

November 24, 1972

Representative Ralph Siriani
State House
Boston Ma 02133

Dear Representative Siriani:

JOINT COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY
HEARING ON BICYCLE LEGISLATION
MONDAY NOVEMBER 27, 1972

Please accept this testimony in place of a personal statement before the joint committee.

The need for a broad revision in bicycle regulation is great, in view of the rapidly increasing rate of injury and death that has resulted from the new popularity of bicycling. We welcome your concern.

I am enclosing a portion of a proposal on a study of bicycling-safety matters, including legislation, which we are submitting to the Department of Transportation for a December 1 deadline. The study would be a collaborative program involving the staffs of Senator William Saltonstall, Senator Edward Brooke, Registrar of Motor Vehicles David Lucey, and the research laboratories of Liberty Mutual Insurance Company. The marked extract enclosed emphasizes our concern about the present chaotic state of bicycle regulation.

I believe that the bicycling community would welcome stringent legislation, involving appropriate scales of punishment, so long as this legislation brought as a reward an acknowledged place on the highway for responsible bicyclists. Bicyclists should be required to bear the liability for accidents and injuries to others which they are found to have caused. Perhaps they should be required (or their parents or guardians, if they are minors) to hold personal and third-party insurance. But it is important that any regulations about the bicycle itself be of a performance nature, rather than one of specifications. In other words, the brakes should be required to be capable of stopping a rider in wet weather in a certain number of feet from 25 mph, and it should be no concern of the law what types of brakes are installed on which wheels.

Yours very sincerely

David Gordon Wilson
professor of mechanical engineering

copy: Sen. Saltonstall