



## **Bike Safety and Legislative Update**

### **Linda McGrane**

Bicycle Access Council of PA hosted its annual Bike Club Conference in York, on Saturday, March 26. The agenda included several knowledgeable speakers who presented valuable information, and participants discussed important issues relevant to all or most cyclists and recreational bike clubs.

The most enlightening revelation was the fact that, although bicycles (aka "pedalcycles", as opposed to motorcycles, which also have two wheels) are "permitted" to use the roads, we cyclists are not the primary "intended" users of the road. This distinction is invoked when cyclists complain about rumble strips along the shoulder of the road. Even though rumble strips are the bane of many [otherwise enjoyable] bike routes, they do serve an important function in preventing accidents caused by drowsy drivers. Here's an example of a "permitted" (vs "intended") user, in reverse: police cars and ambulances are permitted to use the Schuylkill River Trail, in the event of an emergency, in order to assist a person in medical distress, or to respond to a crime. However, police cars and ambulances are not the primary INTENDED users of the trail.

Re. the proposed "**Four Feet Passing Law**", State Rep. Ron Miller, sponsor of House Bill 170, presented details. HB 170 includes the requirement for motor vehicles to pass bicycles at a distance not less than four feet. Links for House Bill 170, as well as the companion Senate Bill 156, are below, for your reference. Miller himself is a recreational cyclist. This legislation was slated for debate/discussion in committee by the end of April. According to Rep. Miller, **18 other states** already have a four foot minimum passing law.

According to Rep. Miller and the conference leader, certain members of PennDoT and the State Police had raised concerns about the four-foot passing requirement -- some opponents felt that, on narrow roads with only one lane in each direction, a motorist passing a cyclist by four feet might have to cross the center yellow line, resulting in an increase in head-on collisions with oncoming motor traffic. (Solution: the motorist should wait for oncoming traffic to pass, before passing the cyclist.)

In addition to the four-foot passing clause, HB 170 includes other protections for cyclists: 1) Motorists would be prohibited from making sudden (hazardous) turns in front of pedalcycles, e.g., the "right hook"; and 2) Pedalcycles would be exempt from having to maintain a minimum speed. (A pedalcycle is considered a "slow-moving" vehicle, but as long as we cycle as far to the right as practicable, we do not have to comply with a minimum speed requirement to be on the road.)

If/when this legislation becomes law, educating the public en masse, and including these changes in driver training and testing, will be a major priority.

Here are the links for the House and Senate Bills:

**House Bill 170** -- Four-feet passing clause is on line 22 of page 3

<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/PN/Public/btCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&sessYr=2011&sessInd=0&billBody=H&billTyp=B&billNbr=0170&pn=0114>.

**Senate Bill 156** -- Four-feet passing provision is on line 13 of page 3

<http://www.palegis.us/bills/?q=2011/0/N/SB0156>

If you have any questions about topics discussed at the conference, please contact me – I look forward to hearing from you! Thank you for your interest in bike safety and legislative initiatives on behalf of cyclists. Linda 267-251-7862, or mcgrane\_linda\_a@yahoo.com