



Rethinking urban transportation



Safe Roads  
ALLIANCE



December 12th, 2017

The Honorable Speaker DeLeo  
Massachusetts State House  
Room 356  
Boston, MA, 02133

**RE: Support for H.3660, An Act requiring the hands-free use of mobile telephones while driving**

Dear Speaker DeLeo,

The Massachusetts Vision Zero Coalition, made up of community-based organizations, businesses, nonprofits, civic groups and individuals, all dedicated to the goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and improving safety on our streets, respectfully request that the House moves House Bill 3660, *An Act requiring the hands-free use of mobile telephones while driving*.

Our coalition supports this important legislation because distracted driving is more of a problem than ever, in large part due to the prevalence of smart phones. According to ZenDrive, motorists with smart phones use hands-held devices in 88 out of every 100 trips. They also estimate there are approximately 600 million trips involving a distracted driver in the US every day. This has led to 3,477 road fatalities in 2015 and 391,000 injuries sustained in crashes nationwide involving a distracted driver (NHTSA). Because data is hard to collect in crashes involving a distracted driver, we know these numbers don't capture the true impact of distracted driving.

We have heard that House leadership is divided over whether to make a hands-free law a primary or secondary violation. Making a hand-held ban only a secondary violation would be very concerning to us, as it would not strengthen the current law at all. This would only confuse the public and send the wrong message, i.e. "Just don't get caught". We need a proactive method of enforcement, not a reactive one. We want to *prevent* people from recklessly driving over the yellow line, driving onto the shoulder, or obviously blowing through a red light, instead of enforcing the law only *after* a dangerous violation has occurred.

The purpose of a hands-free law is to get people to put down the phone and focus on the road. If it is made only a secondary offense, then it would not make it easier for law enforcement to actually enforce the law, and it would not send a strong and clear message to the public. Drivers would end up more confused about what is and what is not allowed when behind the wheel.



Sharing the concerns about racial profiling, we support the data-collection language in the Senate bill (S.2103) that would help ensure that this legislation does not contribute to any trends of racial profiling in traffic stops.



We are very encouraged to see that Governor Baker has stated his support for a Hands-Free bill. Secretary of Transportation Stephanie Pollack has recognized the



“substantial uptick” in fatal crashes in the past few years, and there is no doubt that this increase is partly due to distracted driving. We strongly hope that the House will join the Senate in passing this live-saving law this session.

Thank you for your consideration of our strong support of this legislation, and we hope that you will consider our concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Boston Cyclists Union  
Cambridge Bicycle Safety  
DotBike  
Green Streets Initiative  
LivableStreets Alliance  
Longwood Area Cyclists  
MassBike  
Safe Roads Alliance  
StreetsPAC MASS  
T4MA  
TransitMatters  
WalkBoston  
Walk Up Roslindale