



SIERRA CLUB

VERMONT CHAPTER

Sierra Club Written Statement on adopting pedestrian and bicycle safety as proposed in H.685 April 15, 2024

The Vermont Sierra Club welcomes the introduction of H. 685, addressing pedestrian and bicycle safety. The Sierra Club requests that the Committee consider amending the Miscellaneous DMV Bill (S. 309) to include the proposals of H. 685. This presents Vermont with the rare opportunity to improve bike safety without costly infrastructure expenditures.

The bill will enhance safety for cyclists, wheelchair users, and pedestrians, thus encouraging and facilitating an increase in mobility without fossil fuel or noise pollution.

While some insist that bicyclists and pedestrians should follow the same rules as motor vehicles, it is past time to recognize that bicyclists and pedestrians do not have the same protection, power, and speed as motor vehicles and for us to create a more equitable transportation network.

H. 685 contains five common sense modifications to the current rules of the road:

- Immediately making the safe passing of vulnerable users a requirement: (section 1033)
- Allowing stop-as-yield for bicyclists (section 1139)
- Allowing bikes to cross intersections on pedestrian signals in a manner compatible with pedestrian safety (section 1139)
- Allowing pedestrians to legally use the roadway when pedestrian facilities are unusable (section 1055)
- Removal of the description “electric” for personal assistive devices in the definition of pedestrian (section 4(67))

We don't support delaying the implementation of these rules as suggested by the Department of Public Safety and the Agency of Transportation. Another pedestrian, bicyclist or vulnerable user fatality is not desirable, and as many Vermonters presently don't feel safe utilizing the roads except in a car, we must remove those risks today if the goals are to increase equitable safe active transit, otherwise, the State of Vermont is signalling that personal automobiles take precedence over public safety. We encourage the Legislature to adopt these safety provisions now.

We hope that all of these measures will be followed up with notification of related state agencies and a public information campaign of these updates.

The Sierra Club appreciates the diligence of the Committee in reviewing transportation policy and hopes that you can all support incorporating H. 685 into S. 309.

Robb Kidd
Vermont Conservation Program Manager
Sierra Club
802-505-1540
robb.kidd@sierraclub.org