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Michigan Bicyclists Support HB 4728 in Concept; Recommend “Either/Or” Amendment

During our joint Advocacy Day on May 25th 2011, supporters of the League of Michigan Bicyclists (LMB), Michigan Trails and Greenways Alliance (MTGA) and Michigan Mountain Biking Association (MMBA) delivered a white paper to all Michigan legislators regarding the need for a common sense update to the Michigan Vehicle Code (MVC) in reference to the manner in which bicyclists must signal right turns.

There are currently two introduced House bills that propose to make such changes, HB 4728 introduced by Representative Harvey Santana and HB 4996 introduced by Representative Mark Meadows.

Currently, the MVC states that cyclists must indicate a right turn with an upturned left arm.

HB 4728 would amend the MVC to **require** cyclists to extend his or her right hand and arm horizontally to indicate a right turn. In addition, this bill would **eliminate** the previous method, meaning that an upturned left arm would no longer be recognized as a legal turn signal for bicyclists.

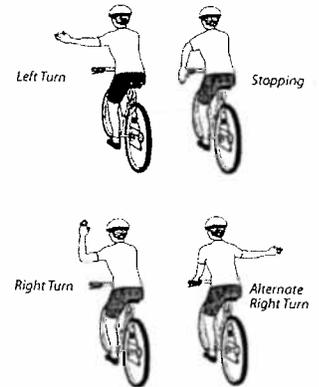
HB 4996 would amend the MVC using an **either/or clause** allowing cyclists to signal using an upturned left arm **or** by pointing to the right.

LMB, MTGA and MMBA support the current draft of HB 4728 in concept only. We fully endorse HB 4996 as written. It is our preference that such a revision not be written as a mandate but rather as an either/or clause giving cyclists the option to use either method. We support amending HB 4728 to legalize the new method of signaling right turns with an extended right arm while ALSO preserving the method currently written in the MVC.

According to the League of American Bicyclists, of the 32 states who have made this common sense revision, **no state has completely stricken the old method of signaling with an upturned left arm.**

LMB, MTGA and MMBA would like to see the MVC updated to legalize the actions of the many cyclists who already instinctively point to the right without penalizing current law-abiding cyclists who use an upturned left arm. **Thousands of out of state cyclists visit Michigan each year that may only know or use the universal upturned left arm signal that is currently legal in all 50 states, and required in 18 states.** By striking the original language, cyclists could be penalized by law enforcement for unintentionally violating a traffic law that would be unique only to Michigan.

It is also worth noting that HB 4728 would still require automobile drivers without working turn signals to use the upturned left arm signal, thus requiring driver’s education students to continue to learn both forms of the hand signal, regardless of the outcome of HB 4728.



“MAKING MICHIGAN A BICYCLE FRIENDLY STATE”



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We believe that legalizing the new method of signaling and encouraging cyclists to use it is a positive move. Not only do automobile drivers better recognize a cyclist's intentions when they point in the direction they plan to turn, it is also easier to teach children to point in the direction they plan to go. Once again however, it is our preference that HB 4728 be amended to legally allow cyclists to signal right turns using either method.

LMB, MTGA and MMBA stand committed to working with community partners to help educate and encourage more cyclists to routinely use hand signals and to help educate motorists about their responsibilities to safely share Michigan roadways.

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