



April 6, 2021

**Testimony in OPPOSITION to LD 1230
“An Act To Enhance Traffic Safety with Regard to
the Operation of Bicycles on Public Ways”**

Greetings Chairs Diamond and Martin, and to the other members of the Transportation Committee. My name is James Tassé, and I am here on behalf of the Bicycle Coalition of Maine to oppose and urge an “ought not to pass” vote on LD 1230, “An Act To Enhance Traffic Safety with Regard to the Operation of Bicycles on Public Ways.”

As the leading statewide education and advocacy organization for people on bikes or walking, the Bicycle Coalition of Maine is well informed with respect to interactions between operators of motor vehicles and vulnerable users.

We are experts on best practices for keeping safe on bicycles, and indeed, we are the entity that provides safety education to thousands of people across the state in schools, at community events, and at conferences. The BCM encourages people riding bicycles or walking to always be aware of other users on the roads, and to use the roads safely, legally, and courteously. We have contributed to the enactment of legislation that protects the safety, access, and rights of persons walking and bicycling.

We draw on this experience and expertise to tell you that LD 1230, which would require that bicycles ride single file whenever they are being overtaken by motor vehicles, should not move forward.

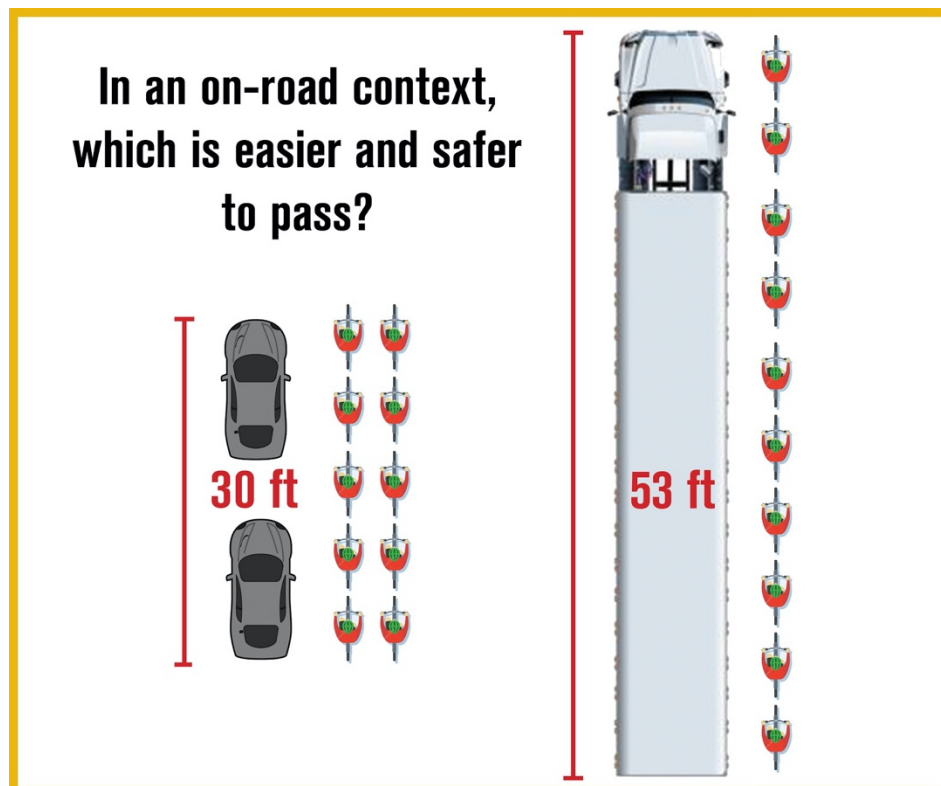
- LD 1230 is an unnecessary bill that is redundant with Maine law in Title 29-A Chapter 19 §2063, (2), which law enforcement already uses to address group bicycle riding.
- LD 1230 will make roadways less safe by making groups of riders much longer, forcing overtaking cars to take more time in the oncoming lane while passing.
- LD 1230 will make roadways less safe by encouraging cars to pass bicycles in unsafe places.
- LD 1230 will result in increased harassment of bicycle riders and raise the temperature of roadway attitudes.

Although single-file riding has its place and is the best practice in many situations, it can also be very dangerous in a number of situations. Requiring mandatory single-file riding at

all times during a motor vehicle pass gives significant deference to motor vehicle operators over bicycle riders and their safety.

Maine law already requires that bicycles operate “on the right portion of the way as far as as practicable,” and police agencies use this requirement under [§2063\(2\)](#) to address this issue. The new language proposed by LD 1230 will conflict with this, and potentially other Maine laws, and could result in greater ambiguity regarding a bicycle rider’s legal lane position.

This bill would create unsafe passing conditions that are worse than the situation it is trying to correct. Passing this bill would mean that, say, a group ride with four people riding two and two abreast, which would be about 18 feet long (assuming 6 ft for bike length and 6 feet between bikes front to back), would need to become a line that would be more than 40 feet long. With groups of 10 or more riders, this requirement would create long strings of riders that would be more, not less, difficult to pass.



Note: this image does not depict the additional distance between riders, which makes the strings longer

A short group is easier than a long string to pass, especially on winding roads where the sight lines are not good. In these locations, a driver passing a string of riders may need to suddenly move back to the right mid-pass, at grave risk to the bicyclists. In places where riders have to ride in the center of the lane because of sub-standard lane width, multiple riders might wind up being single file in the middle of the lane, which would be even harder to pass.

The BCM believes this bill will encourage "close passes" by suggesting that a car always has priority to pass a bicycle, and that bicycles need to get out of their way. This bill, if passed, will result in harassment and diminish roadway safety while raising the temperature of roadway attitudes.

The BCM's position is that people on bicycles, whether singly or in groups, should be treated like tractors on the roads, and only passed with a lane change when it can be done safely, with good sightlines and no oncoming traffic.

In addition to the real safety problems this bill, if passed, will cause on the road, from a pure policy perspective, it is not helpful to the legal system to add laws that create uncertainty and ambiguity.

This bill is redundant with existing law, and therefore unnecessary. It will create less safe conditions for vehicles passing bicycles. It will make roadways less safe.

For these reasons, I urge you to vote Ought Not To Pass on LD 1230.

Thank you, and I'd be happy to take questions.

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "James C. Tassé".

James C. Tassé
Assistant Director
Bicycle Coalition of Maine

James Tasse
Bicycle Coalition of Maine

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