



Auto Consumer Alliance
13900 Laurel Lakes Avenue, Suite 100
Laurel, MD 20707

**Testimony to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
SB 627 — Vehicle Laws – Bicycles – Operation at Intersections
Position: Favorable**

The Honorable Will Smith
Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East, Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, MD 21401
cc: Members, Judicial Proceedings Committee

Feb. 13, 2025

Dear Chairman Smith and Committee Members,

I'm a consumer advocate and Executive Director of Consumer Auto MD, a nonprofit group that works for safety, transparency and fair treatment for drivers, road users and consumers across Maryland. I'm also a rather avid cyclist in Baltimore City and Baltimore County.

Consumer Auto supports **SB 627** because it will make Maryland's roads safer for everyone, and more convenient, and more hospitable for bicyclists. That will encourage more cycling – which promotes fitness (and pleasure), helps our state move toward meeting our climate goals and cutting traffic congestion (and the noise, pollution, and stress it causes) -- and thus benefits even those who may be annoyed by seeing cyclists on our streets.

Other than walking, it's hard to think of a form of transportation that is more environmentally friendly or affordable than cycling. Yet even in a time of climate crisis and when many people are struggling to afford the fast-rising cost of vehicles and motorized transportation, our streets have gotten more deadly for cyclists. With more and more very large vehicles that often have poor forward visibility on our streets, the number of deaths on U.S. roads among cyclists rose 38% between 2011 and 2020. ¹ In 2022, more than 850 cyclists were killed on U.S. roads and more than 50,000 were injured.²

In 2020, 26% of cyclist deaths came at an intersection³ – and every cyclist is well aware of the danger we face from cars turning or rear-ending cyclists or accelerating dangerously through intersections.

For those who don't ride, the idea that allowing bicyclists to roll through intersections with stop signs at a cautious speed improves bicycle safety might seem counter-intuitive. But cyclists have better balance when they maintain momentum. And they're more visible and more noticeable to drivers when they're in motion. And rolling through an intersection – rather than stopping and then pedaling rather hard to get started again – minimizes the time cyclists are exposed to dangerous traffic in intersections.

¹ <https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/2022-03/Bicyclist-Yield-As-Stop-Fact-Sheet-032422-v3-tag.pdf>

² <https://ncsrsafety.org/bicyclists-injured-in-motor-vehicle-crashes-2022/>

³ <https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/2022-03/Bicyclist-Yield-As-Stop-Fact-Sheet-032422-v3-tag.pdf>



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Data also confirms cyclists' experience that the "stop as yield" policy is safer as well as more efficient. When Delaware established such a rule in 2017, crashes involving cyclists at intersections with stop signs declined 23% over the following 30 months. After Idaho established such a rule in 1982, crashes declined 14.5%.⁴ Ten states and the District of Columbia now use some form of the "stop as yield" law; none of them has reported a spike in cyclist crashes or fatalities after implementing it.

Part of the reason this reform has worked so well is that it simply codifies what most cyclists already do: Proceed cautiously through stop signs when the intersection is clear and it appears safe to do so. While you may see the occasional exception, most cyclists do so cautiously indeed – because we know very well that we're highly vulnerable to much larger, faster-moving vehicles at intersection. At the same time, coming to a full stop at each stop sign on a quiet street is difficult and inefficient for cyclists – and really does not improve public safety.

Bikes are (properly) subject to most of the same rules of the road as cars and trucks. But there are obvious differences in how they function – and in the danger they pose to other road users. The "stop as yield" rule that **SB 627** would establish reflects those differences in a way that makes good sense – and makes cycling both more safe and more practical. It would also serve to make our streets more accessible and workable for some of the people (in this case, those who use bicycles for transportation) who may not be able to afford the high (and fast-rising) cost of owning and maintaining a car.

We support SB 627 and hope you'll give it a FAVORABLE report.

Sincerely,

Franz Schneiderman
Consumer Auto

⁴ <https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.gov/files/2022-03/Bicyclist-Yield-As-Stop-Fact-Sheet-032422-v3-tag.pdf>