



Texas Motorcycle Safety Coalition Meeting Minutes November 16, 2017

Texas A&M Transportation Institute

Gibb Gilchrist Building, Room 105

10:00 am - 3:00 pm

Highlights

- Opening Remarks/ Welcome New Members
- Legislative Update
- FHWA Infrastructure-Based Motorcycle Crash Countermeasures Project
- TTI Motorcycle Mapping Project
- Comprehensive Motorcycle Crash Analysis Feedback
- Motorcycle Registration Dedicated Funding Discussion
- Open Discussion & Adjourn

Opening Remarks/ Welcome New Members

TMSC Chair Chris Beireis opened the meeting at 10:08 by introducing himself and welcoming new members. Attendees went around the table and introduced themselves. In attendance were coalition members from the Texas Department of Public Safety (TxDPS), the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Skilled Motorcycle Riders Association, various motorcycle riding groups and clubs, Sherry Matthews Advocacy Marketing, and the Texas A&M Transportation Institute. Beireis thanked everyone for coming.

Legislative Update

Jude Schexnyder presented updates regarding the following legislation being proposed or discussed in the Texas State Legislature:

Senate Bill 288 on Lane-Splitting was filed and referred to the Senate Transportation meeting, but did not get a hearing.

Senate Bill 346 and House Bill 1240, on Red Light Requirements. SB 346 (introduced by Kirk Watson) added a new section to red light requirements: an operator facing only a steady red signal may proceed after stopping if the signal does not cycle within a reasonable period of time (because it failed to detect

the rider/vehicle). This is a difficult bill from a law enforcement standpoint, due to the impreciseness of the language (“reasonable”). HB 1240 (introduced by Rep. Zedler) adds some detail (the motorcycle rider may proceed after stopping if the red light fails to change after two cycles) that clarifies the condition under which a rider may proceed through the red if the motorcycle is not detected.

Questions and comments from meeting attendees included the following:

- What if the loop does not detect the motorcycle and the light does not cycle (i.e., the other traffic direction simply stays green without cycling)? Most prevalent in the left-turn lane.
- Flashing yellow arrows in the left turn lanes at many intersections have reduced this problem.
- Still a need for a “dead red light” bill. There’s a model for this bill that has been used in other states.
- Does a red light bill exonerate cities from designing intersection detection systems that recognize motorcycles?
- Budget limitations will prevent many cities from fixing all intersections in a reasonable period of time; in the meantime, need to have some traffic law fix to allow motorcycles to proceed through red as described above.
- COC&I and COIR may be best to pursue red light bills with state legislators.

FHWA Infrastructure-Based Motorcycle Crash Countermeasures Project

Mike Manser summarized this project, which will examine infrastructure-based countermeasures such as guard rails, cable barriers to explore ways to make them more motorcycle friendly. This includes looking for ways to prevent riders from going under or over barriers, such as guard rails or jersey barriers, and in general ensuring that roads are being built with both cars and motorcycles in mind.

Currently very few motorcycle-specific countermeasures exist. The FHWA project will rank currently available countermeasures and figure out how to test these and potential countermeasures for motorcycle safety. Questions and comments from attendees included the following:

- Any examples from European countries? Answer: Yes – Europe, Japan, Australia may all have examples that U.S. can learn from.

FHWA has started a motorcycle advisory council to address infrastructure-based solutions, and TTI has been asked to identify additional people to include on this council. Researchers, advocates, engineers, etc. TTI welcomes suggestions from TMSC members for additional people to add to the list.

TTI Motorcycle Mapping Project

Marcie Perez of TTI presented updates to TTI’s motorcycle mapping project, which provides online video, maps, roadway information, crash/safety data, and rider input for selected motorcycle routes in Texas. Routes are selected by TTI for this map based on motorcycle crash frequencies. Seven new

routes are being added to the map in Fiscal Year 2018. Each route will be video-taped by a TTI videographer while riding the route. New planned routes for the map include:

- River Road alongside Guadalupe River
- Killeen-Burnet, FM 2670 and FM 963
- Park Road 4, going out of Burnet
- U.S. 67 to Hwy 188 through Marfa, Terlingua, and Alpine
- FM 1093: Loop around Brazos River
- FM 94 through Davey Crockett National Forest
- Part of Hwy 287 to Hwy 174; Mansfield to Blum and alternate road FM 917

TTI would appreciate rider input on additional routes to map in the future, plus input on existing routes regarding interested things to see, amenities, warnings/alerts, other comments. Anyone can log on to the map and submit input. Cards with the map URL (<https://www.looklearnlive.org/routes/>) were distributed to meeting attendees. The map may be useful not only to individual riders, but to road captains of organized rides.

Questions and comments from meeting attendees included the following (responses to questions are shown in italics):

- When you look at this data, do you look at time of day and alcohol as a contributing factor? *Yes to both; for most of the crashes on these roads, alcohol was not a factor. Majority of crashes happened in daylight.*
- Is time of year included? *Day and month are not currently added but can be added if that is helpful. Roadway conditions such as wet/icy roads are currently included.*
- Is wildlife included as a factor? *Yes – two instances of wildlife as a crash factor.*
- Could an “alert” icon be added to the map to indicate high-fatality locations? *Yes, this could be added.*
- Many other states have specific signs targeting motorcycles at high-risk locations. Never see this in Texas. *TxDOT posts some signs about the number of motorcycle fatalities in certain locations; not many motorcycle-specific signs on the roadways.*
- A motorcycle map company produces state maps of routes that are fun to ride on. *Yes, that is a source for many of the ride routes that are included on our map.*
- Gravel roads may be sites of motorcycle crashes due to riders that specifically do off-road biking.
- How do we get the word out about this site? *It’s really useful.*
- Ask for private-sector motorcycle websites to link to the page.
- Can this map be linked from the TxDOT website?
- Before the last turn-off ahead of gravel road, low water crossing, etc., would be nice to have a warning sign so that the motorcycle can detour.

Comprehensive Motorcycle Crash Analysis Feedback

Eva Shipp and Dennis Perkinson of TTI conducted a focus group discussion with the meeting attendees regarding the comprehensive motorcycle crash analysis.

The main discussion question: What additional crash information could be examined to help improve rider safety? Responses from meeting attendees are as follows:

- Not related to crash info, but would be helpful to provide information to riders on LLL about where road construction is going on, so that they know where to detour.
- Still have a need to merge K&A crash data with motorcycle training status.
 - A lot of riders who got their first bike in middle age; may not be trained.
- Suggest a supplement form to CR-3 crash report for a motorcycle fatality (for supplemental data that could be helpful to crash analysis)
- DPS has Highway Safety Fusion Center – grant funded center that does quarterly reports on highway patrol data.
- Rural crashes – how many are unlicensed? *Answer: Overall, a high percentage of crash-involved riders are unlicensed (estimates from 40% to 50%).*
- Distance from crash location to nearest medical/trauma center, EMS response time.
- Look into listed residence county for crash-involved riders. Likely to see a lot of crashes in curvy-road areas that involve riders from “flat”/non-curvy-road areas that are visiting/riding in the curvy areas (more generally, out-of-area riders on unfamiliar roads).
- Look for bar/tavern/icehouse close to high-crash areas/roads (particularly if most crashes are in one direction heading away from the bar). Ex. Buckhorn Saloon in Goldsmith, TX
 - Resource to find this info? Contact local DPS/police, TABC
- Check whether curve-related crashes also involve a struck object.
- Check surrounding traffic in high-crash areas (e.g., lots of commercial vehicles, etc. that motorcycles may be passing). In oil-field areas, have a lot of large trucks plus a lot of new, young motorcycle riders because of high-paying oil-field jobs.
- Were crash-involved riders wearing proper gear? Can tell from the crash report if they were wearing helmet, but not about other gear (unless included in fatality packet).
- Crash rate is pretty much flat across 6 years (2010-2016). If our function as a coalition is to reduce crashes, how are we going to do that? Are we here to save lives or to reduce crashes? If we’ve been trying to bring down crash rate without much success, what can we do to help them not die if they crash?
 - Need to define problem better, get a more accurate picture of crash causation.
 - That’s the real function of this coalition, so that we can put a lot of different viewpoints together and figure out how to drive down these numbers.
 - More people wearing helmets would drive fatalities down; fewer people riding intoxicated would drive fatalities down; fewer unlicensed riders would drive fatalities down. Education and training are a big part of the answer.
 - Still a lack of awareness among Texas riding population about the need to get a motorcycle license. Need to improve public education.
- Things like the motorcycle map project take statistics and make them “real” for riders.
 - Marcie Perez, TTI: What about taking fatal motorcycle crashes and looking at the physics behind the crash?
 - Needs to be a fine line; education is valuable, but don’t want to scare people away from riding altogether. Focus on understanding risks, but also how to minimize those risks.

- Deal with a lot of psychological aspects of improving a rider's handling of a motorcycle, that can be aided with training. In many crashes, the rider was exceeding his/her own skill limits, not necessarily the limits of the bike or the roadway.
- How do we get more people to take the motorcycle basic course? And how do we encourage them to take follow-on training after that?
- Would graduated licensing be feasible for motorcycle riders? (Limits CCs of engine based on certification level.)

Motorcycle Registration Dedicated Funding Discussion

John Young, Motorcycle Training Coordinator for the Texas DPS, summarized the recent developments regarding the state's dedicated funding from motorcycle registrations.

Roughly 400,000 motorcycles currently registered in Texas; approximately 1.1 million licensed riders in the state. Chapter 662 of the Texas Transportation Code designates \$5 from each motorcycle license goes to the dedicated motorcycle safety fund. Texas DPS and TxDOT are the two agencies who should have access to that money, for the purpose of funding motorcycle safety efforts including motorcycle training. Original intent of the fund was to defray training costs for riders; current tuition for motorcycle course is \$250 per student. Over the years, this fund has been used to fund DPS to administer the training program.

Cost to trainers to maintain a training site is approximately \$175-200 per student in Houston, varies some by city. Currently, motorcycle training program is not allowed to spend the fund money to reimburse trainers, provide startup for training sites, etc.

Rumor is that in the next legislative session, a bill will be introduced to move the motorcycle training program will be moved to Licensing and Registration; if that happens, oversight of the motorcycle safety funding will be moved to that department.

Nationwide data indicates that increases in the number of motorcyclists trained (with the basic motorcycle course only) correlates roughly with increases in motorcycle fatalities. John proposes that we have made it much too easy to get a motorcycle license, and so we're giving licenses to people who aren't riding regularly. We know training is a factor in motorcycle crashes and fatalities. What if we train anyone who wants to be trained in the basic riding course, and graduates of that course get a 1-year permit to ride. By the end of that 1-year period, if you want to ride and be licensed, you purchase a motorcycle and take an intermediate training course, and get tested by a third party in order to get a long-term motorcycle license. This provides the opportunity to train new riders on more advanced techniques that should help them to avoid crashes and injuries. Make basic training so easy that anyone can go on a moment's notice, and make sure that people who are serious about riding take the second, intermediate course.

This way, the basic course is a good way to find out if riding is for you. A lot of people who take the basic course will decide not to ride after all, or otherwise will decide not to purchase a bike (or can't afford to purchase a bike). The intermediate course, which teaches more skills, is for people who have a bike and know they want to ride.

Discussion:

- Phrase it as a graduated license; DMVs are familiar with that terminology.
- If we make it more difficult to get a license, people are more likely to ride unlicensed and forgo insurance (because they don't get the insurance discount from having the license). Fine line between making licensing more difficult to improve public safety and the unintended consequences of increased unlicensed/uninsured riding.
- Have seen in other states where you have to have a permit BEFORE taking BRC. I think unlicensed riders should be getting ticketed and bikes should be impounded. (Response: not likely to happen)
- One of the problems is that there's no real enforcement on unlicensed riding. How do you incentivize a license? Do you make vehicle registration contingent on having a Class M license, and pull over unregistered motorcycles?
 - From law enforcement officer: Problem with stopping riders to check for a license is probable cause – have to be stopped for something else (traffic or criminal violation) before you ask for a license (just as for a car driver). Changing this for motorcycles would be profiling motorcycle riders, which is unconstitutional. In Austin, if you do get caught without a Class M license, you are mandated to take the BRC.
 - Would have to prove that you could see the absence of a registration sticker before you pulled the rider over, or it will get tossed out of court.
 - Because the disincentives are difficult to implement effectively, the focus is on public education and outreach – convince them that having the training and license is in their best interest.
 - Courts/prosecutors will also tend to focus on the most serious legitimate offense cited and drop the rest (including things like helmet use, licensing, etc.)
- Can you pull over unhelmeted riders to check for license/insurance status?
 - Not as a primary offense, only as a secondary offense (you must be pulled over for another traffic violation first).
- I coach in the Navy, where you have to have a license to ride on base. Within 90 days of taking the Basic Course, have to take Advanced Course. The perceived value of the advanced course is much higher than the perceived value of the advanced course among the students who take it.
- What would be the viewpoint of the motorcycle community towards a change like this (assuming that currently licensed riders would be grandfathered under the current licensing law)?
 - In my club, to join you have to have a license and insurance.
 - Could clubs change bylaws to reflect a two-stage licensing system?
 - If you can use the safety fund to offset the cost of the intermediate training, maybe you increase the likelihood that riders will take the second course.

- Are you going to do the same thing to drivers? Otherwise you are creating a burden on motorcycle riders that is different from that of other vehicle drivers.
 - Maybe – if you were previously licensed, you only have to take the intermediate course.
- Is there a problem with the Basic Course? Should we be doing something differently from the start?
 - Conduct comparison between Lee Park’s basic course and MSF? How do we measure the outcomes?
 - Evaluation survey following course? Get feedback from students.
 - Potential for collecting riding, training, etc. information through the LLL website? Maybe through the Routes page; include info as part of the user profile?
- Until you understand the motivations of people for taking or not taking additional training, you won’t be able to solve the problem.
- How viable would it be to require an M endorsement to get a motorcycle inspection/registration?
 - As long as you don’t violate the right to own something, you can regulate whether it can be operated on a public roadway.
- What about making it a challenge/status symbol to get further training? Make it an event to get your advanced training.

John welcomes further input – if we were to do training and licensing better, what would “better” look like?

Open Discussion & Adjourn

Discussion from the floor included the following:

Motorcycle Safety Funding at Texas DPS. At a past meeting, 4-5 people signed up to be on a committee to address the current freeze on the motorcycle safety funds. Any further progress on that?

- John Young - because of other pressing priorities at the motorcycle safety unit recently, this has been on hold; hope to get back to it soon.

Motorcycle Safety Forum. Mike Manser asked for ideas for topics, themes, speakers, dates, and location for the Texas Motorcycle Safety Forum that will be held in 2018. Responses and input from attendees included the following:

- Lee Parks as speaker
- Behavioral research/safety culture – how do you get people to change behaviors?
 - Influence of motorcycle clubs (club rules, etc.) on behaviors
 - U.S. Defenders? NCOM?
- Get someone from Texas Motorcycle Dealer’s Association to talk about the impact of the economy on the industry.
- Insurance representative, IIHS
- Legislators – Kirk Watson, others?
- Format? Primarily speakers, or something else?
- Could it be moved to a month other than April? That’s one of the busiest training months.

- Could move Forum earlier; could training conference also be moved earlier?
- January-March is best, while weather is still colder.
- Weekend will get more riders.
- Location? Suggestions included Embassy Suites in San Marcos.
- How do people feel about charging a nominal fee for the Forum to reduce the no-shows?
 - One approach is to charge the fee, and refund it to anyone who shows up (more of a deposit)?
 - Could use the money to buy one or two great door prizes.

Mike will send an email out to the Coalition asking for additional feedback about the Forum.

The meeting adjourned at 2:56.