

Policy for Street Safety

Laws and rules of the road help protect people using our streets.



Content

Street Safety Standardization: Learn about safety policies that you can support.....	Page 2
Get Legislators to Hear your Voice: Lawmakers work for you!.....	Page 4

Street Safety Standardization

Learn about safety policies that can make a difference

In addition to street design, personal responsibility, and courtesy for all travelers, laws and policies have a major impact on how streets are used and how safe they are. At the local, state, and federal level, policy-makers are constantly developing street regulations, enforcement policy, and transportation funding proposals that have major impacts on safety and active travel for your neighborhood.

The Bicycle Transportation Alliance (BTA) Legislative Agenda

The BTA devotes a lot of time and effort to supporting legislation that will make streets safer. You can get involved with the BTA to support these efforts and lobby your own representative to pass meaningful, equitable policy. Contact them at gerik@BTA4bikes.com or (503) 226-0676x11. In 2011 some of their target proposals included:

Vehicular homicide

Oregon is one of only four states with no vehicular homicide law punishing deaths caused by careless driving behavior.

Proposals have been made to create felony charges for drivers who have killed another person while driving without a valid license or while committing a different traffic violation, such as driving under the influence of alcohol.

Local control of speed limits

Speed plays a major role in safety; the chance of death from a car crash is much lower at speeds below 20 MPH.

Currently, Oregon law sets speed limits throughout the state based on the type of road. Local agencies, like the City of Portland, can apply for variances. Sample legislation includes House Bill 3150, which would allow lower speed limits on Neighborhood

Greenways. As of the May 2011, the bill was being studied.

Improved driver education

Licensing procedures should include periodic retesting (particularly for new drivers), expanded questioning and training on vulnerable road user laws (like how to drive with bicycles and pedestrian nearby), or even increased fees for traffic violations. Valuable resources include the Oregon Bicyclist Manual and Oregon Department of Motor Vehicles Manual.

Improving crash reporting standards

Existing crash reporting doesn't record much information related to the injuries of people walking and bicycling.

New rules could improve data collection and reduce under-reporting of pedestrian and bicycle crashes. See the existing Oregon Traffic Accident and Insurance Report form for reference.



Enforcement of the Vulnerable User Law

This law was enacted in 2008 to provide protections to non-automobile street users. Penalties for drivers are more substantial and the law standardizes the right of all users to the shared roadway. Enforcement has been lax though, and increased vigilance and accountability need to be pursued.

More Policy Actions to Support

Stronger enforcement of crosswalk laws

In the past few years the State of Oregon has passed several notable laws granting right-of-way to people walking at all crosswalks, marked or unmarked. Every corner in Oregon is a crosswalk at which the traveling cars and bicycles must yield to people crossing on foot and on bike. Much more education and enforcement of these laws is needed.

No Turn on Red Regulations

Fortunately, few of these turning crashes result in deaths because the speeds are low, but turns still pose a major threat to people driving, walking, and bicycling. At high-traffic locations, turning restrictions can prevent many injuries and make bicycle lane and pedestrian use much easier.

Bicycle infrastructure

Well designed bikeways can provide low-stress, direct, and easy-to-navigate route suitable for every rider. Making all users aware of the need to share the road can increase safety for people biking, walking, and driving.

Pedestrian infrastructure

People walking are disproportionately likely to be killed on arterial streets (50% of deaths) and places where no crosswalks exist (40% of deaths). Providing basic facilities such as sidewalks for people walking is an obvious step that needs more attention.

Transit infrastructure

Access to regular, convenient transit will make people less dependent on automobiles. Transit stations need to be easy to reach for people walking and bicycling from nearby destinations.



Oregon law provides many protections for people crossing streets at all marked and unmarked crosswalks; awareness of these laws and compliance by people driving is often low however and increased education and enforcement could be beneficial

Supporting Active Transportation

Safer streets are more inviting to people walking, bicycling, and taking transit. Plus these people help create safer streets.

- Support walkable, bikeable, transit-served development where everyone can meet daily needs without a car; models for such development include Smart Growth, New Urbanism, Location Efficient Development, and Transit-Oriented Development.
- Learn more about issues of health, environment, equity, and economic vitality for street users of all ages.
- Talk to your employer about incentive programs to get away from car use; like parking cash-outs and tax incentives for bicycle use.
- Support automobile congestion pricing, tolls, and increased parking fees; car use places a disproportionate burden on streets and causes the majority of traffic safety hazards. Cars should not be subsidized through low gas taxes, free parking, and flimsy cost incentives.
- If you are biking follow the same rules of the road that cars do – it is the law!

Get Legislators to Hear Your Voice

Lawmakers work for you. Make them *work* for you.

Find Your Legislators

It is easy to find all of your legislators and their contact information in one place. Go to www.leg.state.or.us and click on the “Find Your Legislator” menu, then enter your home address to find your state and federal representatives’ contact information.

You can also contact committees and committee chairs at the state and federal level.

- Oregon Senate Committee on Business, Transportation and Economic Development
- Oregon House Committee on Transportation and Economic Development
- United State House of Representatives Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
- United State Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, & Transportation, and the Subcommittee on Surface Transportation

Spread the Word

1. Identify current legislation that you want your representative to support or reject. Or suggest practical policy improvements that could be introduced as laws.
2. Writing formal letters is still one of the best ways to establish contact. Be direct but respectful when writing. Refer to specific legislation and describe how you think it would benefit or harm all the people using your local streets.
3. Lawmakers maintain local offices that you can visit. They also regularly appear at fundraisers, campaign rallies, groundbreakings, and other events, especially around election time.
4. Social media sites like Facebook and Twitter can be good, if informal, ways of staying up to date on your representatives’ work.

Keep Tabs on Your Lawmakers

You can track the voting record of your representatives through a number of websites. If you contact them, be sure to thank them for supporting safety legislation or express your disappointment if they did not support safety improvement policy.

- For Oregon legislators visit gov.oregonlive.com
- At the federal level, many organizations track voting records for the public. A good, non-partisan source of records is OpenCongress.org

Follow Street Safety and Transportation Legislation

Bills and measures relating to street safety and transportation are always moving through various phases at the city, state, and federal level. Below are resources that can be useful for keeping up with policy developments locally and nationally.

- For detailed reports on past and current Oregon safety legislation, visit the State Traffic Safety Legislation Database.
- Resources on road safety laws available at www.stc-law.com
- Also follow state issue coverage through organizations such as Bicycle Transportation Alliance, Willamette Pedestrian Coalition, Organizing People-Activating Leaders (OPAL) Environmental Justice, 1000 Friends of Oregon, Coalition for a Livable Future, Active Right-Of-Way (AROW), and others.
- Many national organizations are highly involved in promoting safer streets and active transportation. Check out these groups’ great resources and discussions: Transportation for America, StreetsBlog, Transport Politic, Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals, PeopleForBikes.org, Transportation Alternatives, Planetizen, National Association of City Transportation Officials, League of American Bicyclists, Active Living Research, and others.