



TO: Representatives Hall, Luebke, Michaux, and Wilkins  
Senators Atwater and McKissick

FROM: Alan Dippy, Chair, Durham Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission

DATE: 24 May 2010

RE: House Bill 1686, Bicycle Safety Changes

The Durham Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) is a citizen's advisory commission that was created by the city and county of Durham. In addition to advising local governing bodies on bicycle and pedestrian issues, BPAC is also charged with studying changes in laws and regulations concerning bicycle and pedestrian issues.

BPAC is writing to urge you to oppose House Bill 1686, "Bicycle Safety Changes." This draft legislation limits cyclists' rights as vehicle operators to use the full lane of the road and does not meet the aims expressed in its short title, "Bicycle Safety Changes."

As the North Carolina Active Transportation Alliance (NCATA) notes, "[i]f passed by the General Assembly, this legislation sets a precedent for limiting allowed use of the full travel lane by cyclists. Bicycles are currently recognized as vehicles with the same rights and responsibilities on the roadway as other vehicles. This legal standing is an important recognition of cyclists' access to the full lane as a protective measure -- research indicates that cyclists are safest when they are most visible to other roadway users and behave predictably by 'driving' like a vehicle."

Further, in discussing the safety of scenarios in which motorists are overtaking cyclists, the NCATA added, "...it is often much safer and easier for cars to pass a group of two- or even three-abreast cyclists than it is to pass a single-file line, because riding abreast shortens the length of the group. For example, once a group reaches 12 riders, there are rarely opportunities on our winding NC roads for cars to see far enough ahead that they can safely predict when to pass such a long line. A '2 x 6' formation is therefore safer and more courteous than '1 x 12.'"

While it is noble to consider improvements to traffic code that enhance the safety of bicyclists, this proposed legislation fails to meet that goal, while placing an unnecessary restriction on normal vehicular operation by North Carolina's cyclists. We encourage you to reach out to the cycling community to further the discussion about legislation that can improve bicycle safety, Durham's BPAC would be eager to participate in such conversations.

cc: Durham City Council  
Durham Board of County Commissioners  
Mark Ahrendsen, Transportation Director, City of Durham  
Dale McKeel, Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator, City of Durham