



RE: House Bill 920 – Favorable  
Statement of Michael Sayre  
Before the House Environment and Transportation Committee  
February 27, 2020

Committee Chair Barve and Vice Chair Stein, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

My name is Michael Sayre and I am the on-highway government affairs manager for the American Motorcyclist Association. I also serve as the chair of the Motorcyclist Advisory Council to the Federal Highway Administration. As a rider myself, I hope to share my perspective and experiences with this often misunderstood topic.

Lane splitting (or filtering), when done under the accepted “best practices” recognized in the California Highway Patrol guidelines, is not only a benefit to the riding community, but also allows all road users to arrive sooner to their chosen destinations.

When motorcyclists split lanes or filter to the front of stopped or slow traffic, other motorists can move forward, improving overall traffic flow.

The key factor identified in a study conducted by the University of California at Berkley, was the speed delta, which is the difference between the speed of the motorcyclist and surrounding traffic. As indicated by the lead researcher, Dr. Thomas Rice, a delta of 15 mph or less, up to a surrounding traffic speed of 50 mph, did not result in any associated changes to crash occurrence rates or injury types.

The AMA fully supports H.B. 920 and requests the committee endorse its passage.

H.B. 920 would allow lane splitting and would require that state agencies with an interest in motorcycle safety weigh in and adopt guidelines for safe lane splitting. This provides an excellent opportunity for this practice to be adopted and introduced in Maryland.

The AMA places significant emphasis on motorcycle operator and passenger safety. On every type of public roadway, motorcyclists encounter challenges from other roadway users and are constantly vigilant to potentially unsafe conditions.

Arguably one of the most dangerous situations for any on-highway motorcyclist is being caught in congested traffic, where stop-and-go vehicles, distracted and inattentive vehicle operators and

environmental conditions pose an increased risk of physical contact with another vehicle or hazard. Even minor contact under such conditions can be disastrous for motorcyclists.

Allowing motorcyclists to move between stopped or slowed traffic prevents them from becoming the victim of a rear-end collision.

In many countries, lane splitting is considered a normal practice for motorcycle and scooter riders. Particularly in the highly urbanized areas of Europe and Asia, riders are expected to pass between conventional vehicles and advance to the front of the group.

Efforts to formally legalize and recognize lane splitting/filtering are under consideration in six other states during the 2019 legislative session. Utah House Bill 149 became law last year, with support from the Utah Highway Patrol.

As an organization, the AMA was very involved with the California legislation (A.B. 51) to formalize and codify lane splitting, which was passed and signed into law in 2016. Many groups supported A.B. 51 in California, including the California Highway Patrol, the Fraternal Order of Police, California Statewide Law Enforcement Association, Sacramento County Deputy Sherriff's Association, AAA of Southern California and Liberty Mutual Insurance. In addition, AAA of the Bay Area roadside assistance employees operating on motorcycles are authorized to lane split themselves.

I would encourage members of the Maryland law enforcement and motorcycle safety community to reach out to their counterparts in Utah and California to learn more about their support for this important practice and how their concerns were addressed.

Thank you for your time and attention, I ask for your support on House Bill 920.