

From: office@greens.org.au on behalf of Robert Cook via Australian Greens
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Sent: Saturday, 12 March 2016 4:04 PM
To: LCLC
Subject: Submission to Inquiry into the Road Safety Road Rules 2009 (Overtaking Bicycles) Bill 2015

This e-mail has been sent on behalf of Robert Cook, at [REDACTED]. They can be contacted by phone at [REDACTED] or by e-mail at [REDACTED]. The content of their submission is below.

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I support safe passing distance laws for cars and trucks overtaking bicycles, so we can all share the road safely.

When bike riding is safer, more people will leave their cars at home. This will mean better health, less congestion on our roads and less pollution.

I agree with the Committee's decision to look at the examples of Queensland, ACT and Tasmania where safe passing laws have been introduced, or are being trialled, and how to run a public education campaign about the rule change.

When the new mobile phone rules came in, most drivers learned the rule quickly because it was in the news. An education campaign is more effective when it tells drivers about a new road rule.

Overview

Congestion on Melbourne's road network has steadily increased with the population to the current level where travel by motor vehicle is often significantly delayed. The clear solution is for people to have the option of using smaller 'footprint per person' transport than that offered by motor vehicles. This is either public transport or riding bicycles.

To encourage more people to ride bicycles, this option must be perceived as safe which can be addressed by eliminating actions that are perceived as dangerous.

An action that is a significant contributor to the perception of bicycle riding being dangerous is motor vehicles passing too close to the bicycle rider.

Introduction

The following information is derived from the experiences of a daily bicycle ride commute distance of 43 kilometres, of which a third is on an off-road path. It is also important to note that with the exception of Dalton Road in Thomastown/Epping, that approximately 95% of vehicle drivers on the rest of my commute already overtake with a safe margin.

The submission

It is not a complete solution to address this issue only by passing additional road laws. There are actually three factors that contribute to motor vehicle drivers adopting the behaviour of not leaving enough space when overtaking a bicycle. These are:

- Poor Road Infrastructure.

- Driver Distraction and;
- Driver Indifference.

Passing additional road laws will mitigate two of these factors and not address the root cause of the third factor which is poor road Infrastructure.

Poor Road Infrastructure

There are three aspects of road infrastructure that need to be addressed to encourage safe overtaking distances. These are;

- Entry to Roundabouts.
- Insufficient lane markings. – eg. Buckley Street
- Narrow roads – eg. Albion Street.

Entry to Roundabouts.

The entries to residential roundabouts are usually marked so that the motor vehicle is given priority. This is a point of conflict because the lane marking suggests that the bicycle rider has to give way to a vehicle to their rear, which is very impractical under normal riding conditions.

Drivers see the entry point and roundabout as their road space and disregard the bicycle resulting in a passing manoeuvre that is too close to the bicycle rider.

What should be done is the bicycle lane is given priority access to the roundabout and vehicle drivers have to slow down and merge with the bicycle lane.

(an image was supplied to illustrate the solution but is not supported in this text-only format.)

Insufficient lane markings.

The section of Buckley Street, Essendon, east-bound between Lincoln Road and the Railway line is a wide section of road though not wide enough to mark two lanes. As a result many drivers make two informal lanes that have insufficient safety margins.

Part of the incentive to make two informal lanes is the right hand lane often has unexpected interruption due to a vehicle making a right hand turn.

This 650 metre section of road is so dangerous with vehicles passing too close that I refuse to ride on it, preferring the safety of the footpath.

The solution is to install right-hand turn lanes in the median strip and mark in lanes that have a chevron safety zone like Macaulay Road, Nth Melbourne or Clarendon Street, East Melbourne.

Narrow roads

I regularly ride along Albion Street between the Moonee Ponds Creek and the Upfield Railway line. When cars are parked on both sides of the street, there is only sufficient room for one vehicle to travel along the street. When there are no parked cars along one side of the street, there is sufficient room for two cars to traverse this section of road.

Where the road space shrinks from two vehicle space to one vehicle space is often where a motor vehicle, upon encountering a bicycle rider will push through the tight space.

The solution is to very clearly and regularly mark this as a 40 km zone road and rigorously enforce this speed limit. Every 100 metres, have '40 km' painted on the road. Also paint on the road at alternating intervals a turtle and a snail to re-enforce that this is a designated slow road. Slowing the driver will make them less inclined to push in front of a bicycle rider.

Driver distraction

This is why legislation is required because of all the in-car electronic distractions that now exist that didn't exist just a few years ago.

Usually it is a mobile phone, but could also be a GPS, in-car entertainment, vehicle control etc. Just look at taxi drivers always fiddling with their screens!

An incentive to give extra attention when around bicycle riders such as minimum overtaking distance laws is required and one I fully support.

Driver indifference

These are drivers who ignore existing road rules and pass too close to bicycle riders. These people would only be about 5% of the cars that pass me, however this is still too high for my liking. I typically encounter this along Dalton Road although it can happen anywhere.

In Dalton Road, almost daily, I see vehicles that are just inside the bicycle lane as they drive along.

The worst example seen recently was a small truck that had its outside rear dual wheel tracking on top of the bike lane line. With the tray overhang and the side mirror wide of the tray, the mirror was actually above the centre line of the bicycle lane. Too close to my head!

In closing.

I trust these suggestions are given due consideration with a clear mind of what needs to happen and the ability to discern an affect from a cause.

This is all about the perception of our roads being safer. This will encourage more people to start riding bicycles, people who usually drive a car and this can only be to the benefit of our society as a whole for all the reasons that have been canvassed in other forums.

Robert Cook
