



January 13, 2011

Statement by State Representative Mitch Greenlick (HD 33) on HB 2228

I have spent my life as a health researcher. During the 1990s I was professor and chair of the Department of Public Health and Preventive Medicine at the School of Medicine at Oregon Health & Science University. I have been a member of the Oregon House of Representatives since 2003 and currently co-chair the House Health Care Committee. As a health researcher and as a legislator I have pushed hard to improve the health and safety of our citizens, including promoting measures (such as safe-routes to schools) that increase the opportunity for safe bicycling in Oregon. I introduced HB 2228 because I am not convinced that we are doing all we can to protect the health and safety of young children who join their parents bicycling on the streets and roads of Oregon.

Researchers at OHSU recently completed a study of serious riders, those who bike to work on a regular basis. The study found that, on average, about 30% of those riders suffer a traumatic injury each year and that about 8% of those riders suffer an injury serious enough to require medical attention. I was not able to resist asking myself what would have happened to a young child strapped into a seat on the bike when the rider suffered that serious traumatic injury. The study clearly leads us to work to reduce the environmental hazards that make those injuries more likely. But when I began looking for data on the safety of young children on bikes, it is clear that data are simply not available.

My children were born in the late 1950s. Back then we would put the three kids in that back of a station wagon and let them bounce freely around the car while we traveled the country. It never occurred to us that we were putting them in danger. The cars did not even have safety belts in those days. We have learned that this is not a safe way to transport kids. We now require safety belts, safe car-seats for infants, and we exclude small kids from the front seats of cars with air-bags. Consequently, we have dramatically reduced auto crash fatality-rates for children over the decades. By the same token I do not believe there is a parent in Oregon who would want to risk the safety of their young children if they really believed it was risky to put them on a bicycle.

I introduced HB 2228 to begin what I hope will be a rational discussion to assure we were doing everything possible to improve the safety of bicycle transportation in Oregon. This bill is not an anti-cycling bill. In fact, it is a pro-cycling bill that will focus on creating a safe cycling experience for Oregon's children. There is so much we don't know about this topic. I hope this process will reduce the heat in the debate and increase the light.

I urge the bicycling community to be patient and to engage the process calmly and productively if the bill gets a hearing in a house committee, as I hope it will. Let's try to keep the discourse civil and trust we all want to do what is best for the children of Oregon.