



British Columbia
School Trustees
Association

May 31, 2022

The Honourable Rob Fleming

Minister of Transportation & Infrastructure
PO Box 9055, Stn Prov Govt
Victoria, B.C. V8W 9E2
minister.transportation@gov.bc.ca

Dear Minister Fleming,

Subject: Safe Passing Distance for Safer Routes to School

At the British Columbia School Trustees Association's most recent annual general meeting, our membership, representing all 60 boards of education in B.C., passed the following resolution:

"That the BCSTA request that the Province of British Columbia amend the Motor Vehicle Act to better support safe active transportation by requiring drivers to provide 1 meter of space on roads with posted speeds of 50 km/h or less, and 1.5 meters of space on roads with posted speeds in excess of 50 km/h, when passing people cycling or walking."

Your time as the minister of education would have alerted you to many instances of children using alternative forms of transport to get to school, especially as we push the importance of reducing our carbon footprint within our communities and subsequently onto students. Cyclists, in particular, face many additional threats as they often share the roadways in our province with vehicles. Many students also walk to local schools, and not all have protected sidewalks to utilize. We must ensure that no more lives are lost when preventable measures can be put in place to protect those partaking in activities as simple as walking down a street.

As we look for examples from across the nation, we note that other provinces have adopted "safe passing distance" legislation which requires that motorists assume additional responsibility for maintaining minimum safe distances from vulnerable road users. Adjusting our existing laws to meet current needs, coupled with an awareness campaign aimed at drivers, will lead to better, safer outcomes for students who rely on public infrastructure to get to and from school and other places.

A by-product of improving safety measures for those dependent on these methods is that it will also encourage others who may not currently feel safe to take advantage of alternative transportation options.



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On behalf of all boards of education, we ask that the *Motor Vehicle Act* be amended to better protect cyclists and pedestrians by increasing space requirements for passing drivers, as outlined in the resolution above. I look forward to hearing from you and thank you for taking the time to consider this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolyn Broady". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Carolyn Broady

President

British Columbia School Trustees Association

Motion: A202211

Enclosure: Original motion rationale

CC: Jennifer Whiteside, Minister, Ministry of Education and Child Care
Christina Zacharuk, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Education and Child Care
BCSTA member boards of education
Suzanne Hoffman, CEO, BCSTA
BCSTA Board of Directors

11. Safe Passing Distance for Safer Routes to School

Category: School Premises, Facilities, Services

Motion #:	11 : A202211	Sponsor:	SD 61 (Greater Victoria)
Meeting:	AGM 2022	Action:	<i>not specified</i>
Category:		Outcome:	Letter to be drafted (April 28)
Disposition:	Carried		

Motion as Adopted:

BE IT RESOLVED:

That the BCSTA request that the Province of British Columbia amend the *Motor Vehicle Act* to better support safe active transportation by requiring drivers to provide 1 meter of space on roads with posted speeds of 50 km/h or less, and 1.5 meters of space on roads with posted speeds in excess of 50 km/h, when passing people cycling or walking.

Motion as Presented:

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That the BCSTA request that the Province of British Columbia amend the *Motor Vehicle Act* to better support safe active transportation by requiring drivers to provide 1 meter of space on roads with posted speeds of 50 km/h or less, and 1.5 meters of space on roads with posted speeds in excess of 50 km/h, when passing people cycling or walking.

Rationale:

The death of young people travelling to and from school brings to stark relief our need to update our antiquated road safety laws.

Recent data from ICBC clearly shows that cyclists, pedestrians, and motorcyclists face greater risk of death or injury in a collision with a motor vehicle relative to the motor vehicles' occupants. While motor vehicle injuries have seen a significant drop in the past decade, pedestrian injuries and fatalities have remained constant. Between 2010 and 2019, an average of 47 children under 18 years old were killed walking down the street.

Currently the *Motor Vehicle Act* of British Columbia mandates that cyclists must ride on the right-hand side of the road, and not on sidewalks unless expressly permitted by local by-law. Faster motor vehicles sharing roads with inherently slower cyclists often result in close passes, accounting for almost one third of the threatening encounters experienced by people on bicycle and almost fifty per cent of incidents in rural areas.

Because relatively few roads in B.C. have bike lanes or shoulders, and many do not even have sidewalks, directing cyclists and pedestrians to share the road with high-speed motor vehicle traffic poses a potentially fatal risk and a resulting disincentive for active transportation.

Five other provinces, including Ontario and Quebec, have updated their traffic safety laws, moving away from the old paradigm of "same road, same rules" to acknowledge that motor vehicles, due to their size and speed, have additional obligations to ensure the safety of vulnerable road users. These provinces have all enacted "safe passing distance"

legislation designed to protect vulnerable road users by educating and requiring motor vehicle operators to maintain a minimum safe distance when passing more vulnerable road users. Establishing a clear and reasonable distance for safe passing has created a better understanding and expectation around safely sharing roads, in areas that do not have dedicated or separated cycling infrastructure.

The need for safe passing distances between vehicles and those families walking and cycling to school is evident. Most families who walk or cycle to school do not have access to adequate infrastructure like sidewalks, trails, and protected bike lanes to get to school, requiring them to travel on the side of the road and share space with much larger and faster vehicles. Many families would like to walk or cycle more, but simply don't feel it is safe to do so. Others don't have a choice.

Updating our road safety laws to reflect modern best practices is a critical step in creating safer roads for all road users.

Reference(s):

[The BC Cycling Coalition](#)

[Motor Vehicle Act](#)

[Union of BC Municipalities](#)

[Vision Zero](#)

This is an action motion and does not change or contradict any existing Foundational or Policy Statement.

This motion relates to Foundational Statement 9.1FS (Safe Environment).