

The Concerned Bikers Association/ABATE of NC



“The Voice of the North Carolina Motorcycling Community since 1971”

Mary E. Peters
Secretary of Transportation
Washington, DC 20510

25 February, 2008

Secretary Peters:

This letter is forwarded to inform you that members of the Concerned Bikers Association/ABATE of North Carolina are united in our disappointment of your recently submitted proposal to amend the SAFETEA-LU (PL109-59), and authorize individual States to use Section 2010 funds to “...promote the use of motorcycle helmets”. Your proposal holds motorcycle safety hostage to an antiquated, dangerous, and failed “crash-mitigation” paradigm that has been killing motorcyclists for over 35 years.

As a self-proclaimed “Boomer-Biker” yourself, we believe your concern is sincere. However, we believe you have been ill advised. Motorcycles are the most vulnerable highway users, and; the most neglected. NHTSA’s own FARS data illustrate the failure of the current motorcycle safety paradigm.

The basic design of the motorcycle does not lend itself to the “passive-protective-measures” that mitigate crash consequences for passengers in an enclosed vehicle. In spite of the millions of tax dollars wasted on “helmet-use-promotion” campaigns; motorcycle crashes, injuries, and fatalities continue to increase annually. It is painfully obvious - crash mitigation does not work for motorcycles.

Motorcyclists know what is killing us. The evidence is obvious: Crashes kill bikers. Conversely, Crash Prevention saves lives. Fueled by the personal, and painful, experiences of this failed safety paradigm of “bureaucratic-convenience”, motorcyclists concentrated our efforts on working with members of Congress to ensure that SAFETEA-LU provided funding for the development and evaluation of “Crash-Prevention” approaches to motorcycle safety. Now, your advisors wish to sabotage those efforts.

Since the passage of PL 109-59, motorcyclists have remained committed to validating a crash-prevention approach to motorcycle safety. Individual motorcyclists and motorcycling organizations have contributed their own money to establish the “matching funds” required to implement the Motorcycle Crash Causation Study at the University of Oklahoma. At home in individual states, motorcycling organizations like CBA/ABATE of NC have worked closely with state DOT offices to implement and evaluate Motorist Education & Awareness, and Rider Education programs using the SAFETEA-LU funds directed toward this purpose. Given sufficient time and resources, the evidence will clearly demonstrate; Crash-Prevention strategies save motorcyclists’ lives.

If adopted, your ill conceived “throw-a-helmet-at-the-problem” amendment will certainly impede, and possibly negate, the progress being made in developing programs to reduce the frequency of motorcycle crashes. The obvious result of returning to a failed “one-policy-fits-all” approach to highway safety will be the continuation of the 35 year history of annual escalation of motorcyclist fatalities.

Respectfully,

Randy Norris
President
CBA/ABATE of North Carolina