



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

Senate approves bike safety legislation supported by O'Mara, who says new law would enhance motorist awareness, prevent accidents, bolster local safety efforts like tonight's 'Ride for Silence' in Wisner Park

THOMAS F. O'MARA May 15, 2019

| ISSUE: **BICYCLE SAFETY**



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Albany, N.Y., May 15—The New York State Senate today approved legislation (**S5228**) long supported and co-sponsored by Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C,I-Big Flats) to enhance bicycle

safety in New York by requiring the state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) to incorporate a “bicycle and pedestrian safety” component into the pre-licensing driver’s manual and exam motorists are required to review and pass before obtaining a driver’s license.

“With more and more cyclists sharing our roadways, we should take every reasonable step to make all drivers more aware of the need for safety,” said O’Mara, a member of the Senate Transportation Committee. “This legislation would help make motorists more aware of bicyclists on the road, and help prevent accidents and save lives.”

O’Mara has co-sponsored and the Senate has approved the legislation in the past. Specific provisions of a new driver awareness and education component could include instruction on: safely passing a cyclist on the road; special considerations while driving in urban areas; the definition and designation of bicycle lanes; how to navigate an intersection with pedestrians and cyclists; and exiting a vehicle without endangering pedestrians and cyclists.

O’Mara **first pledged support for the measure at the “Awareness Ride in Memory of Matt Miller” in May 2014**. Miller, 43, an Elmira Free Academy graduate, was struck head-on and killed by a left-turning motorist while riding his bike on Hendy Creek Road in the town of Southport in late April 2014. The motorist was ticketed for failure to yield.

“Matt Miller’s tragic death in 2014 led the local cycling community to get behind this and other pieces of legislation and it made all of us more aware of the need for action,” said O’Mara, noting that these local efforts continue with **tonight’s “Ride of Silence” in Elmira’s Wisner Park**. “Making all drivers more aware of sharing the road with cyclists and pedestrians is the most effective way to make our roadways safer. It’s a straightforward, common sense piece of legislation that could save lives and the Assembly leadership should approve it.”

O'Mara also continues to sponsor legislation (**S1439/A283**) to establish a “three-foot, safe-passing zone” as the minimum distance that motorists must provide when passing bicyclists on roadways.

The legislation, currently in the Senate Transportation Committee, has been supported by bicycle safety and other bicycling advocates statewide, including the Southern Tier Bicycle League and other local safety advocates. According to some estimates, the surge in cycling's popularity has resulted in more than 200,000 bike riders taking to roadways daily. The legislation is sponsored in the Assembly by Assemblyman Phil Steck (D-Colonie), where it's currently in the Assembly Transportation Committee.

If enacted into law, **New York would join 32 others states** which have enacted three-foot, safe-passing laws. Supporters of the legislation, including O'Mara and Steck, say that as the state Department of Transportation (DOT) continues to actively install bike lanes on roadways throughout New York, their legislation is timely and necessary to help ensure the safety of the increased bicycle traffic.