



# Texas Motorcycle Safety Coalition Meeting Minutes June 27, 2019

Texas A&M Transportation Institute  
TTI Headquarters Building, Room 1122  
10:00 am - 3:00 pm

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## Opening Remarks and New Member Introduction

TMSC President Chris Beireis opened the meeting and invited everyone present to introduce themselves.

## TxDOT Update

Lisa Johnson of TxDOT provided updates on TxDOT-sponsored motorcycle safety projects. So far in 2019, there have been 192 motorcycle fatalities statewide; in the Austin district, motorcycle fatalities are down 33% compared to this point in 2018. However, still a huge issue. TTC met at the end of May and have passed a minute order requiring TxDOT to set a goal of reducing annual traffic fatalities to 1950 by [year] and to 0 by 2050 (Road to Zero). This will require us to think about a lot of options and ideas that have been taboo in the past. Stand by for some interesting ideas and countermeasures to come up, including a potential push to reinstate universal helmet laws.

Mike Manser of TTI encouraged the group to start thinking about what each of us can do to accomplish the goal of reducing traffic deaths to zero; we need to start viewing crash-related deaths as unacceptable and taking big steps to eliminate them. Think about ways to increase voluntary helmet use, ways to reduce alcohol-related crashes, ways to reduce speed-related crashes. This Road to Zero commitment is a big commitment for TxDOT; reducing fatalities by half is going to require some major changes in how TxDOT looks at traffic safety. This will require a cultural shift, which is a difficult achievement; but it has worked before for things like reducing smoking and increasing seatbelt use in the U.S., and for motorcycle and other traffic safety efforts in other countries.

Chris Beireis agreed with Mike's point, but commented that a cultural shift is also going to require support from the legal system and enforcement. Mike agreed that this change is going to require shifts from all fronts. Another comment addressed the power of education – it has had some significant success in voluntary helmet use, though the alcohol problem may be harder to solve. A question was raised regarding whether there is going to be more of a legal requirement to have a motorcycle license in order to buy a motorcycle. Keith Rovell said that a big change needs to occur among motorcycle dealers, to eliminate alcohol-oriented events sponsored by the dealerships, and that this change may need to be pushed by manufacturers. Several people commented that it is difficult to change the decisions of private business owners. One commented that liability for alcohol-related crashes for motorcycle riders leaving dealership-sponsored alcohol events should fall on the dealership. Maybe TABC needs to visit dealers and explain the ramifications of having riders crash after leaving a dealership event. Jude commented that leadership, including motorcycle dealers, help to set the culture of alcohol as part of motorcycling. Club leadership can start to push back against that culture.

Lisa commented that there will be no one "silver bullet" to reduce fatalities to zero – there will need to be efforts and collaboration from all stakeholders to make this happen. Focusing energy on one issue to start has the potential to build synergy and making some real progress. Steve Ratke mentioned the State Highway Safety Plan and invited people to get involved in that process.

Other comments:

- Find ways to educate within clubs, encourage legislation and enforcement. The military went through a big shift starting in the 1980s; Navy has gone away from "wetting down" at promotions and other alcohol-focused command functions. The military services needed to accomplish a de-glamorization of alcohol as part of the culture, and it came from the leadership down.
- Part of the culture of U.S. and Texas is "I do what I want." Some people will drink no matter what. Emphasize personal responsibility, but also back it up where necessary and effective with legislation.
- Can we furnish bars with placards with the "Drink.Ride.Lose" message or similar educational/outreach messages? The problem is that the bar employees get caught between the owners, who may fire them for not serving a customer, and the law that says that the employee is responsible for overserving if the customer later leaves and gets in a crash. Consider outreach that points the finger at people who allow/enable dangerous behaviors.
- Need to focus on law enforcement, but also on educating judges about importance of motorcycle licensing and the safety implications of an unlicensed rider. Judges have the power to compel a rider to get trained and licensed, but not many actually do that.
- Keith Rovell commented that when the motorcycle safety program switches over from DPs to TDLR, every license will get renewed. This is a chance to influence the requirements for getting a new motorcycle license. There will be a 9-person advisory board for motorcycle licensing at

TDLR. We have an opportunity to get some things done during the next nine months that will improve safety. Mike Manser asked Keith to put a few points in an email to TDLR summarizing his suggestions on how to structure the training and licensing program to improve motorcycle safety in Texas.

- Mike also commented that TTI will have two roles with the TDLR-run motorcycle safety program: encouraging more riders to take the training, and recruiting more rider coaches to get trained to offer the course. He also encouraged TMSC members to look at the TDLR website and start thinking about people who should be nominated for spots on the 9-member advisory board.
- Jude encouraged TMSC members to get involved in TTI's motorist outreach events to help bring motorcycle safety and awareness information to motorists. If riders volunteer to help at these events, it will put a picture in the mind of motorists about the people on the motorcycles. Go to [LookLearnLive.org](http://LookLearnLive.org) to volunteer to help.
- One attendee felt very strongly that TTI is not responsive enough to Coalition member requests to post information from motorcycle clubs or individuals, or to provide support for local events. He would like to see TTI collaborate more with motorcycle clubs and independents, and also provide clearer information on who to contact for specific things like getting signs, arranging for paid media events, and similar requests. TTI staff members indicated that TTI does not promote rides or club events on their website or social media accounts nor do we post other non-motorcycle safety information. However, this type of information can be posted by others; requests should be sent to Chris Beireis. For other types of requests (such as requests for materials or information), TTI staff will review recent inquiries and requests received through [LookLearnLive.org](http://LookLearnLive.org) and by email and confirm that they have all been answered.
- Is there a formal way that TMSC members can network when they're not at meetings? Can we build a system for more direct communication among TMSC members?

## Motorcycle Training and TDLR Update

Mike Sconza provided some updates on the TDLR changeover. Training motorcycles are being priced and titled to be offered to the sponsors. Any that are not bought by sponsors will be auctioned to the public. This must be accomplished by February (purchases by sponsors) and May (public auctions of remaining motorcycles) of 2020.

A portion of the bill transferring the motorcycle safety program from DPS to TDLR is effective September 2019 and another portion is effective September 2020. The bill has just been signed. The advisory board cannot be initiated until September 1 of 2019, and needs to be in place by September 1 of 2020.

## 2020 Forum Planning

Mike Manser invited the attendees to start thinking about next year's Forum. Help is needed to identify speakers and to decide the Forum theme (if any specific theme is desired), and to figure out ways to

reach more riders and others who might want to attend. Last year we had some good feedback from new attendees who had never heard about the Forum before and then were glad they attended. TTI has a few channels to get the word out, but there's a lot of room for more people to attend if we can find ways to reach them. What are some ways that the Coalition and TTI can advertise the Forum? And how do we make the messaging attractive?

- Facebook event – can be shared to clubs, individuals' own social media
- Reach out to HOG Chapters;
- Wes feels that there isn't sufficient response from LLL to website inquiries; a more consistent response rate would encourage more input from website visitors.
- Reach out to other motorcycle safety groups in Texas.
- Can TTI put out a mass email to TMSC membership? Mike that TTI will do that and also establish a new page on LLL to solicit Forum suggestions.
- Can we create a banner advertising the Forum that TMSC members can take to other events? Paper flyers aren't bad for getting the word out, but a larger item is more eye-catching. Lisa will try to get a banner made.
- Get the Forum on AMA's event calendar. Jude will look into getting this done as soon as we have a date.
- Can the paid media campaign mention the Forum?

What date/place would be best for the Forum?

- Late February; Saturday Feb 29 or Feb 22 (backup)
- Kerrville was a good location; the facility was great to work with and the riders liked them as well.
- EMT training last year was a huge hit; bring that back next year. (Road Guardians)

Suggestions for Speakers?

- Road Guardians; could ask them for a half-day course on Friday on Sunday for people who are interested, but would also like a short session during the Forum.
- Michael Sayer
- Safety gear presentation last year was good.
- Klim company contacted Mike; if a rider wearing their gear is hurt in a crash, they replace the gear, but also analyzes the gear damage to see how to improve it. They've offered to share their

gear info database with Mike, and we may see if they would be willing to come to the Forum.  
*Comments:* Shubert does the same thing; so does Motoport and Aerostitch.

- MotoGP person – comedian named Alonzo Bowden. He does some “Why We Ride” outreach and might be interested in attending. He would be entertaining; could follow up with him to find out if he’s interested and what he might want to talk about
- Sean Thomas – traveling spokesman for BMW motorcycles and certified coach. Chris B can contact him.
- Testimonies of traffic crashes, victim speakers, etc. ? Question from another member – are we preaching to the choir with MC crash impact stories? [Amy Jo – maybe film some testimonies and use in outreach videos to drivers for the motorcycle-awareness portion of the campaign?]
- Maybe testimonials from riders who had near-misses that maybe could be educational to other riders? Regarding helmets, speed, situational awareness, etc.
- Airbag jacket manufacturers? There was a display at the International Motorcycle Show this year. Best resource for that would be Audrey at MotoLiberty.
- TTI is following up on additional suggestions provided by attendees.

## New Videos

Laura Higgins presented a sample of new videos that have been produced this year. Rider awareness videos have been produced for seven new routes on the LookLearnLive.org Routes page, showing a rider’s-eye view of roadway segments along popular riding routes in the state.

Additionally, six new “Survival Tips” videos and six new “It’s the Law” videos have been produced and will be shared on LookLearnLive’s social media channels.

## Texas Strategic Action Plan for Motorcycle – Recent Supplements

Laura Higgins presented some information on recent activities pertaining to the Texas Strategic Action Plan (SAP) for Motorcycles.

At the 2018 Motorcycle Safety Forum, attendees participated in small group discussions about ways to reduce drinking and riding in the motorcycle community. A report about the outcome of those discussions has been posted at LookLearnLive.org on the “Strategic Plan” page: “[Countermeasure Expansion for Impaired Riding.](#)”

At the April meeting of the TMSC, attendees discussed and ranked countermeasures listed in the SAP that the Coalition is most interested in leading. The three countermeasures that were ranked the highest were:

- Continue in-depth analysis of crash data to ID crash causation factors (TMSC would partner with TTI, focusing on education messages that are based on TTI's analysis of motorcycle crashes and the factors leading to crashes).
- Communicate rider responsibility for motorcycle safety.
- Educate riders on gear use.

Lisa Johnson commented that the SAP and the Coalition are examples of things that help Texas get funding for motorcycle safety activities.

A member asked how Texas' efforts in motorcycle safety compare to those in other states. Mike Manser said that most other states are not as active in motorcycle safety as Texas; other active states include California, Colorado, and Florida.

## Other SAPs for Motorcycles: What can be used in the next Texas SAP?

Mike Manser reminded the group that the 2016-2021 SAP will need to be updated soon. We will use some of the same approaches as last time, including input from riders, coaches, and other stakeholders. The plan development will also use the crash data to help identify the most serious crash issues faced by motorcycle riders, and will include targets for reducing crashes of particular types.

Other SAPs, such as Florida's include some elements that may improve the Texas SAP, and those will be considered as we start to develop the updated SAP in the next couple of years.

## Open Discussion and Adjournment

Question – is cell phone involvement in crash data dependent on police crash reports? How accurately can the reports capture that data?

Is it legal to subpoena cell phone records? [Answer – it can be done, but it can be a long process.]

As a motorcyclist, distracted driving with car drivers is obviously an issue. But we can also see from crash data that certain percentages of motorcycle crashes involve an intoxicated rider, run-off-road crashes, and other things that are more in the control of the riding community.

People with hearing loss learning to ride – how do other trainers deal with finding and paying ASL interpreters, and other accommodations? Answer from other coaches: remember that the ADA requires “reasonable accommodation” and the trainer paying high interpreter fees out of pocket is not a reasonable accommodation. Other options include providing cards to read, providing other specialized materials. Also talk with head of motorcycle safety program and learn how they've been handling the issue. Since you have a close community of riders with hearing loss, reach out into that community and do an entire class within that community; spreads the cost of an interpreter out.

Jude summarized this year's legislative session. Of the six motorcycle-related bills presented during the session, the major one passed was the DPS Sunset Bill (SB 616) transitioning motorcycle safety program from DPS to TDLR. A modified version of the moped licensing bill was also passed; it eliminated the training requirement that was originally included. Senator Watson also introduced a lane-splitting bill that did not pass. A bill about motorcycle profiling was also introduced and did not pass; if riders are concerned about the effects of motorcycle profiling (such as putting riders in a gang database if they wear motorcycle clothing that someone decides looks like "gang clothes") now is the time to visit with legislators in prep for next session. Lane-splitting/traffic filtering is also an issue that will keep coming up; it needs more data to define the crash risk of a motorcycle rider at the back of a stopped queue and the potential safety benefits of legal traffic filtering that allows riders to go to the front of the queue.

Any thoughts on legislation for next session?

- "Pavement consumption" is a term to keep in mind. At some point in time, the legislature may pass a law basing fees (probably during registration process) on how much pavement your vehicle "consumes" or wears down. This is low for motorcycles (compared to, for instance, trucks).
- Bill eliminating toll road fees for motorcycles.

The meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.