

February 10, 2015

The Honorable Andrew Maynard  
The Honorable Antonio Guerrero  
Co-Chairpersons, Transportation Committee  
Legislative Office Building  
Hartford, CT 06106-1591



**Re: SUPPORT for SB 502, *An Act Concerning Bicycle Safety and Transportation Options***

Dear Chairmen Maynard and Guerrero:

As a statewide membership organization that works to make Connecticut a better place to bike and walk, Bike Walk Connecticut SUPPORTS SB 502, *An Act Concerning Bicycle Safety and Transportation Options*.

**Connecticut is not yet a great place to bike and walk, but it could be**, with strong leadership from legislators, the Governor, and municipal leaders. We urge you to draft SB 502 as a comprehensive bill that, at a minimum:

1. Clarifies the law on riding as far to the right as practicable as recommended by the League of American Bicyclists (LAB). Our proposal to amend Conn. Gen. Stat. §14-286b(a), developed in collaboration with the legal staff of the LAB, is attached.
2. Permits and encourages modern bicycle facilities, including two-way bike lanes and cycle tracks.
3. Clarifies when and how motor vehicles may pass slower moving vehicles, including bicycles.

**Last year, Connecticut's "Bike Friendly State" ranking dropped from 18 to 21.<sup>1</sup>** This is a case of "if you're not moving forward, you're moving backward." While other states are taking major steps to promote active transportation, merely maintaining the status quo put Connecticut behind. The LAB's state rankings were released on the same day that last year's Vulnerable User bill was signed into law, a measure that took five years to pass. Connecticut simply is not moving forward at the same pace as other states.

**Why does being bike-friendly matter?** "Active transportation" and being bike-friendly matter for important transportation, environmental, health and economic competitiveness policy reasons.

- Cycling can help mitigate commuting traffic and the exorbitant costs of road building and maintenance.
- Shifting the mode of transportation from driving to biking and walking for short trips would reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- Taking short trips by bike or on foot, instead of by car, is a great way to get more exercise and tackle our obesity epidemic.
- Cycling ties into economic competitiveness: millennials don't love to drive; knowledge workers choose where they want to live; great cycling would strengthen Connecticut's tourism economy.

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<sup>1</sup> LAB 2014 Bike Friendly State Report Card, at [http://bikeleague.org/sites/default/files/BFS2014\\_Connecticut.pdf](http://bikeleague.org/sites/default/files/BFS2014_Connecticut.pdf)

**Cycling can help manage commuting traffic and avoid costs of road building and maintenance.**

The [2014 MetroHartford Progress Points report](#)<sup>2</sup> found that 81% of all workers in Greater Hartford commute alone by car, and that 83% of the 121,000 jobs in Hartford are filled by commuters. Surely this is a factor in highway congestion. Making it easier to commute by bike, in combination with transit, will mitigate traffic congestion and help avoid the exorbitant costs of road expansion and maintenance.

**Shifting the mode of transportation from driving to biking and walking for short trips would reduce pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.** Promoting active transportation for trips of three to five miles or less should be part of Connecticut's climate action plan.

**Being inhospitable to biking and walking contributes to our obesity epidemic.** Connecticut's adult obesity rate is 25.0%, up from 10.4% in 1990. The obesity rate for children age 10-17 is 15%, up from 12.3% in 2004.<sup>3</sup> Obesity related health problems like diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, arthritis, and obesity-related cancer can be disastrous on a personal level. They are also enormous drains on our personal and public finances. Many people want to bike and walk more but they don't feel safe doing so on our streets and roads. Parents are reluctant to let their kids walk or bike to school because of safety concerns with vehicle traffic. Embracing biking and walking as a matter of transportation policy would help check these trends.

**Cycling ties into economic competitiveness in other ways: Millennials don't love to drive; knowledge workers choose where they want to live; great cycling would boost Connecticut's tourism economy.**

- It is now well-known that **millennials** choose to drive far less than preceding generations. Many **knowledge workers** won't consider living anywhere but in a walkable, bikeable community. A place where 81% of a region commutes to work alone by car on congested highways does not depict a lifestyle that is attractive to the millennials and knowledge workers we want to attract and keep in our labor force.
- Biking—and walking—makes for **vibrant town centers and cities**. By putting "feet (and wheels) on the street," biking and walking creates lively cities, towns, commercial districts and neighborhoods.
- Our historic sites, working farms, rolling hills, stone walls, and views of the Sound beg to be explored by bike. Connected, completed multiuse paths, along with modern complete streets designs, would boost **Connecticut's tourism economy** significantly.

We hope 2015 will be the year that Connecticut moves to the forefront on becoming a great place to bike and walk. Thank you for considering our views.

Sincerely,



Kelly Kennedy, Esq., Executive Director  
Bike Walk Connecticut

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.metrohartfordprogresspoints.org/>

<sup>3</sup> The State of Obesity, a project of the Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, at <http://stateofobesity.org/states/ct/>.

## Definitions from the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Bikeway Design Guide

**Bike Lanes:** A bike lane is a part of the roadway designated by striping, signs, and pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. Bike lanes let bicyclists to ride at their preferred speed without interference from prevailing traffic conditions and facilitate predictable behavior between bicyclists and motorists. A bike lane is distinguished from a cycle track in that it has no physical barrier (bollards, medians, raised curbs, etc.) that restricts the encroachment of motorized traffic.

	<p><b>Conventional bike lanes</b> are an exclusive space for bicyclists through the use of pavement markings and signs. The bike lane is adjacent to motor vehicle travel lanes and flows in the same direction. Bike lanes are typically on the right</p>		<p><b>Buffered bike lanes</b> are conventional bicycle lanes paired with a designated buffer space separating the bicycle lane from the adjacent motor vehicle travel lane and/or parking lane.</p>	
<p>side of the street, between the adjacent travel lane and curb, road edge, or parking lane.</p>		<p><b>Contra-flow bicycle lanes</b> allow bicyclists to ride in the opposite direction of motor vehicle traffic. They convert a one-way traffic street into a two-way street: one direction for motor vehicles and bikes, and the other for bikes only. Contra-flow</p>		<p><b>Left-side bike lanes</b> are conventional bike lanes placed on the left side of one-way streets or two-way median divided streets.</p>
<p>lanes are separated with yellow center lane striping.</p>				

**Cycle Tracks:** A cycle track is an exclusive bike facility that combines a separated path with the on-street infrastructure of a conventional bike lane. A cycle track is physically separated from motor traffic and distinct from the sidewalk. Where on-street parking is allowed, cycle tracks are located to the curb-side of the parking (in contrast to bike lanes). Cycle tracks may be one-way or two-way, and may be at street level, at sidewalk level, or at an intermediate level. By separating cyclists from motor traffic, cycle tracks can offer more security than bike lanes and are attractive to a wider spectrum of the public.

<p><b>One-Way Protected Cycle Tracks</b> are at street level and use a variety of methods for physical protection from passing traffic.</p>	<p><b>Two-way cycle tracks</b> are physically separated cycle tracks that allow bicycle movement in both directions on one side of the road.</p>	<p><b>Raised cycle tracks</b> are vertically separated from motor vehicle traffic. A raised cycle track may allow for one-way or two-way travel by bicyclists.</p>

## **Bike Walk CT Proposal to Amend Conn. Gen. Stat. §14-286b(a)**

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

Section 1. Subsection (a) of section 14-286b of the general statutes is repealed and the following is substituted in lieu thereof (*Effective on passage*):

**Sec. 14-286b. Operation of bicycles; attaching to moving vehicle prohibited; carrying of passengers, packages, bundles and other articles restricted; at least one hand to be kept on handle bars. Operators of roller skates, sleds, skateboards, coasters and toy vehicles prohibited from attaching to moving vehicle. Penalty.** [(a) Every person operating a bicycle upon a roadway shall ride as near to the right side of the roadway as practicable, except when (1) making a left turn pursuant to subsection (b) of section 14-241, (2) overtaking and passing another vehicle proceeding in the same direction, (3) overtaking and passing pedestrians, parked vehicles, animals or obstructions on the right side of the highway, and (4) when the right side of the highway is closed to traffic while under construction or repair.]

(a) Any person operating a bicycle upon a roadway at less than the normal speed of traffic shall ride as close to the right side of the roadway as is safe as judged by the bicyclist, except when:

1. Overtaking or passing another vehicle proceeding in the same direction;
2. Preparing for a left turn at an intersection or into a private road or driveway;
3. Reasonably necessary to avoid conditions including but not limited to: fixed or moving objects; parked or moving vehicles; bicycles; pedestrians; animals; surface hazards; or lanes that are too narrow for a bicycle and a motor vehicle to travel safely side by side within the lane;
4. Riding in the right-turn-only lane; or when
5. Riding on parts of roadways set aside for the exclusive use of bicycles, including but not limited to counter flow bike lanes, left handed cycle tracks on one-way streets, and two-way cycle tracks.

### ***Statement of Purpose:***

To eliminate the ambiguity caused by use of the word "practicable;" to adopt exceptions of section 11-1205 of the Uniform Vehicle Code, as recommended by the League of American Bicyclists; to clarify that cyclists may use the full lane when reasonably necessary to avoid unsafe conditions inherent with narrow or substandard width lanes or any other unsafe condition; and to update the statute to accommodate the use of modern bikeway designs. The proposed language also eliminates the redundancy of "bicycle or vehicle" since the definition of a vehicle includes a bicycle.

*[Note: FHWA guidance on cycle tracks is expected in the very near future]*