


Coronavirus Update

Stay informed about coronavirus – COVID-19. Learn more. *May. 7th, 2020, 9:00 am*

[Read more](#) 



Mass.gov

PRESS RELEASE

Baker-Polito Administration Files Legislation to Improve Road Safety

Proposal to address distracted driving, interlock devices,
pedestrian and bicyclist safety and new mobility options

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

1/22/2019

Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt.

Governor Karyn Polito

Governor's Press Office

Brendan Moss, Press Secretary, Governor's Office

Phone

(617) 725-4025 (tel:6177254025)

Online

gov.press@state.ma.us

(mailto:gov.press@state.ma.us)

Baker-Polito Administration Files Legislation to Improve **ROAD SAFETY**



BOSTON — The Baker-Polito Administration today filed legislation to improve road safety entitled, “An Act Relative to Improving Safety on the Roads of the Commonwealth.” The proposal makes a number of changes recommended in the Strategic Highway Safety Plan and updates existing statutes that were drafted before recent advances in various forms of mobility.

“Keeping the Commonwealth’s networks of roads as safe as possible for

everyone using them is one of our administration's top public safety priorities," **said Governor Charlie Baker.** "This bill includes common sense proposals to substantially reduce distracted driving, stiffen penalties associated with operating under the influence, improve safety requirements for certain trucks and to begin establishing a regulatory framework for new forms of transportation. We look forward to working with our colleagues in the Legislature to pass this comprehensive road safety bill into law."

"Our administration believes empowering law enforcement and transportation officials with the tools contained in this bill will make a real difference in road safety for drivers, workers, bicyclists and pedestrians," **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.** "This bill will put in place important safety measures for First Responders and highway construction crews working every day to improve road conditions and overall safety for everyone travelling in Massachusetts."

Between 2012 and 2016, 15,662 people were seriously injured and 1,820 people lost their lives on the roadways of the Commonwealth. In addition, 14 road workers were killed between 2009 and 2016. To protect those working, the legislation would allow the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) to set up temporary mandatory speed limits in construction zones. To protect people walking, bicycling and using motorcycles on Massachusetts roadways, the legislation would require state-owned heavy trucks and state and municipally-contracted vehicles to be equipped with convex and cross-over mirrors and require the installation of side guards between the front and rear wheels of these vehicles to protect people from being caught under a truck and run over by its rear wheels. The bill expands efforts to limit distracted driving by having Massachusetts join sixteen other

states, including all of our neighboring New England states, in requiring hands-free use of electronic devices while driving. Law enforcement would also be able to stop motorists who are not wearing seatbelts under this legislation.

The proposal corrects inconsistencies in the law for those convicted of Operating under the Influence (OUI) by requiring first-time offenders who apply for hardship licenses to be placed into the ignition interlock program and clarifying the ability of the Registry of Motor Vehicles to penalize those who attempt to drive after consuming alcohol, even with an ignition interlock device.

Emerging micromobility technologies like electric scooters and increased use of electric bicycles present both opportunities as a compliment to current means of transportation and challenges as an industry without any existing statutory framework. As a first step, the administration proposes treating electric scooters and pedal assist electric bicycles the same way bicycles are treated under state law and establishing a multi-party advisory group to recommend more permanent policies.

An Act Relative to Improving Safety on the Roads of the Commonwealth includes proposals on the following topics:

- **Hands-free:** Requires electronic devices to be used in “hands-free” mode and would not allow anyone operating a motor vehicle to touch or hold a mobile electronic device, “except to perform a single tap or swipe to activate, deactivate, or initiate hands-free mode.” The bill would permit talking, texting and other tasks to be completed by voice commands and

would allow law enforcement officers to better enforce distraction laws.

- **Primary seatbelt:** Law enforcement would be permitted to stop motorists for not wearing seatbelts.
- **Work zone safety:** Allows MassDOT to establish mandatory temporary lower speed limits in construction zones that would double fines when workers are present.
- **Ignition interlock, hardship licenses:** Proposal would require the use of ignition interlock devices for first offenders who apply for hardship licenses, requiring an interlock device for a minimum of six months as a condition of obtaining a hardship license.
- **Ignition interlock, penalties for violating terms of interlock program:** Clarifies the ability of the Registry to penalize those who attempt to drive after drinking alcohol, (even with an interlock device), or who tamper with an interlock device.
- **Side guards and additional mirrors:** The proposal would require all Commonwealth-owned and operated vehicles over 10,000 pounds to have side guards, convex mirrors, and cross-over mirrors after January 1, 2020. This law would require all Commonwealth and municipal contractors to have these devices by January 1, 2022. Certain vehicle classifications would be exempt and the law grants the authority to the Registrar of Motor Vehicles to grant additional exemptions, in keeping with U.S. DOT standards.
- **New technology:** Electric scooters and other low speed mobility devices, such as electric bicycles, currently lack a specific vehicle classification. The proposal treats these new technology items the same as bicycles

according to existing Mass General Law. For example, these operators, like bicyclists would need to wear a helmet if under the age of 16, would be required to yield to people walking and provide an audible signal when passing, and could not block vehicular or pedestrian traffic when parked. In addition, the law would require MassDOT to establish a micro-mobility advisory working group to propose future changes for safe adoption of emerging and undefined low speed mobility devices.

The proposals to increase road safety being made by the Baker-Polito Administration stem, in part, from discussions with members of the Massachusetts Legislature, strategies outlined in the 2018 Massachusetts Strategic Highway Safety Plan and input from key stakeholders like The Massachusetts Vision Zero Coalition and various law enforcement professionals.

###

Media Contact

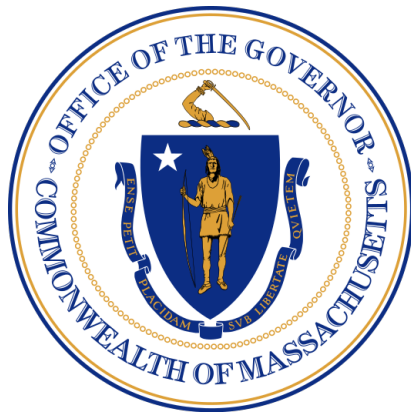
Brendan Moss, Press Secretary, Governor's Office

Phone

(617) 725-4025 (tel:6177254025)

Online

gov.press@state.ma.us (mailto:gov.press@state.ma.us)



Office of Governor Charlie Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito (</orgs/office-of-the-governor>)

Governor Charlie Baker, Lt. Governor Karyn Polito, and members of their administration are committed to making Massachusetts the best place to live, work, and raise a family.

More (</orgs/office-of-the-governor>)

Governor's Press Office (</orgs/governors-press-office>)

Visit the Governor's Press Office to learn about recent news from the administration, follow our happenings on social media, and for media contact information.

More (</orgs/governors-press-office>)

Did you find what you were looking for on this webpage?

Yes No

[SEND FEEDBACK](#)