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ISSUE STATEMENT

Motorcyclists, who have significant room to maneuver while riding within a traffic lane, can use this margin to position themselves for maximum visibility to other motorists while maintaining safety and control of the traffic situation.

WHERE WE ARE

The relatively narrow width of a motorcycle on the road allows its rider to employ many strategies not available to drivers of other vehicles.

- Motorcyclists can choose their position within their lane to avoid road surface hazards, other vehicles, pedestrians or other mobile hazards, intrusions, or potential intrusions into their right-of-way.
- Motorcyclists may seek positions where they are in view of other drivers and pedestrians.
- Motorcyclists may select a position that maximizes their view of the road and traffic ahead.

All states permit motorcycles to use high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes with a single rider on the motorcycle. Limited studies evaluating this practice have shown no traffic or safety problems ([Jernigan, 1995](#)).

A motorcycle's narrow width can allow it to pass between lanes of stopped or slow-moving cars on roadways where the lanes are wide enough to offer an adequate gap. This option can provide an escape route for motorcyclists who would otherwise be trapped or struck from behind. 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.

Although lane splitting is allowed in just a few areas of the United States, notably California, it appears to be worthy of further study because it offers a means of reducing congestion in addition to possible safety benefits. It is widely used in many other countries.

WHERE WE WANT TO BE

All motorcyclists should be aware of the value of lane positioning to maximize their visibility to other motorists and better manage traffic situations.

We would like to have additional research to provide information about the safety or dangers of lane splitting.

HOW TO GET THERE

A well conceived lane-position strategy can greatly increase the safety of a motorcyclist, particularly in traffic. More motorcyclists and other motorists need to be apprised of such strategies through rider training and safety messages in the media and methods such as registration renewal flyers.

More research is needed to verify the benefits or hazards of lane splitting.

Recommendations

- Study the safety implications of lane splitting.
- Educate motorcyclists about lane-use strategies, including HOV lane usage.



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