

Motorcycle Riders Foundation
236 Massachusetts Avenue NE, suite 510
Washington, DC 20002

United States Department of Transportation
Secretary Norman Y. Mineta
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20509

March 3, 2006

Secretary Norman Mineta,

Please accept this letter as the official position of the Motorcycle Riders Foundation (MRF) on the proposed amendments to highway safety guidelines concerning motorcycle safety. The MRF is pleased the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has decided to expand its approach to motorcycle safety but does have some serious reservations about certain aspects of the proposed amendments.

The Motorcycle Riders Foundation is the nation's leading organization dedicated solely to representing the nation's street motorcyclists at the federal level. Since its inception in 1987, the MRF has been successful in advancing the rights of America's motorcyclists. The MRF supports safer public roadways and continuing motorcycle safety and awareness education.

Amendment 1: Program Management

The MRF supports the nature of this amendment. Proper program management is crucial in improving problem areas related to motorcycle safety.

Amendment 2: Motorcycle Personal Protective Equipment.

The Motorcycle Riders Foundation opposes this amendment in its entirety for several reasons. First, it is our understanding NHTSA has been banned from urging states or local legislators to favor or oppose the adoption of any specific legislative proposals under USC Title 49, subtitle VI, Part A, Chapter 301, Subchapter 1, § 30105. The MRF respectfully requests an official statement addressing why NHTSA should be allowed to seek a state helmet mandate under this law.

In 1998, Congress passed the Transportation Equity Act of 2001 (PL 105-178) and under Title 2, Subsection 2001 they modified the uniform guidelines under which the federal highway safety programs operated. This change in law directed the National Highway Traffic System Administration to shift its agenda from focusing on primarily injury reduction to converging on accident prevention in order to save many more lives. We feel calling to mandate the use of personal protective equipment comes from a safer crashing point of view and not from the accident prevention perspective Congress had directed the Administration to observe.

Lastly, the US Senate voted on May 11th of 2005, Roll Call Vote 120, in strong opposition of a floor amendment that would have penalized any state without a mandatory helmet law. Please respect the position of the US Senate and the sovereignty of the states and remove Amendment 2 from consideration completely.

Amendment 3: Motorcycle Operator Licensing

No position. The MRF supports and encourages all motorcyclists to obtain proper training and an official endorsement to operate a motorcycle. However, this should be left to the individual states to decide what is best for them.

Amendment 4: Motorcycle Rider Education and Training

Strongly support. The MRF actively promotes rider training as one of the best solutions to motorcycle safety. We support every aspect of this amendment and urge its inclusion in this set of guidelines and all which follow.

Amendment 5: Motorcycle Operation Under the Influence of Alcohol or Other Drugs

The Motorcycle Riders Foundation supports the intent of this amendment however; we are concerned law enforcement may unfairly target motorcyclists when conducting enforcement campaigns.

Amendment 6: Legislation and Regulations

Oppose. Once again, the MRF is seriously concerned when NHTSA begins to press for specific state legislation and for the same reasons stated in Amendment 2 we oppose this proposed amendment and urge its removal from the proposed amendments.

Amendment 7: Law Enforcement

No Position. The MRF supports the education of law enforcement officers to identify problems accurately and efficiently. We further support the education of officers in accident scene management and crash investigation. Creating a consistent accident reporting system is integral to modernizing and giving more reliability to crash statistics.

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The MRF has serious reservations regarding the feasibility and practicality of educating law enforcement about helmets and whether or not they meet FMVSS 218. It is our understanding a list of compliant helmets has never been issued. We call into question law enforcement's ability to achieve the goal of this proposal and request its removal from Amendment 7.

Amendment 8: Highway Engineering. Support

The MRF actively supports this amendment. Continuing communication between road engineers and motorcyclists is imperative to help avoid future engineering problems related to motorcycles.

Amendment 9: Motorcycle Rider Conspicuity and Motorist Awareness Campaigns

Supported by the MRF. Awareness campaigns are proven to raise visibility of motorcyclists and also will save bicyclists and pedestrian lives in the process. The MRF does not advocate any clothing color or reflectivity combinations as mandatory for all motorcyclists.

Amendment 10: Communication Program. No position.

Amendment 11: Program Evaluation and Data

Support. The MRF supports the active evaluation of all motorcycle safety programs to ensure the best results.

We thank you for your careful consideration of this letter and please do not hesitate to contact us should you have a need for any further information.

Jeff Hennie

Vice President Government Relations

Motorcycle Riders Foundation