanapal

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April 7, 2025

Senator Chris Gorsek and Representative Susan McLain, Co-Chairs
Joint Committee on Transportation
900 Court Street, NE
Salem OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Gorsek and McLain and Members of the Committee:

As in previous legislative sessions, the City of Portland Bureau of Transportation is concerned about the safety of motorcycle lane-splitting and opposes HB 3542. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the bill.

Portland is a Vision Zero city committed to eliminating traffic deaths and serious injuries on our streets. We continue to see motorcyclists disproportionately killed in traffic crashes. Over the past five years (2020-2024), 49 motorcyclists have died in Portland, accounting for 16% of Portland's traffic deaths. Across the U.S., the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA) found that "per vehicle miles traveled in 2022, the fatality rate for motorcyclists (26.16) was almost 22 times the passenger car occupant fatality rate (1.20)" (2022 is the most recent year for which national crash data is available). With motorcyclists already disproportionately involved in the most serious crashes, lane-splitting would increase potential conflicts between motorcyclists and drivers.

While the lane-splitting parameters in HB 3542 are narrow, we are concerned that the practice of lane-splitting would spill onto city streets. A UC Berkeley study, Motorcycle Lane-splitting and Safety in California (2015) found that 17% of motorcycle crashes in California involved lane splitting during the 14-month study period. It also found that of the lane-splitting crashes, motorcyclists rear-ended other vehicles in 38.4% of the crashes, compared to non-lane-splitting crashes where motorcyclists rear-ended other vehicles in 15.7% of the crashes. In addition, in 2021, France found a 12% increase in motorcycle crashes during a five-year lane-splitting trial. Conditions allowed for lane-splitting in California and France are different than conditions outlined in HB 3542, but the studies still raise concerns about the potential for increased crashes in Oregon.

Lane-splitting supporters sometimes claim that the practice will reduce congestion. In fact, motorcycles make up a very small percentage of vehicles in the Portland metro area and we are not aware of peer-reviewed published research indicating that lane-splitting reduces congestion. A lane-splitting trial in New South Wales, Australia found no congestion relief when lane-splitting was allowed, despite 4% of trips being made by motorcycle. By comparison, the percentage of motorcycles on Portland area freeways is less than one-half of



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one percent. Further, the potential for increased crashes due to lane-splitting could actually increase congestion. In a highway crash, it can take hours for traffic flow to recover due to collision response, investigation, and clearing the crash site. Before advancing this new policy, we recommend ODOT study the congestion impacts of legalized lane-splitting.

Based on research, crash data and on-the-ground knowledge, the Portland Bureau of Transportation remains concerned about the safety impacts that would come with legalizing lane-splitting in Oregon.

Sincerely,

Priya Dhanapal
Deputy City Administrator - Public Works

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