



February 9, 2015

Dear Alaska State Legislator:

On behalf of bicyclists and pedestrians across Alaska, Bike Anchorage fully endorses and supports House Bill No. 7 — An Act relating to the offense of reckless driving. Bike Anchorage is a non-profit organization working to make Anchorage more bicycle-friendly. A bicycle-friendly town, city or state is one where it is safe and convenient to go by bike.

In 2014, Anchorage had three car-bike collisions resulting in bicyclist fatalities (Eldridge Griffith, Ashley Xiong and Jeff Dusenbury) and nine car-pedestrian collisions resulting in pedestrian fatalities along with additional numerous injury-causing automobile collisions with bicycles and pedestrians. Nationwide, automobiles kill roughly 30,000 pedestrians and bicyclists per year in the United States, an average of 80-85 people per day. Bike Anchorage supports the goal of eliminating all fatalities. A single fatality per year is simply one too many.

From 2000 to 2011, bicycle commuting rates in large, bicycle-friendly communities, like Anchorage, have increased 80 percent while the national average was 47 percent. In 2013 and 2014, there has been a large increase in bicyclists commuting to work year-round in Alaska and especially here in Anchorage. Our Bike to Work Day participation has tripled since 2007. Bicycling and other forms of non-motorized transportation are on the increase as lifestyles change to non-motorized active modes of transportation, becoming ever increasingly popular among young people.

Vulnerable road user laws, like H.B. 7 increase protection for bicyclists and pedestrians. These laws, like H.B. 7, increase the cost of unsafe practices that impact bicyclists and pedestrians and provide a strong incentive for safer driving practices, especially around vulnerable users. There is an inherent safety disparity between pedestrians and bicyclists versus those in automobiles encased in a heavy metal shell. Because of the disparity, as well as the challenges faced in addressing evidentiary issues involved in motorist-vulnerable user collisions, laws like this one provide a statutorily helpful tool in the enforcement of reckless driving.

Twenty-three states now have some form of a vulnerable users law. By enacting this law, Alaska will take a strong step forward in protecting bicyclists and pedestrians.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Brian Litmans
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