

In Opposition to LD1230  
An Act to Enhance Traffic Safety with Regard to the Operation of Bicycles on  
Public Ways

Testimony of Victor Langelo  
2 Brookside Dr, Topsham, ME  
vlangelo@eclipseservices.com  
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Dear Senator Diamond, Representative Martin and Members of the  
Transportation Committee,

My name is Victor Langelo. I reside in Topsham and ride a bicycle for both commuting and for recreation. I've been riding a bicycle on roadways for over 50 years. I typically ride between 1500 to 2000 miles a year on roadways. I ride with and without a cargo trailer. I've ridden in major cities and in rural roads. I've ridden alone and in groups.

In my experience riding to the right in single file is not always the safest option. In slow traffic I can keep up with the motor vehicle traffic and drivers often forget you are to their right. I have been in three significant accidents when a driver passed me then turned right in front of me. All three times it was an unexpected turn as into a driveway or parking space. The best solution I've found is riding in the middle of the lane when traffic is slow, forcing drivers to move into the left lane or the opposing lane to pass. In a group this is best accomplished with riders riding two abreast.

On rural roads I've been forced off the road more than a few times when a driver has attempted to pass with too little room. Far too often this occurs when the driver incorrectly judges the bicyclist's speed and can not pass in time to avoid hitting an oncoming vehicle. In a few cases the opposing vehicle has also been forced off the road. Again an effective technique is for the bicyclists to take the lane until such time as it's safe to pass. Doubling up reduces the distance the motor vehicle will have to travel in order to pass.

Maine law already includes a requirement that a bicyclist ride as far to the right as is practicable. As I've pointed out, there are times when it is neither

practical nor a safe choice. I understand that not all bicyclists observe the best practices. I also note that motorists don't always behave in a safe manner. All road users need to be courteous to other users. This change to the law does not make it safer for bicyclists and in-fact may give motorists the expectation that they should always be able to pass bicyclists.

I and other board members of our local bike club stress before every ride the we should be polite to the motorists since that could be one of us. That means riding single file in traffic where possible and leaving gaps in long lines so vehicles can pass just a few cyclists at a time. We also design routes to avoid poor roads and dangerous turns. But that isn't always possible for commuters. In my opinion, the best short term solution to improve the safety of our roads for is education about the rules for and experience of the other users. Long term we need roads designed for all users, not just motor vehicles.

I urge the committee to reject the changes proposed in this legislation.

Sincerely,

Victor Langelo  
Topsham