

Texas Motorcycle Safety Coalition Meeting Minutes

December 8th, 2016

Texas A&M Transportation Institute
Gibb Gilchrist Building, Room 102
10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Highlights

[Texas is poised to have a decrease in fatal motorcycle crashes](#)

[TTI is developing an interactive online map of popular motorcycle roads](#)

[Indiana ABATE's Jay Jackson and Total Control's Lee Parks identified as potential speakers for the Statewide Motorcycle Safety Forum](#)

[Motorcycle riding clubs and groups have great success in adopting new ways to maintain safety](#)

[TTI researchers have published a comprehensive motorcycle crash analysis, detailing factors and details of crashes around Texas](#)

Opening Remarks

TMSC Chair Chris Beiries opened the discussion at 10:19 by welcoming new people. All attendees went around the table and introduced themselves. In attendance were members from TxDOT, law enforcement agencies, Sherri Matthews, rider clubs and organizations.

Overview of Current Motorcycle Numbers & Trends

DJ Jeffries, TxDOT, opened his presentation by discussing how cities like Austin have seen dramatic population increases. The influx of people has led to an alarming rate of increased automobile crashes. Nationally, there has been a record high in motorcycle fatalities. Texas has not been following this trend.

For all 14 TxDOT program areas, motorcycles are the only one that is seeing a decrease in fatalities. Last year, there were just over 500. Currently, there have been less than 450. With 40,000 registered motorcycles, Texas has an increased exposure rate for fatal motorcycle crashes. Even as population grows and exposure rates increase, fatalities on road per motorcycle are dropping. Previously, the fatality rate was 11.46. The current rate is 10.1

Mr. Jeffries spoke specifically about several major contributing factors, including alcohol, licensing, and helmet use. Currently, there have been 90 alcohol related fatal crashes. 20% of fatalities involve alcohol, which is about half the amount of alcohol related fatal crashes for cars.

The number of un-helmeted fatalities has dropped significantly, and at a steeper rate than overall fatalities. Texas currently boasts a 72.1% helmet use – highest state average of a state that does not

have a helmet law. Mr. Jeffries identified licensing as an issue that still needs to be conquered. Younger riders need to be convinced of the importance of training and proper licensing. Law enforcement plays a crucial role in this, as they are the ones who can enforce the rules of proper licensing.

Questions about increasing the amount of licensed and trained riders included, “how do we reach millennials getting out there without training?” “is money a problem/can we use public money to support the DPS MSU program, and reduce the cost of the course?” and “how do we reach moped and scooter riders?” Some answers were that the info given out to motorcycle clubs is different than the info we need to send out to scooter riders. Mr. Jeffries said that “we need to give a message that will bring them into the fold”. For reaching younger people, with the increased popularity of obtaining degrees online and using cell-phone based apps, there needs to be a way to make the curriculum available in ways that younger riders would want to access.

Mr. Jeffries asserted that the work is not done. We have “grabbed the low hanging fruit” and we will rely on TTI’s report to identify other areas that can be addressed to lower the amount of fatal motorcycle crashes in Texas. Mr. Jeffries credited the work of what happens in this room to be a factor in the decreasing rate of motorcycle fatalities. DJ said “we are actually making a difference, and you should all be proud”.

TTI’s Motorcycle Mapping Project

Laura Higgins, TTI, introduced the TTI motorcycle mapping project. TTI’s Looklearnlive.org will soon include an interactive map that displays crash information, video of popular roads for motorcycles rides, and tips for navigating roads with high crash rates. TTI’s Mike Manser is looking to meet with about 5 coalition members via conference call to discuss what kind of information riders want to have. Laura asked interested parties to connect with her during lunch to provide contact information that she will then turn over to Mike Manser.

Brainstorm/Discussion for 2017 Statewide Motorcycle Safety Forum

Laura Higgins continued addressing the group and moved into discussing the 2017 Statewide Motorcycle Safety Forum. The Forum is to be held in May. Laura brought up a few general categories for discussion:

Speakers: Lee Parks, who is in charge of the California licensing program and is the curriculum developer for Total Control.

TTI researchers of causation study were requested.

Road design and road surfacing experts were requested– there was a brief discussion on this at a coalition meeting, but one coalition member asked how can riders take this back to their communities. Darren McDaniels, a TxDOT roadway engineer, was brought up as a “great person to present high surface friction treatment, and run-off-the-road crashes”.

Keynote speaker: Jay Jackson, who is from Indiana ABATE, is vice president of Motorcycle Riders Association and is well-versed in motorcycle rights, the ethanol debate, off-road

vehicles, and more. Jay was commended as being an excellent speaker and someone who can give a presentation on what is happening in Washington D.C. in regards to motorcycle rights.

Mike Manser was brought up as a potential speaker to discuss the human factors side of why motorcycles are difficult for drivers to see.

Topics

A question was asked about scooters, and if they are legally obligated to have a Class M. This created a discussion about how scooters have evolved, and are now able to travel as fast as smaller displacement motorcycles. Laura Higgins asked the group if there would be interest in having a presentation on scooter safety and the issues of scooter riders. The group expressed that the forum attendees would not be interested in a presentation geared towards scooter riders. A 15 minute brainstorming session on scooters was brought up as a potential forum topic. Materials geared towards moped and scooter riders could be developed and given out at dealers of scooters advocating for scooter riders to take the basic rider course. The idea of reaching the scooter riding community, specifically through the creation of scooter specific materials to distribute at campuses and scooter shops, is an idea that the majority of the coalition members expressed interest in. DJ stated that getting started with a basic tip card for scooters is necessary. For college campuses, when students register for a scooter/MC parking pass, they should be given tip cards.

Bringing motorcycle safety to community events, like National Night Out, was brought up. A public information officer was suggested as a potential speaker for the forum. Texas Municipal Education Court Center was brought up as a location to reach judges.

A legislative update was recommended as a topic.

Funding for motorcycle education was recommended as a topic. The need for a desire to connect with the community and motivate them to contribute to funding was brought up by coalition member. Member David Bryant brought up that a college in California offered the BRC as a class.

Mr. Jeffries recommended connecting with Agri-life's FDRM alcohol unit to bring their intoxicated motorcycle simulator to the forum.

Club Safety Overview and Open Discussion

Ron "Bone" Blackett, from Blackett Arms MC, was asked how clubs increase safety as a starting point for this discussion. Bone spoke about safety starting in the community. There are 12 Confederation of Clubs regions, which are all in the process of appointing a point of contact within the region that connects with TTI and TxDOT to acquire safety materials and info. The culture of clubs is changing, as more riders are wearing helmets. Drinking is an issue within clubs. In Bone's personal club, when they ride to bike nights, if two or more of their club members come to a rider and say they have had enough to drink, the rider has the option to hand over the keys or hand over their club membership. Bone articulated that in a club, if one rider goes down in a crash, others will go down. It is up to clubs to adopt and enforce their own norms and rules to combat impaired riding.

Reaching kids is an effective way to increase safety. Bone discussed members holding onto the reflective “Share the Road” stickers to pass out to kids they see in their community. The parent driving the vehicle may not see a motorcycle, but the child may.

Road captains play a crucial role in increasing safety within clubs. Road captains, or other riders, will ride ahead and alert the rest of the group of road way issues. The “Road Captain mentality” and role has changed from being the rider who knows where all the bars are, to the rider who knows the best roads to ride. There has been a generational change in attitude regarding the purpose of rides, shifting from bar hopping to enjoying more scenic rides. Clubs also enforce safety through not allowing riders with unsafe bikes to partake in group rides. Region 1 in Austin was used as an example for how individual clubs are improving safety. Region 1 has had EMTs attend meetings to teach the club members what to do in the event of a seriously bodily injury crash.

Keith Rovell, Vice Chair, asked Bone if COC&I can connect with rider coaches/training course providers. Keith expressed a need for clubs to connect their members with training providers. Paul Landers encouraged Keith, and others interested to attend COC&I regional meetings. Legislative Day Weekend is happening in January, and Paul Landers extended the invitation to attend to all TMSC members.

Paul Landers discussed “vision without execution” as being an issue. He discussed the need for the legislative Motorcycle Caucus to connect with clubs and riders as a way to increase “the big picture” of motorcycle safety through obtaining money to promote safety. In 2015, there were 735 motorcycle safety proclamations. This is a way for clubs and riders to reach drivers with motorcycle safety messages. The proclamations provide a great opportunity for clubs or riders by facilitating a relationship with city government and city leadership.

The discussion moved towards discussing legislative endeavors. The issue of motorcycles using toll roads was brought up. The question of whether or not motorcycles should be classed differently from vehicles on toll roads. Questions on how motorcycles should pay for tolls ranged from “should motorcycles use tolls for free?” to “should prices be decided by vehicle weight?”

Before the break for lunch, Sam Haynes, TTI, brought up TTI’s desire to create a Motorcycle Safety Directory that will be on Looklearnlive.org. The directory will help connect riders with clubs, dealership, individuals, and other stakeholders who are resources for motorcycle safety. A sign-up sheet for the directory was passed around.

Comprehensive Analysis of Motorcycle Crashes in Texas: A Multi-Year Snapshot

Dr. Eva Shipp, TTI, lead the research efforts of a comprehensive analysis of motorcycle crashes. She presented her findings. In her presentation, she went over:

- Crash severity

- Crashes: motorcycles vs others – 28% of motorcycle crashes result in fatal and incapacitating injuries, compared to 4% of vehicle crashes

-VMT - >1% of VMT in Texas involve motorcycles, but 14% of fatalities involve motorcycles, how VMT varies by age. Most VMT by motorcyclists are traveled by 45 – 60 year olds. Younger riders are over-represented in crashes.

- Types of rides – Most daily rides are 50 miles or less.

-Rural – 30% of crashes happen on rural roads. Crashes in rural areas also tend to be more severe.

-Impaired riders – half of crashes involving an impaired rider involve a fatality. 67% of impaired riders in fatal crashes were not wearing hear.

-Crash types: 50% of motorcycle crashes involve the rider running off the road. In running-off-the-road crashes, 24% hit a fix object. 25% of all crashes involve a failure to yield left (rider or car driver).

-40% of riders in crashes did not have a Class M endorsement

Over all, crash fatalities are on track to consistently decrease

Dr. Shipp ended her presentation by letting the TMSC know that the Look Learn Live website has the full report available for download.

DPS MSU: Challenges and Solutions – Open Discussion

Mr. Chris Beiries led the discussion on DPS's MSU funding, citing a lack of transparency as a main cause of concern.

Mr. Keith Rovell, Vice Chair and course sponsor, brought up the need for input from the state. Keith also discussed the challenge of meeting the new curriculum that is being used by Texas courses. The new curriculum adds three hours of class time for students and instructors. The new course is also more expensive. Sponsors have requested the use of the \$2million in funding that the MSU has to alleviate the cost of the course for students. As of now that money has not been used to alleviate the increasing costs of motorcycle training. The MSF allows students to take an e-course before the course, or two weeks after the course. Texas has decided that if a student has no taken the e-course prior to the class, they will not be allowed to partake in the in-person course. This is problematic for sponsors looking to fill open spots with walk-in students, or last minute additions. It is also problematic if a student shows up and did not take the e-course. They must be sent home and they do not get the cost of the class they paid for refunded. Keith expressed a personal belief that the current regulations end up encouraging unlicensed and illegal riding.

Rovell expressed concerns with the lack of communication between sponsors, instructors, and the state. The Motorcycle Instructor's Association of Texas was created to improve communications with the state, but it has been to no avail.

The retention of rider coaches and trainers was also brought up. The current loss rate of instructors attempting to be re-certified is 30% – 32%. The questions on the re-certification tests were brought up

as being inefficient in testing the knowledge instructors have on curriculum. Sponsors are losing instructors that are already certified and talented instructors. Mr. Paul Landers asked what other states do to retain instructors that make them successful. Answers ranged from less red tape to less stringent requirements. An advisory board was brought up as a possibility to meet some of the challenges sponsors and instructors face. Regional training centers were also brought up as way to alleviate the issue of finding lots to hold courses in.

Conversation shifted to transitioning the MSU from DPS into an agency that makes more sense for their efforts. DPS is directed to be involved in motorcycle safety training through a memo from the Governor. The Governor has the ability to move the MSU to TxDOT, or to TDLR similar to how car driving training was moved.

TMSC Future Meetings

The TMSC has three more meetings that are to be held in the fiscal year of 2017. The group favored remaining in College Station and hosting meetings on Thursdays.

Open Discussion/Adjourn

Sam Haynes, TTI, presented the Look Learn Live display motorcycle, which was donated two years ago by Jim Booth of Independence Harley-Davidson. The bike has been outfitted in a graphic wrap with motorcycle-specific safety messages.

A representative from Texas A&M Agri-Life discussed their newly acquired motorcycle simulator, which simulates impaired riding.

Representatives from Sherry Matthews discussed their upcoming plans for motorist outreach, including plans to host a large memorial ride. The representatives asked to connect with interested parties who would like to share their stories of motorcycle crash survival, or loss, with the media. They are hoping to get a motorcycle and rider to represent every death that occurred in 2016.

Mr. Paul Landers and Mr. David Bryant presented a brief legislative update on the various pieces of legislation they are working on for the upcoming session.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00pm