



## HB 1937 – REQUIRING BICYCLISTS TO WEAR A REFLECTIVE VEST

***Proposed language: “307.184. Every person riding a bicycle upon a state road or highway shall wear a reflective vest.”***

The Missouri Bicycle and Pedestrian Federation and our allied groups and organizations take bicyclist safety very seriously. For this reason, we oppose HB 1937. The reasons—

### **Economic development**

- **Bicycling is a \$1.2 billion industry in Missouri, 14,365 jobs, 120 bike shops (small, locally owned businesses),** plus retail, tourism, travel, hotels, sporting goods, clothing, restaurants. We do not want to discourage bicycling and endanger economic growth in this sector.
- **Seven nationally recognized cross-country bicycle routes, used by thousands of cross-country bicyclists each year, pass through Missouri, putting \$7 million annually into Missouri’s economy.** These routes are primarily on state roads and highways. How will we inform these thousands of bicycle tourists about the vest, which is not required in any other state? Where will they purchase a vest? Will it brand Missouri as an anti-bicycling state which they will choose to avoid entirely?

### **Bicyclist visibility and safety is better considered under current law**

- **Reflective vests are already allowed under Missouri law**—vests or other reflectors are required after sundown, the only time when reflectors help with visibility.
- **The terms “reflectivity” and “vest” are not defined in HB 1937;** “reflective vests” could be worn that will meet the letter of the law yet not increase visibility in any way.
- **Current law (307.185 RSMo) already requires reflectors** that meet definite standards for visibility; HB 1937 has no standard for visibility and so has no visibility benefit.
- **For many types of bicycles and situations, a reflective vest does not create any visibility at all.** Current Missouri law requires reflectors that provide visibility to the front, rear, and sides under specific conditions, an already-existing and superior requirement.
- **Fixing the above three problems to define reflectivity and require visibility from all directions and all types of bicycles will make HB 1937 look a lot like the existing 307.185.**
- **A reflective vest will not create any extra visibility whatsoever under daylight conditions,** when most bicycling on state highways occurs.
- **Specifying specific clothing will meet resistance; noncompliance will be huge. Choice of clothing is a very personal decision and a requirement for the general public to wear a particular article of clothing will be viewed as infringing very strongly on personal freedom and choice.** Current law requires visibility; the means of achieving that required visibility—whether through clothing or some other way—are left to the individual.



### Discouraging bicycling and unintentionally reducing safety

- **Onerous, non-standard requirements decrease the amount of bicycling** at a time when for health, economic, and practical reasons, Missouri should be encouraging more bicycling. The health benefits of bicycling outweigh the safety dangers by a factor of 20.
- **Safety for bicyclists is tied directly to the amount of bicycling: More bicycling means greater safety (per mile ridden)** and less bicycling means more injuries/fatalities per mile ridden. Onerous and ineffective requirements discourage bicycling, reduce the amount of bicycling, and so reduce safety as well as community health.
- **Non-standard:** Current Missouri requirements for reflectors and lighting are similar to laws in all 50 states and most cities and counties. They are standard, proven, and easily complied with by all bicyclists and bicycles. The reflective vest is not required anywhere in the U.S.
- **Unenforceable:** Police rarely enforce existing bicycle laws and regulations, many of which have very strong, proven safety benefits. Will they spend their valuable time enforcing a non-standard law with no proven safety benefit?
- **Confusing:** “State roads and highways” wend through every city, town, and county in Missouri. The average person does not know when he or she is on, or crossing, a state road or highway vs. city or county road.
- **Will require the reflective vest on nearly all bicycle trips—even on trails.** Most bicycle trips, including trips on within city limits or on trails, require at least some portion along or across state roads or highways.
- Most bicycle owners—80%—are casual bicyclists and **requiring purchase and maintenance of additional, specific equipment only discourages casual bicyclists from bicycling at all.**

### What could really make a difference in improving bicycle safety in Missouri?

- **Improve/modernize Missouri’s existing reflector and lighting requirements** for bicyclists, 307.185, to make them state-of-the-art .
- **A statewide visibility campaign for bicyclists** – which would create a far larger effect on bicyclist behavior than an unenforceable law. A small appropriation will have a huge safety benefit—most probably far larger than passing any statute, which is likely to remain unknown by the vast majority of casual bicyclists.
- **Bicyclist and motorist education** – proven to dramatically improve bicyclist safety.
- **Public outreach and safety campaigns.**
- **Law enforcement training and enforcement of existing laws** according to best practices for bicyclists.
- **Improve our roads--for instance, by adding shoulders to state highways.** Bicycle and pedestrian businesses and organizations will strongly support moving in this direction, which benefits motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians and is proven to dramatically improve safety and extend the lifetime of roads.



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### **Current Missouri Law:**

307.185. Every bicycle and motorized bicycle when in use on a street or highway during the period from one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise shall be equipped with the following:

- (1) A front-facing lamp on the front or carried by the rider which shall emit a white light visible at night under normal atmospheric conditions on a straight, level, unlighted roadway at five hundred feet;
- (2) A rear-facing red reflector, at least two square inches in reflective surface area, or a rear-facing red lamp, on the rear which shall be visible at night under normal atmospheric conditions on a straight, level, unlighted roadway when viewed by a vehicle driver under the lower beams of vehicle headlights at six hundred feet;
- (3) Reflective material and/or lights on any part of the bicyclist's pedals, crank arms, shoes or lower leg, visible from the front and the rear at night under normal atmospheric conditions on a straight, level, unlighted roadway when viewed by a vehicle driver under the lawful lower beams of vehicle headlights at two hundred feet; and
- (4) Reflective material and/or lights visible on each side of the bicycle or bicyclist and visible at night under normal atmospheric conditions on a straight, level, unlighted roadway when viewed by a vehicle driver under the lawful lower beams of vehicle headlights at three hundred feet. The provisions of this subdivision shall not apply to motorized bicycles which comply with National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration regulations relating to reflectors on motorized bicycles.