



Motorcycle Riders Foundation

236 Massachusetts Ave. N.E. #510, Washington, D.C. 20002
202-546-0983 / FAX 202-546-0986 • mrfoffice@mrf.org • www.mrf.org

Statement of

Senator Robert Letourneau

New Hampshire State Department of Safety Motorcycle Rider Education Specialist

Former Chairman of the NH Senate Transportation Committee

Lifelong Motorcyclist

Representing the Motorcycle Riders Foundation

Before the

Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

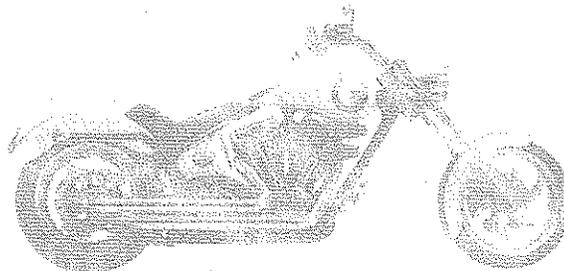
US House of Representatives

Subcommittee on Highways and Transit

March 29, 2011

Regarding

Highway Safety Programs





Motorcycle Riders Foundation

236 Massachusetts Ave. N.E. #510, Washington, D.C. 20002

202-546-0983 / FAX 202-546-0986 • mrf@office@mrf.org • www.mrf.org

Recently NHTSA sent their budget request to the hill. They proposed adding a new component to this successful grant program. They would like to also use this small pool of funds for motorcycle helmet use promotion. Keep in mind they can already do this with available 402 funds. We ask that you reject this proposal as this would dilute this already small amount of money from where it needs to go, teaching people how to properly ride motorcycles and to teach the rest of the motoring public to watch and look out for motorcycles.

We ask that Congress continue this practice set for the in SAFETEA-LU. Consider this, under current SAFETEA-LU law the federal government spends \$1 dollar per motorcyclist per year and ask your self if you think that is enough.

Accident Prevention

Past legislation this committee has crafted included language that specifically directs NHTSA to focus on accident prevention over occupant protection when addressing motorcycle safety. Occupant protection has been successful with other forms of vehicle design, however the frame geometry and inherent exposure of a motorcycle limits any occupant protection success. Accident prevention saves societal costs, reduces injuries and reduces property damage. We ask that you continue to promote outcome oriented accident prevention solutions.

Again, from a personal perspective, on July 5 2008 putting my money where my mouth is I took and passed the advanced "*Skilled Rider Course*" because I know it saves lives, and, yes, I did learn that I have rider's skills I was not using properly. However, more importantly when people ask me if I have taken the course I can say yes and it works...

HOV Lanes

Another provision of past authorization bills passed by this committee creating a safer riding environment was the access for motorcycles to HOV lanes. This action by Congress has resulted in all federally funded HOV lanes are open to motorcycles. When commuting, motorcyclists are safer in a riding environment that has fewer vehicles and traffic is flowing smoothly rather than in congested stop and go traffic. When considering future highway design it is important to include motorcycles and we ask that this same allowance be assured with HOT lanes and PPP's. HOV lane access provides motorcyclists with a safer commuting environment. For that, 7 million American motorcyclists thank Congress.

Motorcyclist Advisory Council

Also included in SAFETEA-LU was language that created an advisory council to provide wisdom to the Secretary of Transportation on motorcycles and the design of highway infrastructure. The council was initially





Motorcycle Riders Foundation

236 Massachusetts Ave. N.E. #510, Washington, D.C. 20002

202-546-0983 / FAX 202-546-0986 • mrfoffice@mrf.org • www.mrf.org

Chairman Duncan, Mr. DeFazio, and members of the Highways and Transit Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to testify today on behalf of American motorcyclists'. My name is Senator Robert Letourneau and I am here representing the Motorcycle Riders Foundation (MRF) which is a coalition of state's motorcyclists' rights organizations and individual members representing about 275,000 individual motorcyclists. I also serve as the Motorcycle Safety Specialist for the New Hampshire Department of Safety. I have also served as Chairman of the New Hampshire Senate Transportation Committee. Additionally, I have been motorcycle rider for 43 years.

2010 funds

I appreciate the opportunity to provide your subcommittee with some thoughts the MRF has on highway safety programs administered by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). The members of the MRF are appreciative that in the SAFETEA-LU legislation section 2010 provided \$25 million specifically for motorcycle safety rider education and motorist awareness of motorcycles. That program reached 48 States and has been extended for two additional years. Funding shortfalls for motorcycle safety are present across the country. Only twenty four (24) states report that safety programs operate from user fees alone. Eighteen (18) states use a combination of user fees, dedicated state funding and federal funds. Three (3) states use only federal funds. Making matters even worse, during this time of budget shortfalls many Governors are raiding the dedicated safety funds generated by licensing fees from motorcycles to pay for non-transportation programs. When states are running a deficit, they often turn to motorcycle safety funds as a piggy bank. We hope that next reauthorization not only keep the federal motorcycle safety grant program as a priority. Many non profit state motorcycle rights organizations (SMRO's) have implemented share the road campaigns and impaired riding reduction programs with private funding sources. These 2010 funds can be made available to the non profit world to help them continue these important endeavors. It is important to note that due in large part of this program motorcycle fatalities dropped for the first time in 11 years during the 2008-2009 time period. The decrease in fatalities from '08-'09 was by 10%.

According to a survey of the State motorcycle safety programs by the Governors Highway Safety Association motorcycle registrations have more than doubled since 1997 and new motorcycle sales have quadrupled since then. Surely when the population is increased, one must expect the crash numbers to climb as well. Simple statistics.

That same report stated this explosion of motorcycle sales from 356,000 in 1997 to 1.1 million today is crippling the rider education programs across the country. Twenty nine (29) States and DC have capacity problems and often have wait times for training more than 12 weeks. This is another reason why Congress needs to invest more money in motorcycle rider education via the section 2010 grant program.





Motorcycle Riders Foundation

236 Massachusetts Ave. N.E. #510, Washington, D.C. 20002

202-516-0983 / FAX 202-546-0986 • mrf@office@mrf.org • www.mrf.org

chartered for 2 years, extend an additional 2 years and is now dormant. We ask that you again include language to re-authorize this charter by directing the Secretary of Transportation to re-ignite the group.

Motorcycle Only Roadside Checkpoints

Recently NHTSA solicited applications from State law enforcement agencies from around the country to propose ideas on how they would conduct motorcycle only roadside checkpoints. NHTSA then presented an award in the amount of \$70,000.00 to the State of Georgia to conduct such checkpoints. The stops are mandatory are used to check for proper licensing, registration, DOT compliant personal protective equipment and the general condition of the motorcycle.

The first of these checkpoints were conducted a few weeks ago by the Georgia State Highway Patrol and targeted motorcyclists traveling southbound through Georgia many of whom were on their way to Florida for the world famous Daytona bike week. Any one who did not pull over was subject to a \$600 dollar fine and charged with evading law enforcement.

These mandatory checkpoints are not only a violation of personal rights they are completely discriminatory. As motorcyclists we are already subjected to all other roadside checkpoints such as drunk driving and so on. For the federal government to target a single form of vehicle for mandatory checkpoints is not acceptable. These mandatory checkpoints are not only waste of resources, they do not save lives or prevent accidents.

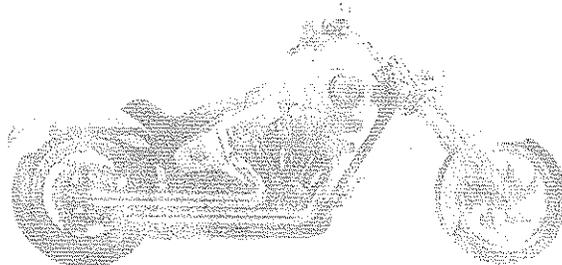
We ask that as you draft the next highway authorization you include language that would prohibit any funds allocated to the Department of Transportation be banned from this type of use. In this age of fiscal challenges we can not afford to be wasting tax payer money on this sort of nonsense.

Incentive funds

The MRF understands the need to incentivize certain actions from the states in order to make the roads as safe as possible. We support incentive programs as long as the funds do not come from much needed monies to maintain and improve our roads. We support incentive grants that are performance based on reducing accidents and fatalities. Those two items should be the only criteria. The MRF opposes incentive grants that are issued based on states passing specific laws.

Green vehicles

We ask Congress to promote motorcycling as a means of reducing energy consumption and reducing traffic congestion. One way to achieve a safer highway landscape is to follow some international practices that our





Motorcycle Riders Foundation

236 Massachusetts Ave. N.E. #510, Washington, D.C. 20002

202-546-0983 / FAX 202-546-0986 • mrfoffice@mrf.org • www.mrf.org

world neighbors are implementing such as more motorcycle parking and lane sharing. Allowing motorcycles to trickle through red light traffic to get out of the traffic mix has been extremely successful, over seas and in California, in reducing crashes as well as congestion.

Decreasing fatalities

When I last testified before this panel I had the distinct displeasure in telling you that motorcycle fatalities were on the rise. I am pleased to tell you that has now changed. According an April 2010 survey done by the Governors Highway Safety Association motorcycle fatalities are down over 10% from 2008-2009. That time period is the most recent set of data available. Some attribute the drop to less vehicle miles traveled. According to the Motorcycle Industry Council new tire sales were up almost 3% over the same dates. An accurate VMT number for motorcycles has always been elusive and until recently not even required by law for individual states to report. Now that they must report the number many estimate the number, not accurately counting the miles traveled as they do for other vehicles. Using the tire sales data is the best available measure of motorcycle usage.

One can attribute this rise in motorcycle usage to one thing, the economy. As gas prices continue to sky rocket we see many people using their motorcycle for transport, not sport.

A Pennsylvania joint House and Senate committee on legislative budget and finance issued a report on June 25th, 2008 on the fatality trends since PA's modernization of its helmet law in 2003 to allow for riders 21 years or older who have completed a motorcycle safety course or have held a valid motorcycle license for 2 calendar years. The report found that "Due to the substantial increase in motorcycle registration, the rate of crashes per 10,000 motorcycle registrations actually declined from 132.4 in CY (Calendar Year) 2000 to 113.2 crashes per 10,000 motorcycle registrations in CY 2007". The report also showed that helmeted riders involved in a collision dropped from 67% in 2000 to 57% in 2007.

When motorcycle safety is addressed, it almost always revolves around one controversial issue. Helmet laws. All but three States have one version or another of a helmet law on the books. Twenty seven (27) states allow riders to exercise choice when donning personal protective equipment and the remaining 20 require all riders to wear a helmet of some sort. If helmet laws worked there would be a sharp contrast concerning crash data between States that require universal helmet use and those that do not. I am here to tell you that is not the case.

According to a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration 2007 publication two of the three states that had the largest increase in fatalities from 2005-2006 have universal helmet laws (AL and CA) and of the three states with single largest decrease in motorcycle fatalities over the year before two states (IL and NH) have no helmet requirement whatsoever and the third (OH) allows for experienced riders to ride without a helmet.





Motorcycle Riders Foundation

236 Massachusetts Ave. N.E. #510, Washington, D.C. 20002

202-546-0983 / FAX 202-546-0986 • mrfoffice@mrf.org • www.mrf.org

The bottom line is helmet laws do not prevent accidents and as a daily rider, that is the best-case scenario: avoid the crash in the first place. How can we do this? Through proper, affordable rider education offered locally and secondly through widespread motorist awareness campaigns to educate the general motoring public to be aware of motorcycles on the road.

One last personal observation, in New Hampshire during the first 10 years of our motorcycle education program having trained over 23,000 riders only one of those riders was involved in a fatality and we believe that that rider had a medical event. Education is the key to successfully reducing motorcycle fatalities our experience is proof positive.

On behalf of the MRF and Americas motorcyclists', I thank you for this opportunity to present our concerns and views as you consider safety issues in the development of the national transportation system.



COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
Truth in Testimony Disclosure

Pursuant to clause 2(g)(5) of House Rule XI, in the case of a witness appearing in a nongovernmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include: (1) a curriculum vitae; and (2) a disclosure of the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. Such statements, with appropriate redaction to protect the privacy of the witness, shall be made publicly available in electronic form not later than one day after the witness appears.

(1) Name:

Jeff Henne

(2) Other than yourself, name of entity you are representing:

Robert LeTourneau

(3) Are you testifying on behalf of an entity other than a Government (federal, state, local) entity?

YES

If yes, please provide the information requested below and attach your curriculum vitae.

Motorcycle Riders Foundation

NO

(4) Please list the amount and source (by agency and program) of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) received during the current fiscal year or either of the two previous fiscal years by you or by the entity you are representing:

NONE

Signature



Date

3-25-11

Bob Letourneau
Legislative Bio

NH House of Representatives 1997 – 2004

Committee Assigned:

Transportation Committee, 1997 - 2004
Election Law Committee 1999-2000
State & Federal Relations & Veterans Affairs Committee 1997-1998
Rules Committee 2003-2004
Legislative Administration Committee 2003-2004

Positions held:

Clerk of Transportation Committee 1997-2002
Assistant Majority Whip 1999-2000
Assistant Majority Leader 2001-2004

Boards sub-committees:

Board of Manufactured Housing 1997 – 2004 / Vice Chair 2003-2004
Chairman of the NH Civil War Memorials Commission 2000 – 2004
Chairman of the Marine Patrol Study Committee 2yrs
Chairman sub-committee on teenage drivers

Rockingham County

Rockingham County Executive Committee 1997 - 2004
Chairman Telecommunication's sub-committee 1997 – 1998
Member Sheriff Sub-committee 1997-1998
Chairman Non-County Special's sub-committee 1999-2000
Chairman Sheriff Sub-committee 2001-2002
Chairman County Attorney sub-committee 2003-2004

Legislative Associations

American Legislative Exchange Council Telecommunications task force 1998 – 2004
Council of State Governments, 1998-2003 Steering, Planning & Host Committee for NH Conference 2001
National Conference of State Legislators 1997 – 2004 Transportation Task Force 2003-2010 V/Chair 2010

Community Involvement

Derry Cable Advisory Board 1997-2004 / Chairman 2003- 2004
Derry Economic Development Corporation Board member 1999-2004

New Hampshire Senate 2004 - 2010

Committee Assignment:

Transportation & Interstate Cooperation (Chairman) 2005-2010

Health and Human Services	2005-2006
Energy Environment & Economic Development	2005-2006
Education	2007-2010
Judiciary	2005-2010
Election Law	2007-2008
JLCAR	2005-2010

Legislative Associations

American Legislative Exchange Council Telecommunications task force 1998 - 2010
Council of State Governments, 1998-2010 Steering, Planning & Host Committee for NH Conference 2001
Vice-Chairman CSG/ERC Transportation Task Force 2010
National Conference of State Legislators 1997 - 2010 Transportation Task Force 2003-2010

License Held:

Justice of the Peace 2009 - 2015

Current position:

Motorcycle Education Specialist NH Department of Safety - Division of Motor Vehicles Motorcycle Training Program