

Q: Is lane sharing legal in Oregon?

A: No. But Senate Bill 422 would legalize it.

Q: Will I be able to lane share anywhere?

A: No. Only under the limited conditions proposed in the bill, summarized below. Highways only:

- lane-sharing allowed only on roads with a posted speed limit of 50MPH or higher

Traffic on the road:

- must be stopped, or moving at 10 miles per hour or less

The rider:

- may travel no more than 10 miles per hour faster than traffic
- must not impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic
- must safely merge with traffic, if traffic speed exceeds 10 miles per hour

Riders cannot lane share:

- between a traffic lane and the curb and bicycle lane (on either side)
- between a traffic lane and a row of parked vehicles (on either side)
- in a school zone

Riders should also use common sense when lane sharing and err on the side of caution: "If you can't fit, don't split". The California Highway Patrol has defined guidelines for safe lane sharing; they are worth a look.

Q: Is lane sharing dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists?

A: Not under SB422. SB422 legalizes lane sharing only on roads with posted speeds of 50 mph or greater: highways and freeways. Pedestrians and bicycles are not common on these roads, and in many cases they are not allowed. Also, under SB422 motorcycles may not lane-share on the right-hand side of the right-hand lane, next to the curb, shoulder or bicycle lane. SB422 was written this way to intentionally, to protect pedestrians and bicyclists.

Q: Is lane sharing dangerous for riders?

A: Lane sharing can be done safely. Although any transportation mode has its risks, steps can be taken to make motorcycling safer. Trusted research such as the Berkeley Study (commissioned by the California Office of Traffic Safety), indicates that in the event of a crash, lane sharing motorcycle riders are less likely to be injured or killed, compared to riders who are not lane sharing. As Chris Cochran, spokesman for the California's Office of Traffic Safety, stated: "lane-splitting in and of itself, when done in what we refer to as in a safe and prudent manner, is no more dangerous than regular motorcycle-riding."

Q: What data is available about lane sharing's safety benefits?

A: The best and most relevant data for SB422 is 2015's [Berkeley Study](#). The study's key conclusion is that in the event of a crash, lane sharing motorcycle riders are less likely to be injured or killed, compared to riders who are not lane sharing. The Berkeley Study is the largest motorcycle crash study ever conducted in the U.S. Commissioned by the California Office of Traffic Safety, with statewide data collected by California Highway Patrol, the Study was provided as a legal document to the California legislature, to inform legislators on their decision of whether to write lane sharing into law. The entire study is fairly substantial; for a succinct summary, read the summary letter written by the report's author. The Berkeley Study also states that "the current data [of this study] cannot be used to compare the collision risks for lane-splitting or non-lane-splitting riders." That is, the Berkeley Study draws no conclusions, and cannot be used to draw conclusions about whether or not lane sharing is more or less risky than not lane sharing. This fact is often overlooked, so keep in mind!

Q: Doesn't lane sharing mean more motorcycle crashes? Wouldn't that cause more traffic problems?

A: No. There is no evidence that lane sharing increases crash risk on highways and freeways, under the conditions of SB422, despite lots of opinions about this question. On the contrary, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) state in their [National Agenda For Motorcycle Safety](#): "There is evidence (Hurt, 1981) that traveling between lanes of stopped or slow-moving cars (i.e., lane splitting) on multiple-lane roads (such as interstate highways) slightly reduces crash frequency compared with staying within the lane and moving with other traffic." SB422 applies to exactly these conditions. [Major studies in Europe](#), where lane sharing is almost universally practiced, have shown that lane sharing was a factor in only 0.5% to 5% of accidents. (A related note: The Berkeley Study explicitly states it did not examine whether or not lane sharing increases the risk of a crash; from page 18 of the Study: "the current data cannot be used to compare the collision risks for lane-splitting or non-lane-splitting riders." Instead, the study showed that riders who crash fare better if they were lane sharing than riders who crash that were not lane sharing.)

Q: Do enough people ride motorcycles to really help reduce congestion?

A: SB422 isn't a silver bullet that'll solve Oregon's congestion problem, but it lets motorcycles make a unique contribution to the solution. Motorcycles share the road with cars and trucks, but they are truly a different transportation mode, and can help reduce congestion in a way cars cannot. Lane sharing benefits everyone: when a motorcycle lane shares that is one less vehicle in the line of jammed up cars. It boils down to more efficient use of existing roadway space. Also, many riders leave their motorcycles in the garage every day because they cannot lane share. If SB422 passes then these riders have a reason to ride to work.

Q: How would SB422 affect liability, in the event of an accident?

A: There are no changes to civil liability. Motorcyclists and drivers still owe a duty of reasonable care to each other. Motorcycles that ride between lanes outside of the permitted parameters of S422 will be subject to legal liability if their violation was the cause of a motor vehicle accident.

Q: I've got a sidecar on my motorcycle, and my friend rides a trike. Would we be allowed to lane share?

A: No. The proposed bill permits lane sharing only by two-wheeled motorcycles and scooters.

Q: Is lane sharing the same as lane splitting? as filtering?

A: For our purposes, yes. We chose the term 'lane sharing' because it is important to consistently communicate with people about what we're proposing: allowing motorcycles to operate in ways cars cannot, under the conditions noted above. Save arguments about 'lane sharing' or 'filtering' or 'lane splitting' or white-lining etc. for the coffee shop. Please help keep the message consistent until the bill becomes law: use the term 'lane sharing'.

Q: Is lane sharing enforceable?

A: Opinions vary: some law enforcement officers say it isn't, but many say it is. The California Highway Patrol (CHP) has no trouble enforcing the practice and has even published guidelines on how to do it safely. For some Oregon perspective, consider this testimony on the 2019 version of SB422, from a former Klamath County Sheriff with 24 years in law enforcement: "I served 11 years riding as a motor officer. During that time, I was certified by the Oregon State Police motorcycle division. I went on to become a motor instructor-teaching and certifying other police officers throughout the State of Oregon ... [Lane sharing] can be done correctly and safely and can be legally enforced." [Consider also this relevant testimony](#) from a 29-year Oregon State Trooper and former Oregon House Representative: "I can't tell you the amount of motorcycle crashes I have investigated that could have been prevented if lane-sharing was available to legally practice in Oregon."

Q: What does Team Oregon think about lane sharing?

[Team Oregon](#) is Oregon's superb mandatory rider training program. Team Oregon is "neutral on the concept of limited lane sharing in Oregon", adding that "lane splitting, as legally practiced in California and under certain conditions (at 50 mph or less; speed differential of 15 mph or less), does not appear to create undue risk." Importantly, they reached this conclusion "after review of motorcycle lane splitting and filtering research, interactions with riders familiar with the practice, and interviews with California law enforcement."

Q: What about drivers changing lanes, or opening their doors? Couldn't they cause a motorcycle crash?

A: SB422 applies to gridlock; in such conditions it is unlikely that cars inching along would be able to change lanes suddenly. And most people don't open their car doors when stuck in traffic. In either case, motorcycles traveling at 20 mph or less — the maximum speed SB422 would legalize — should be easily able to stop in time. Lastly, lane sharing allows riders to see further ahead than if they are directly behind a car—thereby increasing the motorcyclist's ability to spot and avoid hazards ahead of time.

Q: Isn't lane sharing unfair to drivers?

A: Motorcycles are not cars, even though many of our laws treat them like cars, and even though they share the road with cars. Fairness is a tricky subject, and SB422 won't do anything to change human nature. There are people who think it's unfair when bicyclists in dedicated bike lanes "cut in the line", or who think that light-rail passengers should "just get a car." The bottom line is that lane sharing shortens the line for everybody (see previous FAQ). As we've heard from an Oregonian: "I used to commute from Hillsboro to Portland on Highway 26. Stuck in traffic an hour each way -- at least! -- I'd see the MAX train whiz by. I didn't think it was unfair that MAX riders weren't stuck in traffic like me ... after all, I'm the one who decided to drive, rather than take the train."

Q: If it is legalized, will lane sharing be mandatory?

A: No. Lane sharing will be optional for motorcycles. If you don't want to do it, you won't have to! As always, ride within your limits and abilities.

Q: Won't drivers be surprised by lane sharing?

A: SB422 is a low-speed, limited approach to lane sharing that will minimize the chances of drivers being surprised or startled by a lane-sharing motorcyclist. New rules of the road and transportation practices are often implemented, and drivers adjust quickly. Consider the surge in bicycles over the past 15 years and the increase in driver awareness that has resulted. In addition, it has been surprising to us in interviewing 100's of auto drivers in recent years how many times we get the response "Isn't it already legal here?"

Q: I've heard lane sharing is just about protecting motorcyclists from being rear-ended?

A: Studies suggest there are many potential safety benefits to be gained from lane sharing. It's true that lane sharing removes motorcyclists from being rear-ended or, worse, being "sandwiched" by a car in front and behind. Even in stop & go traffic such accidents can have serious consequences for a motorcyclist. With distracted driving at an all-time high, anything that reduces a motorcyclists' exposure to these accidents is worth pursuing. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Motorcycle Safety Foundation's (MSF) wrote that "There is evidence (Hurt, 1981) that traveling between lanes of stopped or slow-moving cars (i.e., lane splitting) on multiple-lane roads (such as interstate highways) slightly reduces crash frequency compared with staying within the lane and moving with other traffic." In addition, other safety benefits of lane sharing include:

- Increases motorcycle's visibility and takes them out of car drivers' "blind spot." A motorcyclist who is lane sharing can be seen in a car driver's sideview mirror at all times. And a motorcycle that is moving, when surrounding traffic is stopped, is more conspicuous and visible. In places where lane sharing is legal drivers become more likely to look for, and be aware of, motorcycles.
- Gives motorcycles more maneuverability for accident avoidance. Lane sharing positions motorcyclists in open road, rather than being directly behind a vehicle, this gives them a path ahead to avoid hazards.
- Lane sharing increases motorcyclists' "line of sight." Being on open road means a better opportunity to see ahead to predict and avoid hazards.
- In the event of a crash, a motorcycle that is lane sharing is more likely to have a "glancing" blow to the vehicle rather than a direct hit. Such accidents are less severe because the motorcycle rider can keep moving forward rather than stopping instantly. The motorcycle rider is also more likely to remain upright.
- Keeps motorcycle riders moving, which reduces fatigue both from heat and from constant stop & go operation of the motorcycle's controls (the vast majority of motorcycles have manual transmissions and require exertion and dexterity to operate the controls).

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Q: Wouldn't SB422 make it hard to get emergency vehicles to a crash scene, in the event of an accident?

A: SB422 would not make it any more difficult for emergency vehicles (ambulances, fire trucks, police) to get to a crash site, in dense traffic on freeways and highways. It is difficult for emergency vehicles to get through any accident-related traffic jam regardless of who or what caused the accident. Also, as noted above, there is no evidence that lane sharing as proposed by SB422 would increase accident frequency (in fact, there's evidence that it may decrease accident frequency). See above: "Q: Doesn't lane sharing mean more motorcycle crashes?"

Q: What about autonomous vehicles? How does that affect SB422?

A: While we are monitoring the increased prevalence of autonomous vehicles, they should not affect SB422. We are encouraged that organizations like the American Motorcycle Association (AMA) are making sure technology companies consider motorcycles. Please take a few minutes to read [this article](#) detailing the work AMA Member Christian Lauterbach is doing on Waymo's autonomous vehicles team. Christian, who "ride[s] and lane split[s] past our self-driving cars on a daily basis," writes that "... our radars all around the car can spot you, whether you're going with a Hi-Viz Roadcrafter or all-black leather."
(compiled by LaneShareOregon.com and BikePac.com)