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Testimony in support of S.B. 694
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Chair McKeown and members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to speak in support of S.B. 694, a bill to legalize safe, responsible lane splitting in Oregon.

The American Motorcyclist Association became aware of this bill due a high volume of grassroots support and contact from both members and non-members who live and ride in Oregon.

While on its face, lane splitting may seem to be unwise — especially to the non-motorcycling public — when done responsibly it can improve conditions for all motorists and increase the average speed of traffic. The viability of lane splitting is being demonstrated every day in California, where lane splitting has been permitted for decades.

Even the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has indicated that lane splitting “appears to be worthy of further study because it offers a means of reducing congestion in addition to possible safety benefits. It is widely used in many other countries.”

We believe the studies that have been completed certainly back up the NHTSA’s assertions and bode well for the broader acceptance of lane splitting. My fellow panelists will describe in detail the empirical and anecdotal evidence that has been collected to back this assertion.

My goal here today is to provide the national and international context of lane splitting.

Currently, lane splitting is allowed — even expected — in many countries around the world. In the U.S., though it is currently officially limited to California, the practice is gaining widespread interest with riders in many other states.

The AMA’s government relations department has observed a noticeable increase in member inquiries regarding the topic. In fact, we have members in Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, North Carolina and Florida interested in organizing grassroots support for bills to legalize lane splitting in their states. We expect this trend to accelerate.

Ending the prohibition on lane splitting also is gaining steam in legislatures across the country. At last check, five state legislatures are considering bills to formally legalize lane splitting – California, Tennessee, Texas, Washington, and of course, Oregon.



While already permitted in California, A.B. 51, introduced by Assemblyman Quirk, would codify lane splitting as expressly legal under the California vehicle code. Tennessee H.B. 1102

and S.B. 1281 would allow lane splitting if traffic is moving slower than 45 mph. Other than the posted speed limit for the roadway, the legislation does not define motorcycle speed while lane splitting.

H.B. 813 in Texas would allow lane splitting but would only allow motorcycles to travel 10 mph faster than surrounding traffic. In the Senate, SB 442 would permit only a 5 mph difference between automobiles and motorcycles and would limit lane splitting to only limited-access highways.

Finally, in neighboring Washington, H.B. 1515 would permit lane splitting, as long as the motorcyclist does not travel more than 10 mph faster than surrounding traffic. Motorcyclists could not lane split when travelling faster than 35 mph. There is specific language in this bill that would prohibit cars from interfering with motorcyclists while lane splitting.

The American Motorcyclist Association supports bills that would legalize responsible lane splitting. To this end, the AMA is actively supporting or is otherwise involved with all 11 of the lane splitting bills that have been introduced in 2015. Note, this is a significant increase from previous years, and we believe that it is still possible that additional states will introduce similar legislation.

Specifically, we believe Oregon's S.B. 694 is a reasonable compromise that would have the potential to reduce crashes and injuries.

For example, the maximum allowable speed while lane splitting of 20 mph is at the lower end of the range set by other bills. As mentioned, other legislation introduced this session would set the speed limit of the road as the maximum allowable speed for motorcyclists to travel while lane splitting.

Similarly, S.B. 694 would limit lane splitting to instances in which traffic is moving 10 mph or slower. Several other bills set the cutoff for legal lane splitting at 20 mph. Guidelines published in 2014 by the California Highway Patrol recommended that riders not split lanes when traffic is moving faster than 30 mph.

Additionally, the speed delta – the maximum difference allowed between the motorcycle and surrounding traffic – is 10 mph. This mirrors the advice of the California Highway Patrol.

In closing, I urge you to support S.B. 694. The evidence and the motorcycling community support the practice of lane splitting. And we believe this bill would create a safe framework for responsible, legal lane splitting.



Thank you for your consideration of my comments. I look forward to any questions that you may have.