

# Reducing cyclist injuries and fatalities.

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## A PROPOSAL

### **Bicycle Safety needs to be a National Priority:**

23 U.S. Code §405 – The National Priority Safety Programs establishes performance measures and provides funding and grants to states that achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries. Our National Priority Safety Programs include Occupant Protection, State Traffic Safety Information System Improvements, Impaired Driving Countermeasures, Distracted Driving, Motorcyclist Safety and State Graduated Driver Licensing Laws. **Bicycle Safety deserves the same legislative priority.**

### **Legislation to create change:**

New legislation needs to be enacted to provide goals, funding and incentives for states to reduce cyclist crashes, particularly car/bike crashes and their associated fatalities. That legislation must address three fundamental issues.

- Collection of accurate car/bike crash data
- Education
- Conspicuity

### **What causes car/bike crashes?**

Until the causes of car/bike crashes are clearly understood, the ability to reduce fatalities will be limited. Collection of accurate car/bike crash data is difficult with the current system that was primarily designed to collect motor vehicle crash data. Therefore, a method of collecting and analyzing car/bike crash data is required.

### **What can cyclists do to reduce car/bike crashes?**

Currently available data suggests the cyclist making a mistake in traffic causes about half of the crashes involving adult cyclists. Curricula are available to train all levels of cyclists to avoid these types of crashes. Providing training for children raises awareness and insures that future motorists have been exposed to bicyclist issues.

The methods of reducing car/bike crashes are relatively simple and include:

- Be predictable
- Obey all traffic signs and signals
- Ride with traffic
- Signal turns and lane changes
- Stop before entering crossing traffic

### **What can motorists do to reduce car/bike crashes?**

Motorists' mistakes also cause about half of the traffic crashes and most frequently for one of four reasons:

- Turning left into the path of a cyclist
- Turning right after passing a cyclist
- Failure to yield when entering crossing traffic at an intersection
- Failure to yield when entering traffic at a mid-block location

Motorists also cause crashes by opening doors into the path of a cyclist and striking cyclists from behind. Striking from behind may be becoming a more prevalent form of crash due to higher speeds, distracted drivers and impaired drivers. These crashes typically result in more serious injuries and more frequent fatalities.

### What can cyclists do to be more visible?

Conspicuity is as crucial to motorists as it is to cyclists in reducing cyclist fatalities. Motorists must detect and recognize cyclists at the greatest distances possible to reduce mistakes made by cyclists and to avoid a car/bike crash. And, cyclists must take action to set them apart visually from motorized traffic to reduce the mistakes made by motorists. Bicycle lighting laws are over 35 years old. They are not uniform across the country. The laws don't relate to current traffic conditions or to current technology in lighting and reflective materials.

Thirty-two States and the District of Columbia allow for restricted use of a blue light on the back of a bicycle. Allowing all cyclists their own unique visually identity, the unrestricted use of a blue light on the sides and back of a bicycle, insures that they are instantly recognized as a cyclist at the greatest distance possible.

To be conspicuous:

- During daylight hours, a cyclist should wear bright clothing and potentially use bright lights.
- During periods of low visibility or darkness, a cyclist should wear bright clothing, reflective materials and use bright lights including blue lights to enhance visibility and identification.
- Cyclists need to learn to control the lane until it is safer to give up control.

### What legislation can do to reduce injuries and fatalities?

Implement a national awareness campaign for motorists and cyclists.

Provide funding to review current available data and define additional data required, with sources, to create a database that will provide statistically valid measures of causes of car/bike crashes.

Provide States with funding and incentives to:

- Provide bicycle skills training to all children and interested adults.
- Incorporate critical bicyclists' safety issues in driver education, defensive driving courses and particularly on licensing examinations.

Improve the conspicuousness of cyclists:

- Develop a modern bicycle lighting law with a consistent set of regulations.
- Provide incentives for states that enact and enforce those regulations.