

SUPPORT HBxxxx - Riding Two Abreast

Bill Patron: Delegate Rodney Willett

OVERVIEW: Improve safety by removing ambiguous language and allowing bicycling two abreast except on roadways with a posted speed limit of 35 MPH or greater and with only one travel lane in the direction of the bicyclists' travel.

Reasons to Support:

- Improves the safety of people bicycling.
 - Riding two abreast makes people on bicycles more visible to drivers and promotes safer overtaking by changing lanes to pass.
 - Allows parents and others to ride beside less-experienced riders.
 - Shortens the length of a group, which can make it easier for vehicles to pass.
- Requires two-abreast bicyclists to “*not impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic*” on two-lane roadways with a posted speed limit 35 MPH or greater, in recognition of a concern of [Senator Stuart](#) in 2022¹. This bill would continue to prohibit two-abreast bicycling on higher-speed two-lane roadways when an overtaking vehicle is present.
- Removes ambiguous language not found in the Uniform Vehicle Code, namely, “*and shall move into a single-file formation as quickly as is practicable when being overtaken from the rear by a faster-moving vehicle*”
- Twenty-three states allow two-abreast bicycling on roadways with no restrictions.
- States that allow two-abreast riding with restrictions commonly use language recommended by the Uniform Vehicle Code: “*Persons riding two abreast shall not impede the normal and reasonable movement of traffic.*”²

¹ 2022 SB 362 Bicycles and certain other vehicles; riding two abreast.

<https://legacylis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?221+sum+SB362>

² Uniform Vehicle Code, <https://theccce.org/usa/uniform-vehicle-code/#11-1206>

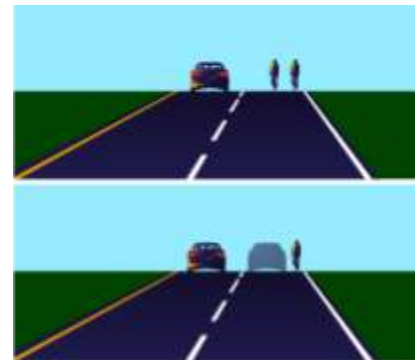
Riding Two Abreast Fact Sheet

Problems to be solved:

Virginia's current law prohibits a parent from riding a bicycle next to their child on a neighborhood street when "*being overtaken from the rear by a faster-moving vehicle*". Virginia's law contains ambiguous language that differs from clearer, simpler standards used by most other states. This bill updates the statute to allow two abreast riding on low-speed roads and provides clearer, commonly-used language for limiting riding two-abreast on higher speed roads.

1. Why is allowing riding two abreast on bicycles safer?

- a. **Visibility.** Compared to riding single file, riding two abreast makes people on bicycles more visible from behind and in front.
- b. **Easier Passing.** Riding two abreast shortens the length of the group by half.
- c. **Enough Room to Pass.** Riding two abreast discourages drivers from attempting to pass bicyclists in the same lane when there is not enough room in that lane to safely do so.



Motorist perception of bicyclist position and available passing space. [Graphic: Keri Caffrey]

2. What studies have been done?

- a. A 2020 [North Carolina legislative study group](#) concluded that two-abreast bicycling is safer than riding single file and recommended no state restrictions on two-abreast bicycling.
- b. [A 2020 Australian study of risk factors for cyclists](#) concluded that riding two abreast in a traffic lane decreased risk.
- c. A 2021 study in Spain, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8657691/> found a higher the level of compliance with safe passing distance for riders riding two abreast

3. Has the Virginia General Assembly considered this bill before?

- a. In 2004, [HB 552, Hargrove](#), the Code of Virginia was updated to remove a blanket restriction on riding two abreast and instead allow riding two abreast if the rider does not impede the flow of traffic
- b. In 2021, [HB 2262 \(Hurst\)](#) removed all restrictions on two-abreast bicycling in Virginia as is the norm in 23 other states.
- c. In 2022, [SB 362 \(Stuart\)](#) restricted two-abreast bicycling in Virginia, including a provision that "*Persons riding two abreast ...shall move into a single-file formation as quickly as is practicable when being overtaken from the rear by a faster-moving vehicle.*"