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2008 legislative priority: Driver Responsibility Act

Issue: Motor vehicle collisions take a too-large toll

In the U.S., motor-vehicle collisions injure 2.7 million and kill 43,000 each year. In Missouri, there are 66,413 injuries, 1257 fatalities, and an estimated economic loss of \$3.7 billion (2005 figures).

According to a WHO report, the leading injury-related cause of death worldwide among people aged 15-44 years is traffic injuries. In the U. S., driving is the number one cause of death and injury for young people ages 5 to 27.

A number of other states have adopted legislation addressing distracted driving, cell phone use, fatigued driving, road rage, and aggressive driving. These are real problems and enforcement and educational programs has proven to be effective.

Countries that have adopted a comprehensive approach including these measures and an emphasis on routine traffic enforcement and driver education have been able to reduce traffic injuries and fatalities by 75%.

Why do bicyclists and pedestrians support this measure?

In Missouri, bicyclists and pedestrians represent less than 5% of trips but 7.5% of fatalities and over 15% of roadway injuries.

Emphasis on occupant safety measures--more crash-resistant automobiles, higher seat-belt use--has resulted in an overall decrease in vehicle-related fatalities but an *increase* in bicycle and pedestrian fatalities.

Driver Responsibility Act

A Driver Responsibility Act with programs and penalties to reduce:

- Distracted driving
- A ban on the use of cell phone and other digital devices such as computers, pagers, Palm Pilots, DVD players, and fax machines.
- Penalties for fatigued driving
- Road rage/aggressive driving
- Additional penalties and loss of driving privileges when any of the above factors leads to injury or fatality
- Educational programs to educate drivers of the dangers of all of the above when driving

For More Information

To learn more, contact Missouri Bicycle Federation Executive Director Brent Hugh, 816-695-6736 or director@mobikefed.org

Information Sources

Missouri Traffic Safety Compendium 2005, NHTSA Traffic Safety Facts 2005, International Injury & Fatality Statistics, (<http://www.safecarguide.com/exp/statistics/statistics.htm>)