

Respected Members of the Committee,
Re: H 5192

I am in opposition to this bill for the following reasons:

First, have the relevant institutional stakeholders (DEM and DOT) been involved in this initiative?

Second, what is the genesis of this bill? If its only to bring the State "in line" with bike path systems in other States, is that enough reason to implement a rule which many cyclists do not agree with, and which does not fit the State in terms of tradition or safety?

What is the cost of conformity if there is no evidence that changing to a new pattern will be safer?

In terms of tradition, RI bike paths, especially the East Bay Bike Path, are older bike paths built on narrow railbeds. For almost 40 years, users have been accustomed to DEM's directive: ride on the right, walk on the left. (DEM directive by Kevin O'Malley 1992). A controversial change to wildly popular bike paths after this length of time would be chaotic and confusing. Signage would have to be replaced. But more importantly, RI bike paths, especially the EBBP, are extraordinarily congested with more families and child users than almost any other bike path in the U.S. There is no real comparison.

For example, RI has only 72 miles of bike paths in a densely populated state. Some states have single bike paths that are longer than the total of all RI paths. Again, where is the real comparison?

In terms of safety, many feel that it is safer to face oncoming traffic, as this is what people have long been accustomed to.

Granted, there are many safety improvements that could be made to RI bike paths. But it must be remembered that even the last law that the legislature passed, which went into effect July 1, 2024, has not yet even begun to be implemented.

Thank you,

Judith A. Byrnes
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