

FHWA MOTORCYCLE ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) recently convened its Motorcycle Advisory Council (MAC) to discuss motorcycles and how they relate to the country's transportation infrastructure, and make recommendations to the U.S. Secretary of Transportation. The Motorcycle Riders Foundation (MRF) is a member of the MAC and attends all council meetings. In addition to council members, the MAC invites specialists from the government, industry and universities, with the goal of reducing motorcycle crashes and injuries to motorcyclists. They carefully consider the small road signature of motorcycles and the how they interact with the roads, bridges and barriers of this country. This was the 8th time the council has met over 4 years.

The feds announced that will be doing two "scans" of motorcycle safety to observe best practices and identify alternative solutions for smooth interaction between motorcycles and infrastructure. They will conduct a domestic scan to study programs throughout the U.S., and will also travel to Europe and Australia for an international scan. The MRF was invited to participate in the international scan, as well as to help craft amplifying questions for international partners in that scan. The sole focus of the scans is improving U.S. infrastructure for motorcyclists.

Much of the discussion at this meeting was focused on how to get the message of the MAC into the right hands across the states. In an earlier meeting of the MAC, a brochure was developed with the mindset that it would provide key recommendations of the MAC to state highway developers. The information is fantastic, but the brochure was met with little fan fare. Oftentimes safety documents are lengthy and dull, and don't get the attention they deserve. So the goal of this group is to not only create something that will get into the right hands, but will also get their attention. Many ideas were discussed, from video public service announcements to boiling down all current motorcycle safety documents into one simple, bullet-point document.

MOTORCYCLE VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED NUMBERS IMPROVE

For years and for good reason, the MRF has been crying foul regarding the motorcycle vehicle miles traveled (VMT) numbers collected and published by the federal government. One of many glaring examples was that for several years, it was reported that the state of South Dakota, home of the Sturgis motorcycle rally, had zero annual motorcycle VMT. In fact, before the MRF got involved in this issue, motorcycle VMT numbers were optional for the states to report. We at the MRF realize the need for solid VMT numbers to get an accurate view of the country's safety situation. The motorcycle industry gathers its own VMT numbers, and they are always at least double what the feds bring to the table. It's refreshing to see the feds act on the MRF's demands and at least attempt to improve the accuracy of the motorcycle VMT numbers gathered. They are now going to code the numbers using geographic information system mapping software that will compare travel on types of roads (from highways to rural roads), as well as breaking out the numbers by vehicle types. This does not mean the numbers will be completely trustworthy, but they are headed in the right direction.

TRAVELER OPINION AND PARTICIPATION SURVEY

The feds also announced that they will be doing a Traveler Opinion and Participation Survey (TOPS) during the summer of 2012. They will survey a random sampling of adult Americans over the phone to gauge how the general public feels about the roads they use, the traffic they sit in, the purpose of travel and so on. As a direct result of the MAC's recommendation to the U.S. Secretary of Transportation, the survey will, for the first time, include questions about motorcycles.

This was the last official meeting of the MAC under its current charter. The MRF is working with U.S. Secretary of Transportation Ray LaHood, a past recipient of the MRF Champion Award, to extend the MAC's charter for another two years. This would be the 2nd extension of the original Congressionally-mandated charter.

To read more about the MAC or view the motorcycle safety brochure visit:

<http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/mac/>

To read the TOPS findings from the last survey (2005) visit:

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reports/traveleropinions/1.htm>