



Oregon

John A. Kitzhaber, M.D., Governor

Governor's Advisory Committee on

Motorcycle Safety

c/o Transportation Safety Division, MS-3

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Governor John A. Kitzhaber, M.D.

160 State Capitol

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Salem, OR 97301-4047

Re: GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON MOTORCYCLE SAFETY ("the Committee") ANNUAL REPORT – 2012

Dear Governor Kitzhaber:

In 2012, the Committee convened in January, May, July, and October – four times in total. Much of the Committee's time was devoted to routine matters, including:

- reviews of DMV issues of interest to motorcyclists;
- updates on rider education from TEAM OREGON;
- updates on noteworthy motorcycle incidents and trends from the Oregon State Police and Portland Police Bureau;
- updates on general motorcycle safety, including a review of fatal crashes, from the Transportation Safety Division of ODOT;
- updates and commentary from active motorcycle organizations in Oregon.

With little legislation on the calendar, the Committee focused the remainder of its time and resources on a survey of Oregon motorcyclists. The committee also drafted a letter to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration ("NHTSA") regarding ways to improve consumer awareness of helmet safety. Washington state has passed legislation allowing modified off-road motorcycles to be operated on public roads. The Committee has begun discussing whether a similar law in Oregon might have implications for motorcycle safety. Finally, citizens and motorcycle organizations have petitioned ODOT for variable message signs ("VMS") which admonish motorists to "Watch for motorcyclists" throughout the year, but especially in May (proclaimed by your office as "Motorcycle Safety Awareness Month"). The Committee reviewed ODOT policy to determine why such advisories may be ill considered.

Motorcycle Survey

In January, the Committee was briefed on a meeting of Oregon, Washington, and Idaho transportation safety administrators, who determined that collecting and sharing data on motorcyclist practices and attitudes might inform motorist media campaigns throughout the region. The Committee debated a survey of motorcycle operators endorsed in Oregon. At its January meeting, the Committee unanimously agreed to fund such a survey. In July, 2,000 of the

approximately 131,000 Oregonians who are registered motorcycle owners received the survey. When survey processing ended in September, 835 completed surveys had been returned, an extraordinary 42 percent response rate.

Among the survey findings, the Committee learned that 61 percent of respondents have twenty or more years of riding experience and that fifteen percent own three or more motorcycles. Nearly half (47%) of respondents ride primarily for pleasure and almost two-thirds (65%) of respondents had ridden more than 1,000 miles in the previous twelve months.

A couple of responses validated recent legislation mandating rider education. For example, nearly half of the respondents (47%) indicated that inattention or distraction by other drivers is the greatest risk to motorcycle safety. (In fact, since 2007, fatalities attributable to the fault of another driver account for only 22 percent of the total). And for all of the hazards to which riders are exposed when they depart a moving motorcycle, only 35 percent of respondents believe they should wear “All the gear, all the time.”

Letter to NHTSA Urging Evaluation of SHARP Helmet Ratings

In May the Committee discussed ways that U.S. consumers might make better informed helmet purchase decisions. The U.K. Department for Transport has developed a Safety Helmet Assessment and Rating Programme (“SHARP”). SHARP purchases off-the-shelf helmets and subjects them to 32 impact tests that better simulate real-world conditions at a variety of speeds. Helmets are then rated and results are published on a very informative website (<http://sharp.direct.gov.uk/>) available to consumers at no charge.

The Committee felt such a program might be well received by motorcyclists in the U.S. and in October we sent a letter to NHTSA suggesting it study the SHARP system. In November, NHTSA acknowledged the program and its benefits. However, limited agency resources make it unlikely such a program will be available in the U.S. anytime soon.

TEAM OREGON

TEAM OREGON trained 11,805 students in 2012, a 15 percent increase over 2011. 2012 was the third year of the mandatory training law phase-in; all new motorcyclists under the age of 41 were required to take an approved rider education course. As in 2011, many of those seeking the required training are opting to take the shorter and less expensive Intermediate Rider Training course (“IRT”); IRT trainings were up 50% during the year compared to an increase of nearly 7.5% among students taking the Basic Rider Training course. In 2013, the law requires all new riders under 51 years of age take an approved course to secure their endorsement.

In October, TEAM OREGON proposed a phased-in tuition increase. Mandatory training has created greater demand for additional facilities. Rising gasoline and maintenance costs, coupled with the need to replace worn-out bikes and add scooters to the fleet threaten to force the program into deficit as early as 2014.

TEAM OREGON proposed to **increase tuition in 2014 by \$20** (\$179 to \$199 for the BRT; \$149 to \$169 for the IRT) and by **another \$20 in 2016** (\$199 to \$219 for the BRT; \$169 to \$189 for the IRT). After deliberating, the Committee agreed to recommend to the Oregon Transportation Safety Committee that the increases be granted. The Committee also asked TEAM OREGON to report back in the fall of 2014 on the continued need for the 2016 increases.

Committee Membership

As we mentioned last year, three Committee members had their terms expire in 2011. One member was replaced in 2011; **Jim Stewart** of Klamath Falls and **David Belton** of Corvallis agreed to continue to serve until replacements were named. In July 2012 four candidates were interviewed and two were selected. **Bob Reichenberg** of Jefferson and **Ted Tracy** of Hillsboro were appointed and they began their service at the Committee's January 2013 meeting.

Finally, we are sad to report that 2012 was not a particularly safe year for Oregon motorcyclists. **50 riders lost their lives in 49 crashes**, the most since 2009. We remain particularly concerned about two aspects of the fatality picture: the rising average age of the victim (50.3 in 2012, up from 48.1 in 2011) and the continued high number of single-vehicle fatal events (55% of total fatalities in 2012). We look forward to the completion of the phase-in of mandatory training in 2015. For an educated rider may come to appreciate how physical reactions change as we mature – lessons that may serve to reduce crashes of all types.

Respectfully submitted,



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