

Maine Legislature Joint Standing Committee on Transportation

Testimony of Maria Fuentes, Maine Better Transportation Association

In Opposition to

LD 1230 – An Act to Enhance Traffic Safety with Regard to the Operation of Bicycles on Public Ways

April 8, 2021

Senator Diamond, Representative Martin, and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Transportation. My name is Maria Fuentes, and I am speaking today on behalf of the Maine Better Transportation Association in opposition to *LD 1230 – An Act to Enhance Traffic Safety with Regard to the Operation of Bicycles on Public Ways*.

MBTA is a statewide organization whose members who believe that increased funding for transportation infrastructure will result in a better quality of life, safety, and economic vitality. Our members include engineering and construction firms, public works directors, bus, rail and aviation companies, and others committed to promoting a multimodal transportation network including highways and bridges, marine, aviation, rail, bike, and pedestrian modes.

Relative to LD 1230, we have members who design, build, maintain and use roadways, including those who choose to commute, recreate, or just want to get around by bicycle or on foot. The pandemic taught us many things, and forced people to manage their lives differently, whether at work or in their personal lives. We know people spent a great deal more time outdoors, and one indicator of that was that bike shops in Maine and all over the country were unable to meet the huge spike in demand for bicycles.

After speaking with the sponsor, we do understand that the bill was introduced as a safety measure - and given the significant spike in accidents causing injuries or death to bicyclists and pedestrians over the past few years - we appreciate the intent behind it. However, we are concerned that forcing bicyclists operating on a roadway to ride in single file while being overtaken by motor vehicles will not meet the goals of the sponsor for a few reasons.

- If passed, this law could make roads less safe since those who ride in groups would have to form longer lines, which could force overtaking cars to take more time in the oncoming lane while passing.
- It may also make roads and travel less safe by encouraging motor vehicles to pass bicycles in unsafe places and believing that bicyclists are the ones who always must get out of the way.
- And Maine statute permits a bicyclist to choose a lane position based on their judgement of safety, and already includes a requirement to ride as far to the right as possible.

There are only three states in the nation that have passed similar laws, while 39 states allow bicycles to ride two abreast. This is not only for convenience, but more importantly for safety.

To sum, under the law of unintended consequences, our concern is that LD 1230 would create unsafe conditions for motorists and bicyclists.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony in opposition, and for the good work that you do.