



# Short Briefing Note on Minimum Passing Distance Law proposals for motorists passing cyclists 2018

## Please support the [Minimum Passing Distance Proposals](#)

Minimum Passing Distance Laws are in effect in many other countries and are an important part of the more cycling friendly culture that Irish people experience when they use bicycles in places like France and Germany.

### Enforcement

1. Traffic law does not have to be enforceable to have an important effect: The best example is the law regarding appropriate speed (Article 7). This makes it an offence to tailgate the vehicle in front or to drive faster than other road conditions allow. When a "rear end" crash happens the appropriate speed law creates an easy test to be applied by the courts.
2. Police in other countries are able to enforce such laws and also to accept video evidence from private citizens as evidence for such prosecutions.
3. Road widths: Many country roads in Ireland have speed limits that are too high. The solution is to reduce the speed limits, not to write traffic law around inappropriate speeds.

**Other issues:** There is a worry that the MPDL might be used as ground for proposing two other measures that should be strongly resisted

- Laws requiring expanded polystyrene foam bicycle helmets.
- Laws requiring so called high visibility clothing

### **Bicycle helmet laws are bad for public health and traffic congestion.**

- Expanded polystyrene foam bicycle helmets are not designed, tested or expected to provide protection from impacts with fast moving motor vehicles.
- If protecting cyclists, especially children, from impacts with motor vehicles is the issue of concern then plastic foam helmets are not the answer
- Evidence from Australia and New Zealand suggests that large numbers of cyclists are put off cycling by helmet legislation. Helmet legislation has reduced cycling in the following groups of people:
  - Children cycling to school
  - Teenage cyclists (particularly schoolgirls)
  - Cycle commuters
  - There is also evidence suggesting that the injury risk for people who continue to cycle has increased instead of reducing.
- Bike-share schemes such as the highly successful Dublin bikes scheme have struggled and even failed in cities with helmet laws. Particularly in Australia.

## High visibility clothing – unusual clothes of disputed value

Some have proposed so called high-visibility clothing for cyclists and pedestrians. The value of such clothing is disputed.

- A study in the British city of Bath found that if cyclists wore high visibility clothing it made no difference to the most dangerous passing behaviour by overtaking motorists.
- Many cyclists who already wear high visibility clothing report that it makes no difference to driver behaviour.
- Cyclists are already required to use front and rear lights at night; a law that all mainstream cycling groups agree with.
- There is a concern that the push for cyclists to use high-visibility clothing is intended to distract from a common failure by the Garda Síochána to enforce the law regarding lights.
- There are questions about how well jackets with retroreflective strips work in dipped head lights. Other measures such as pedal reflectors and reflective ankle clips are viewed as being more effective.
- There is good reason to believe that some who call for high-visibility clothing are attempting to blame walkers and cyclists for dangers created by driving at inappropriate speeds (Article 7) and by unsuitable speed limits on narrow country roads.
- Being forced to wear unusual clothing such as plastic foam helmets reduces cycling. Requiring other items of strange clothing is likely to have a similar effect on both walking and cycling. At the expense of public health and public safety

More information

Cycle helmets: An overview of the evidence

[https://www.cyclinguk.org/sites/default/files/document/2017/11/helmets-evidence\\_brf.pdf](https://www.cyclinguk.org/sites/default/files/document/2017/11/helmets-evidence_brf.pdf)

High Visibility Clothing

Walker, I., Garrard, I., & Jowitt, F. (2014). The influence of a bicycle commuter's appearance on drivers' overtaking proximities: an on-road test of bicyclist stereotypes, high-visibility clothing and safety aids in the United Kingdom. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*, 64, 69-77.

doi:10.1016/j.aap.2013.11.007

Galway Cycling Campaign Article

<http://www.galwaycycling.org/cycling-campaign-releases-briefing-note-on-minimum-passing-distance-proposals/>

Galway Cycling Campaign MPDL Briefing Note

[http://www.galwaycycling.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Briefing\\_document\\_re\\_MPDL\\_proposals\\_final.pdf](http://www.galwaycycling.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Briefing_document_re_MPDL_proposals_final.pdf)