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## **Federal Highway Administration Moves Forward with Motorcyclist Advisory Council: Motorcyclists Severely Underrepresented**

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Motorcyclists across the country were discouraged to find out that the Federal Highway Administration will only require one motorcyclist to serve on an Advisory Council supposedly dedicated to representing those who ride. The Motorcyclist Advisory Council, a newly reestablished group, is supposed to serve and advise the Federal Highway Administration on issues critical to motorcyclists across the nation. By design, the “MAC” would allow motorcyclists the opportunity to discuss how they are affected by roadway design, barriers, construction, and the emergence of intelligent transportation systems like driverless vehicles. However, according to a notice in the Federal Register, the Council is instead requiring participants with safety and engineering backgrounds and only indicating room for **one** representative from the motorcycling community.

### **The MAC of the Past**

The original Motorcyclist Advisory Council was established in a 2005 highway bill. The 2005 law called for the Administrator of the Federal Highway Administration to have a dialogue with the motorcycle community on infrastructure issues of concern to motorcyclists. The Council had 10 members consisting of representatives from the motorcycling community as well as individuals with professional expertise in national motorcyclist safety. According to the 2005 law, four of the ten council members were to include members of the motorcycling community from various state and federal motorcycle associations. The other 6 members would serve to provide the necessary technical expertise related to roadway design, safety and other issues.

However, in 2009 the highway bill expired and along with it, so did the Council. Motorcyclists were disheartened – the MAC was the only official forum they had to express to authorities at the Department of Transportation the issues they faced on the road. That’s why when the Council was reestablished in 2016, it was viewed as a positive development to once again open a dialogue between government officials and motorcyclists across the nation.

### **A Short-Lived Celebration**

Though motorcyclists applauded Congress for reestablishing the Council, this positivity was short-lived. This week, the Federal Highway Administration or FHWA, announced plans to officially open nominations for participants to serve on the

newly reestablished Council. The Council would again consist of ten members, however unlike in 2005, only one representative from a motorcycle association will be required to serve. Many balked including Kirk 'Hardtail' Willard, President of the Board of Directors for the Motorcycle Riders Foundation:

"Despite our best efforts to ensure the motorcycle community had a seat at the table, the FHWA has dismissed our concerns and efforts instead emphasizing councilmembers with safety and engineering backgrounds without any experience actually riding a motorcycle. Including only one motorcyclist in this group is not only imbalanced, unfair and contrary to the mission of the MAC, but it defeats the entire purpose of the Council. The MAC was supposed to carry the voice of motorcyclists – having only one member as an actual motorcyclist will render this Council ineffective."

Dozens of Members of Congress appeared to agree with Willard; over the summer a letter was sent to the FHWA encouraging them to adopt similar language as the 2005 MAC which included at least four motorcyclists in the panel of ten. It appears this letter was largely ignored by the Federal Highway Administration.

The FHWA remains supportive of the Council and its approach to its participants going forward indicating that technical expertise was necessary to ensure the MAC is able to fulfill its charter. The notice from the Agency also indicated that all meetings of the MAC would be public therefore allowing others to speak in support or against of the Council's activities.

Nonetheless, the motorcycle community remains displeased. Lobbyist for the Motorcycle Riders Foundation Megan Ekstrom said, "It's unfortunate that the Federal Highway Administration is choosing to move forward with a Motorcyclist Advisory Council that will not be representative of actual motorcyclists. There are over 10 million bikers on the road in the U.S. and those numbers are increasing. This community is desperate to have a dialogue with the Administration and yet, their requests have fallen on deaf ears. This is a perfect example of the government 'knowing what's best' for a diverse community with a unique set of needs. It's a travesty that none of this will be represented in this so-called 'Motorcyclist' Advisory Council."

Nominations to serve on the Council are due at the end of February. The notice from the Federal Highway Administration can be viewed here:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2017/01/09/2017-00125/motorcyclist-advisory-council-to-the-federal-highway-administration>

***About Motorcycle Riders Foundation***

*The Motorcycle Riders Foundation (MRF) provides leadership at the federal level for states' motorcyclists' rights organizations as well as motorcycle clubs and individual riders. The MRF is chiefly concerned with issues at the national and international levels that impact the freedom and safety of American street motorcyclists. The MRF is committed to being a national advocate for the advancement of motorcycling and its associated lifestyle and works in conjunction with its partners to help educate elected officials and policymakers in Washington and beyond.*