

## **Building a Better Governor's Advisory Committee on Motorcycle Safety,**

### **One Survey Question At A Time (12/29/15)**

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#### **Background**

At the Oct. 15, 2015, meeting of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Motorcycle Safety (GAC-MS), the group discussed the need to improve how new GAC members are melded into the committee. The intent is to find ways to get the greenhorns up to speed more quickly, making them more effective. The Chair tasked a subcommittee of Van Moore, Peter Russell, and Debbie Weber to study the issue and also brainstorm on ways to improve the GAC recruitment process.

The subcommittee, along with GAC Chair Bob Reichenberg, crafted a 10-question survey which was distributed to immediate past GAC members, the GAC liaisons, the GAC chair, the subcommittee, and the current and former Motorcycle Safety program manager to address these topics. Presented below are the results from the 12 surveys received with major themes and minor chords identified. I grouped them into these categories based on whether numerous respondents either used the same words in their comments or expressed similar sentiments (major themes) or were notable for being unique or few (minor chords). In other words, the division is based on qualitative measures, not quantitative.

#### **1. What three pieces of advice would you give to an incoming member to the GAC on Motorcycle Safety?**

*Major themes:* The single-most common item was for incoming members to keep an open mind on topics, rather than entering the committee with the intent for advocating for a position or solution. Another common element was to prepare adequately for the meetings by reading the materials ahead of time. Finally, almost all suggested diving into the discussions from the beginning of your appointment.

*Minor chords:* A few respondents advised hanging back for a meeting or two just to observe and learn. A minority also advocated for performing outside research and becoming a resource on topics of interest which the GAC could utilize. A few advised patience is required when dealing with governmental processes. Finally, one respondent suggested looking at a topic for ripple effects on all motorists, rather than approaching the topic from a motorcyclist's perspective only.

## **2. What particular obstacles do you perceive for new GAC members?**

*Major themes:* By far, the overwhelming response was the complexity of the GAC's mission and its role in interacting with ODOT, TEAM Oregon, and the various riding communities. A strong second was learning the parliamentary process of how a committee functions.

*Minor chords:* There were many, including learning the state's rules on ethics and transparency; learning the group dynamics of the GAC; understanding the GAC is an advisory body, not a policy-making body; it's human nature that the new kid on the block does not want to make waves; and new members not knowing the resources (personnel or publications) that are readily available to help them. A last minor chord was the challenge of new members getting to know the older GAC members better due to interactions mainly being in a formal committee setting.

## **3. How would you address these obstacles?**

*Major themes:* Two approaches dominated the responses and both had the goal of providing a better introductory orientation: one was personal and the other was professional. For personal, several people suggested a mentoring program where an existing GAC member provides guidance or explanation about the GAC and/or how it relates ODOT, the Legislature, training riders, etc. For professional, common comments were improving the written materials provided to incoming GAC members. This can range from a guidebook to an improved webpage. Another shared suggestion was to utilize the knowledge of agency staff and the liaisons.

*Minor chords:* Expand the opportunities for informal interaction, but not violating Oregon's Public Meetings laws. Give incoming members a physical tour of Transportation Safety Division (TSD) or the Capitol, perhaps even shadowing the Motorcycle Safety Program Manager for a day or half-day. One respondent wrote manage the GAC meetings to keep them more focused on the agenda and strategic objectives.

## **4. What three to five things are most important for a new committee member to know?**

*Major themes:* Given the diversity of the GAC, not surprisingly there really were not that many areas of agreement. The closest to common comments were realize you serve at the pleasure of the governor; learn and understand the issues facing the committee; respect the confidential nature of the crash and accident data; learn Roberts Rules of Order; and accept debate will often be vigorous, but never personal.

*Minor themes:* Learn the ethical standards required of GAC members; get to know your new GAC peers and what they're riding, reading, or researching; know current laws that apply to

motorcycles; be familiar with trends in motorcycling; utilize the knowledge of ODOT staff, the liaisons, and other GAC members; understand motorcycle safety and training are not synonymous; make decisions based on careful analysis of data and not perceptions; and understand ODOT facilitates the GAC, but does not run the committee.

## **5. What resources would help committee members be more effective?**

*Major themes:* Two major themes emerged, one internal to the GAC and the other on external outreach. For help internally, several cited an improved handbook along with more in-depth meeting minutes. Again, the need to establish a mentoring program figured prominently. For external resources, surveys pointed to revising the GAC webpage into more of a one-stop location for motorcycle safety information. One suggestion was to make either audio or video available of the GAC meetings.

*Minor chords:* Provide a training session or primer on ODOT's crash data and expand the data set from fatalities to include injuries. Clarify the roles of the various entities involved with the GAC. Expand the public outreach by attending rallies and/or motorcycle club meeting to listen their issues.

## **6. Describe your ideal GAC candidate.**

*Major themes:* All agreed the candidate needs to be an active rider, with some defining that by annual mileage. A close second was the need to be open minded and not only interested in one issue.

*Minor themes:* Be a rider who is well-versed in different types of riding (dirt; touring, commuting, etc.). The ideal GAC candidate should be actively concerned about rider safety. The willingness of a GAC candidate to represent the committee at club meetings or rallies also arose. A few mentioned of the need to be mindful of the time of others when participating in GAC discussions by being concise and/or on-point. A few also mentioned having sufficient time to devote to the GAC.

## **7. What aspect of the GAC do you think might be the most challenging to an incoming member?**

*Major themes:* Almost all comments referenced the complex mission of the GAC itself or a subtle variation on that theme. A complementary comment is the difficulty of integrating into a committee with many members who have served together for numerous years. Without meaning to, current members can create a situation that is intimidating. The group knowledge about previous topics and/or decisions can be challenging to access easily.

*Minor themes:* It can be stressful for a new member to learn how to participate, especially if unfamiliar with the parliamentary process. The members and liaisons are sometimes not clearly identified. New members do not always recognize the GAC is an advisory committee, not a decision-making body or policy-making body. Lastly, one respondent pointed out understanding all the variables that go into motorcycle safety.

### **8. What three to five suggestions do you have to make it easier for an incoming GAC member to quickly get up to speed?**

*Major themes:* The most-common theme with minor variations was for increased interaction with new members for the first year or so. Suggestions included regular and frequent one-on-ones with either the GAC Chair or Vice Chair; creating a mentoring program; or more interaction with GAC peers in an informal setting.

*Minor themes:* Utilize ODOT staff to a greater degree, especially the Program Manager and his/her resources. It would also be helpful to review laws, rules, and plans related to motorcycle safety and the state's policies related to ethics. Come a bit early to the meetings and stay a bit late to get to know your GAC peers.

### **9. What makes an effective GAC member?**

*Major themes:* Overwhelmingly the consensus was for the ability to listen and keep an open mind. Respondents also referenced staying abreast of GAC meeting materials and actively participating in meetings. Several alluded to the benefits of being analytical and using data.

*Minor themes:* A core belief that serving the riders of Oregon is a privilege. A desire to advocate for motorcycle safety outside of the meetings was also mentioned.

### **10. Any additional thoughts regarding the GAC, the GAC recruiting process, how the committee brings new members up to speed once they join, or how the committee could be more effective?**

*Major themes:* Recruiting came up several times and that the process could be improved. The informal methods have worked fairly well (hey, we're all here), but they could benefit from tweaking.

*Minor themes:* Suggestions ranged from dropping the geographic requirements to expanding the GAC to 9 or 11 members. Regarding the GAC overall, suggestions ranged from forming various subcommittees. To increase effectiveness, another idea was to have staff and the Safety Administrator personally brief new members prior to the first meeting and follow-up if needed.

**Recommendations:** Based on the submitted surveys, the GAC should take several actions itself and propose two others to ODOT as these require agency approval and/or initiation.

*GAC-controlled changes:* 1) The GAC should form a mentoring program where one or more seasoned committee members provide guidance and information to new members. 2) The GAC should prepare a guidebook for new members' orientation. This would include background materials the Strategic Plan, crash data and trends, legislation, flowchart for legislation, ODOT organization chart, etc. 3) The GAC should discuss whether to form topical subcommittees (recruiting, tracking legislation, data/trends, outreach, etc.) to drill down deeper and then brief the larger GAC.

*Changes needing ODOT approval:* 1) The GAC website should be substantially revised to become a one-stop shop on motorcycle safety issues. 2) Re-examine the recruiting process and perhaps establish a more formal methodology.