Introduction

One of the arguments often used by advocates for helmet-law repeal is that helmet laws inhibit riders from vacationing in states with all-rider laws. The claim that helmet laws cost tourist dollars simply lacks evidence.

This claim seems to have originated from a March 2004 document entitled "Economic Impacts of Modification to Michigan Mandatory Helmet Law" that Michigan ABATE paid Michigan Consultants to write. As stated in the document, the argument used repeatedly in repeal attempts since the mid-1970s focused on the "rights" or "freedom of choice" of motorcycle operators, which failed every single time to outweigh the safety benefits of the helmet law. Michigan ABATE recognized a new argument was needed.

A clever way to get legislators to consider weakening or repealing a lifesaving helmet law was to convince them that it costs the state money. So Michigan ABATE contracted to have a report written that supported this claim and appeared scholarly. On the surface, it appears to be research. It is not. It was written with one end in mind: to convince legislators that Michigan's helmet law costs the state tourist dollars.

Subsequent to Michigan ABATE's paying to have this document created, similar documents have surfaced in other states. No government or independent, private research organization has completed research that supports the ABATE-perpetuated claim that helmet laws cause states to lose tourist revenue. The Michigan ABATE paid-for document is filled with made-up assumptions, the data and analysis methods are biased, the conclusions are based on faulty logic, resources are primarily from special-interest groups, and the document was not peer reviewed or published in any scholarly magazine. It is the kind of report that would not pass muster as a fourth-grader's research project, let alone something upon which educated legislators should use to base their decisions.

In addition, there is practical evidence to indicate helmet laws do not impede the success of major motorcycling events. The largest touring event in the world, Americade, is held in the Lake George region of New York, and New York has an all-rider helmet law.

Also, what has been dubbed as "America's fastest growing bike event" is hosted in Muskegon, Michigan. If helmet laws prevent riders from coming to Michigan, how is it possible for this event to be growing? The sixth annual Muskegon Bike Time will be held in 2012.

An excellent article entitled "Evaluating Research Quality – Guidelines for Scholarship" can be found at http://www.vtpi.org/resqual.pdf

We invite individuals to evaluate for themselves the Michigan ABATE paid-for document that follows and similar documents that have been created by ABATE groups from other states.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF MODIFICATION TO MICHIGAN MANDATORY HELMET LAW

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF MODIFICATION TO MICHIGAN MANDATORY HELMET LAW

MISSION AND SITUATION

Legislation is pending in the Michigan legislature to modify the mandatory motorcycle helmet law. The mission of this report is to consider a sometimes ignored aspect of law modification---the economic impacts created by the increase in sales and tourism.

The impetus to modify the Michigan law follows a national trend. Even though during the past thirty-five years essentially all states had some form of mandatory helmet law, only nineteen still do. None of the states bordering Michigan continue to have mandatory helmet requirements for adults. Even if the proposed modifications are passed, the Michigan law will still be more restrictive than most states because it will still require helmet usage by those under twenty-one, and by those without recent training and experience,

SIZE AND GROWTH OF MOTORCYCLING

Nationally, motorcycle registrations increased annually for eleven straight years though 2002. A key influence has been the aging baby boomers. The median age for motorcycle owners was 38.0 in 1998, compared to 24.0 years in 1980. A 1998 study found the median income of motorcycle owners to be over $44,000, almost three-fifths were married, and over one-half had furthered their formal education after high school.

In 2002, there were 197,735 motorcycle registrations in Michigan. On a per capita basis, Michigan registrations were significantly below the levels of bordering states. The Motorcycle Industrial Council estimated that in the year 2002 in Michigan there were 528 motorcycle retail outlets, with 5,624 employees, and an annual payroll of over $138 million.

ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT

Modification of the helmet law holds clear potential to increase the sales of vehicles and accessories, as well as retaining a portion of the tourism spending of Michigan motorcyclists and attracting the spending of out-of-state motorcycle enthusiasts. The report details the methodology, sources, assumptions, and calculations used to generate the estimated impacts.

The key estimates are as follows:

Economic Activity--direct

New sales..... $461.2 million

Resales increased..... 124.8 million

Accessory sales increased..... 27.7 million

Tourism ..... 53.9 million

Total direct..... $667.0 million

Impact including ripple effect..... $1.2 Billion

Sales tax direct..... $40.0 million

Employment

Direct (sales and tourism) jobs..... 1,500 new jobs

Total jobs, including from multiplier..... 2,700 new jobs

Additional tax revenue impacts are noted but formal estimates not offered. The report emphasizes that conservative estimation techniques and assumptions are used throughout. The actual potential, particularly in the area of attracting the tourism spending of motorcycle enthusiasts from other states, is actually far greater than enumerated in the estimates.

OTHER ASPECTS

The report focuses on the economic impacts identified above, but for context does provide notes on other aspects of the modification debate. These aspects included the “adult choice” or “rights” aspect, the importance of training and education, and notes on crash data.

Motorcycle fatalities in Michigan numbered 82 during 2002. The number ranged from 51 to 94 during the period from 1993 to 2002; a rather large variance statistically. Even though all motor vehicle deaths are tragic, motorcycle fatalities represented a small portion of the 1,279 recorded that year in Michigan, and were less than one half of the pedestrian figure.

CHAPTER ONE

PURPOSE AND FORMAT

MISSION

Legislation is pending in the Michigan legislature to modify the present mandatory motorcycle helmet law. The mission of this report is to consider a sometimes ignored aspect of law modification---the economic impacts that potentially will be created by the increases in sales and tourism.

The document analyzes the likely increases in motorcycle registrations, sales and ownership, retention of tourism dollars of Michigan motorcycle enthusiasts, and attraction of visitors from other states. The analysis is based upon Michigan data, results in other states, and discussions with those involved with motorcycle events and sales.

The report places the proposed modifications to the Michigan law in its proper context compared to other states. As the narrative discusses, the impetus to modify the Michigan law follows a national trend. Even though at one time during the past thirty-five years essentially all states had some form of mandatory helmet legislation on the books, at present Michigan is one of only nineteen that still do. All of the states bordering Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin, plus Illinois no longer have mandatory helmet requirements for adults. Even if passed, by requiring helmet usage by those under twenty-one, and by those without recent training and experience, the Michigan law will still be more restrictive than many if not most states.

PREVIOUS FOCUS ON OTHER ASPECTS

In the past, advocates for modifying the law have focused their position on the “rights” or “freedom of choice” of adult motorcycle operators. Advocates have also argued that better training of motorcycle and automotive drivers would have a higher impact on safety than any helmet law mandate. Some supporters of helmet freedom of choice question the actual safety benefits of helmets and believe that the results of state helmet laws are less than clear when all factors of usage, training and operator age are considered.

SECTION TWO

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND

OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED LEGISLATION

MICHIGAN SITUATION

How Michigan compares to other states is seen as vital information. Michigan is now in the minority of states that mandate helmet usage by adults. None of the three states with land bordering Michigan (Ohio, Indiana, Wisconsin) require helmet usage by adults (neither do Illinois or Minnesota).

The reality that Michigan has very restrictive helmet usage laws, while the national trend has been to allow adult choice, has several ramifications for this study. It means that data from states with similar geographic and demographics can be used for statistical analysis of modifications to the existing law. It also means that there are direct differences in the attractiveness of states for motorcycle tourism.

Understanding Michigan in the national context also places the modification issue into one of reasonableness. It is fair to suggest that helmet law modification advocates of two decades ago were not always taken seriously in Lansing, regardless of the legitimacy of their positions. This may have been due to the "colorful" characterization that was placed upon them by outsiders, or even sought after by the enthusiasts themselves. Regardless, the reality is that adult choice for helmet usage is now the common position of the majority of states, and that the average age and income of motorcycle owners has been steadily increasing. Motorcycle users come from all age, income, and education attainment levels. Simply put, the views of the individuals who actually operate motorcycles, many for decades, merit valid consideration.

NATIONAL TREND

The impetus for the original passage of mandatory usage in most states, including Michigan, was created in 1966 when the United States Department of Transportation threatened that federal highway funds would be withheld from states that did not enact such legislation. Michigan, along with forty-eight additional states (the exception at the time was California) relatively soon had some form of helmet usage requirement enacted into law.

The arguments and debates are often passionate, and have been the subject of a wealth of previous legislative testimony in Michigan and at the national level. Even though the “rights,” and “training and safety” issues will continue to be key elements of the position of law modification advocates, the economic impact issues also merit inclusion in the discussion.

This document, for the purposes of proper context, also provides summary information on other elements of the overall debate, but the primary focus of the material and findings is the economic impacts.

FORMAT

Section One describes the mission and identifies the past focus of helmet law modification advocates.

Section Two provides an overview of the modifications being proposed, and reviews the trends in others states.

Section Three is the heart of the document, analyzing and estimating the economic impacts from increased sales and tourism that will likely ensue from a modification to the present law.

Section Four offers brief summaries of the other issues that in the past been the dominant elements of the helmet law modification. The summaries are provided solely for context. Other studies and legislative testimony address those concerns in much greater detail.

The past federal pressure as the impetus for mandatory helmet laws is a valuable historical note. The attitudes and reasoning of legislators over twenty-five years ago cannot be viewed with certainty. Yet, there obviously is reason to believe that the pressures for the Michigan law stemmed to a significant degree from the federal funding requirement, rather than any perceived safety analysis. It was also part of a national trend, one that has since gone in the opposite direction.

Even though the federal Department of Transportation never reduced funding to any states dues to the policy, the power do to so was challenged by several states as well as motorcycle groups. By 1976, the United States Congress took action to formally invalidate any power the DOT had to hold back funds. Since that time, a majority of states have significantly modified or repealed their mandatory helmet use laws. At present, Michigan is one of only 19 states that mandate helmet usage by adults. None of the four states bordering Michigan mandate helmet usage by adults.

Pennsylvania was the most recent state to modify their motorcycle helmet law, with the change becoming effective in September, 2003.

KEY PARTS OF THE LEGISLATION AS NOW PROPOSED

Other documents are available that detail the proposed legislation. Obviously, the specifics of the actual language under consideration in legislative committee, and perhaps eventually for a vote of the legislature, may go through a series of refinements. The legislation being supported by ABATE (American Bikers Aiming Toward Education) of Michigan incorporates the following primary characteristics.

- Operators 20 years of age or younger would be required to wear helmets.
- Operators of any age with limited experience would need to wear helmets.
- Operators 21 years of age or older with experience would have freedom of choice regarding helmet usage.

It is important to note that if passed as proposed, Michigan would still have more restrictions than over one-half of the states.

The proposed modifications do not change the existing Michigan requirements involving brakes, mirrors, headlights, passenger seats, and other features.

PRESENT USAGE AND GROWTH

Nationally

Motorcycles have enjoyed renewed popularity in the United States. In 1998 there were 6.57 million motorcycles (including off-road cycles) in use by approximately 5.7 million owners. Nationally, motorcycle registrations increased every year during the eleven year period through 2002, the last year for which totals are available.

A key influence has been the aging baby boomers, now with more disposable income, returning to motorcycle enjoyment. The median age for motorcycle owners was 38.0 in 1998, and the mean age 38.1 years. These figures represent dramatic increases from a few decades ago. In 1980, for example, the median age was 24.0 years and the mean age was 26.9 years.

In the report America at Leisure, June, 2001 As Bear, Sterns & Co. Inc. noted "we believe that the strong industry sales that we've seen since the mid 1990s and are currently experiencing should continue for the better part of this decade, if any credence is to be given to the demographics argument."

Rather than the old stereotype of societal outcasts, motorcycle owners are now more likely to be mainstream America. Within the findings of the "1998 Survey of Motorcycle Ownership and Safety" conducted for the Motorcycle Industrial Council (MIC) by Irwin Broth & Associates, the following characteristics were found:

- Median income of motorcycle owners was over $44,000.
- Almost three-fifths were married.
- Over one-half had attended college or technical school after graduation from high school.
- "Professional/technical" was the most frequently reported category of occupation (this category was third in a similar 1980 survey, behind mechanic/craftsman and laborer/semi-skilled).

Given the national increase in income from 1998 and 2003 the median income of motorcyclists today very possibly exceeds $50,000 annually.

Michigan

In 2002, the State reported total motorcycle registrations of 197,735. Even a modest growth of 6% for the entire period covering 2003 and 2004 will bring the total to approximately 209,600 for the year 2004. This number serves as a base to calculate potential growth induced if the law is modified. The MIC estimates that in 1998 the motorcycle population in Michigan 266,700, with 203,200 being used on-highway (at some time) and 82,000 being used off-highway at some time.

A survey sponsored by the MIC estimated that in 2002 there were 528 motorcycle retail outlets in Michigan, with 5,624 employees. Of the outlets, 256 were classified as "franchised" and 272 were classified as "non-franchised." The total payroll at motorcycle outlets in 1998 was estimated to exceed $138.9 million annually in Michigan and over $3.55 billion nationally.

Even these substantial figures do not include the economic activity generated at multi-purpose retail and automotive supply stores that sell motorcycle related fluids, parts, cleaning materials, tools, and other products.

Michigan usage compared to other states

After the State of Florida eased their helmet restrictions a significant increase in total registrations quickly occurred. ABATE of Florida, using state data; found that a 20.4% increase in total registrations occurred over the previous year. Would such an increase happen in Michigan?

Total registrations in Michigan can be compared on a per capita basis with the other Great Lakes states. As noted, Michigan is the only one of these six states to require helmet usage by adults.

Table A provides comparisons for registrations and population for the six states.

Per capita motorcycle registrations in the other five states, using a weighted average, were 20.1% higher than in Michigan during the year 2000. Four of the five states have registration figures significantly higher than Michigan's. Using an unweighted average for the five states generates a figure of 24.06 registrations per 1000 residents, or over 29% higher than that of Michigan.

If Illinois was excluded from the data the percentage difference between Michigan and its four land border states would be ever greater.

The total "Motorcycle population" estimates for each state can also be used for comparison, although registrations are viewed as more appropriate. This alternative data still yields the finding that motorcycle sales in Michigan are significantly below neighboring and similar states.

Michiganders are known for their enjoyment of motor vehicles, and have a similar or above level of household income compared to neighboring states. Therefore it is reasonable to suggest that if the law is modified, allowing freedom of choice for adults, overall registration could increase by at least 20%. This may not occur in the first year as it did in Florida, but over time (and perhaps quickly) a level of equilibrium would be reached consistent with neighboring states.

SECTION THREE

DISCUSSION AND ESTIMATION OF ECONOMIC IMPACTS

INTRODUCTION

This Section utilizes the potential impact of a 20% increase in registrations and generates estimates of the economic impact within the states. Tourism impacts are then calculated, including both the retention within Michigan of the tourism spending of Michigan motorcycle enthusiasts, and the attraction of motorcycle tourism to Michigan. The overall totals are presented in terms of economic activity, payroll, direct and indirect jobs, and state revenues.

ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF SALES/REGISTRATION GROWTH

Increased sales and sales tax

Sales growth will mirror growth in registrations. If modification to the law creates a 20% growth, this represents an increase in registrations of 41,920. This figure is additive to whatever growth or decline would have otherwise occurred based on such factor of the economy, aging of America, and consumer trends.

The national average sales price for an on-highway motorcycle in 2001 was approximately $10,140. Given price inflation, and the likelihood that the new cycle purchases induced by law modification would be in the higher engine displacements, the price for the vehicle purchases induced by the law modification in Michigan would probably average at least $11,000. Using the $11,000 figure, the additional sales of new vehicles could represent $461 million in direct economic activity. The 6% sales tax on these vehicles could total $27.7 million.

In addition to the new and used vehicle purchases, the increased number of owners will result in increases in annual purchases of accessory items. Nationally in 2001, “Parts, Accessories, & Riding Apparel” and “Service labor” and “Other Motorcycle Related Sales” (excluding purchases of new and used vehicle) averaged over $611 per operator. Former owners returning to motorcycling may spend even more.

For estimation purposes, a $625 per year average for the 41,920 new sales is suggested as appropriate when the impact of the modification takes complete effect and is responded to in the marketplace. This represents over $26.2 million in annual activity and over $1.5 million in state sales tax. These are annually recurring items that will rise with inflation.

The increase in registrations and sales will also energize the resale market. Firm figures from other states are not available, but it is prudent to assume that a 20% increase in sales can result in at least a 10% increase in resales. This would be a recurring item, and may further increase as the number of registrations and existing vehicles increased. Using the existing base of 209,600, a 10% increase in resales, at an average price of $6,000, generates an estimates direct impact of $125.8 million, and sales tax revenues of over $7.54 million.

Even though not included in any monetary estimates, it is possible that the new and used sales figures will be further heightened by more people from neighboring states purchasing their vehicles in Michigan. Such sales are of particular economic benefit by bringing out-of-state dollars into Michigan.

Employees and payroll

The increase in registration will create an increase in employment and payroll. A factor of 15% is chosen, less than the 20% sales factor because the management and facility system is reasonably well-established. An estimated 6,406 positions were involved in motorcycles retail sales and maintenance during 2003. This does not include individuals involved with motorcycle services that are listed in other employment categories or operate on a cash-only basis.

A 15% increase represents 961 direct jobs. Use of a conservative multiplier of 1.8 to represent induced jobs created by sequential rounds of spending by individuals in the direct jobs increases the gross employment impact to 1,730 jobs. The direct total payroll would increase by over $20.8 million, with the impact on the state income tax directly being $730,000, with the multiplier effect further increasing the overall impact.

TOURISM IMPACTS

Background

A variety of stories have appeared in the media pertaining to the incredible popularity, and economic impact, of major motorcycle rallies in other states. It cannot be predicted that in the near future Michigan will duplicate such success. Yet, as long as the helmet law restrictions continue, it is certain that many Michigan motorcyclists will decide to vacation in other states, and the full potential of attracting motorcycle tourists to Michigan will be restricted.

A popular magazine of avid motorcyclists is Horse Backstreet Choppers. It is published in Sterling Heights, Michigan. They sponsor a motorcycle rally/event each year---but never in Michigan. The most recent event, in Salesbury, North Carolina, attracted over 30,000 individuals. The majority used hotel/motel rooms in the area. The function has probably outgrown the area, and new sites are being considered.

In an interview with the event sponsors, it was unequivocally stated that Michigan locations would not be considered due to the present helmet law. Simply put, a Michigan location would attract fewer people.

Some motorcycle rallies/events are held in Michigan each year, but nothing of the magnitude of the major events held in other states. Typically, Michigan events do not attract many motorcycle enthusiasts from others states. Meridian Entertainment, organizers of an event in West Branch each year called the Hog Rendezvous provided insight into the situation. In 2003, of 5,157 paying attendees at the Hog Rendezvous, only 57 (or 1.1%) were from out-of-state. The percentage was 1.25% in 2002 and 1.9% in 2001. The organizers strongly believe that a modified helmet law allowing adult choice would significantly increase the number of out-of-state visitors.

Estimation of tourism impacts

Increased tourism spending will occur through two interrelated aspects:

- Retention of the spending of Michigan motorcyclists.
- Attraction into Michigan of motorcycle tourists from other states.

Modest factors are utilized to estimate the economic impacts.

Retention of Michigan motorcycle tourists

ABATE members and other Michigan motorcycling enthusiasts report that they typically choose other states for motorcycle based vacations due to the helmet restrictions in Michigan. This creates a substantial loss of spending for Michigan tourism based firms.

The 197,735 motorcycle registrations in Michigan are estimated to represent 179,759 individual owners, using a factor of 1.1 cycles per owner. If the change in the helmet law is able to retain one vacation trip in the state for only 20% of the owners, this represents almost 36,000 trips. For calculation purposes, a modest figure of $600 per trip is used to derive an estimate of $21.6 million in retained spending in Michigan. This also would create $1.3 million in state sales taxes, plus additional state and local taxes on such things as motel rooms, alcohol, gasoline, and even tobacco products, plus and income and other taxes paid by the employees in the jobs created.

Increased attraction of out-of-state motorcycle tourists

The modifications to the law will attract more out-of-state motorcycle enthusiasts to take vacations in Michigan. The trips may range from relatively short one day visits to areas near the borders, to extended week long journeys. The number of trips into Michigan can modestly be estimated to at least equal the number retained by Michigan residents. The 35,952 figure is viewed as conservative. In addition to the independent trips, even a handful of modest motorcycle events can attract much of the figure. If one or two major events were to be located in Michigan, they alone could approach much of the number.

Using a figure of $900 per trip by out-of state residents generates an attracted spending figure of $32.4 million and sales taxes of $1.9 million. Other forms of tax revenues would also accrue to the state and local governments.

It is reiterated that the out-of-state tourism potential is far higher than the modest estimates used here. Michigan is known for fine roads, beautiful shorelines, and northern scenery. **There is a pent-up demand by motorcycle enthusiasts to visit Michigan. The change in the law is very likely to encourage sponsors of existing or potential motorcycle events to market heavily to tourists of other states.**

As an ultimate reference point, researchers at the University of New Hampshire estimated that the economic impacts of the famous Laconia Motorcycle Race Week that takes place annually in the state pumps "$200 million into the region's economy." Findings of similar magnitude can be found for the famous motorcycle events in Daytona, Florida, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Sturgis, South Dakota. It is not suggested that Michigan will ever replicate events of such size, but the potential clearly exists to reap significant tourism dollars from motorcycle events located in Michigan.

Tourism totals

Added together, the retention and new attraction calculations total $53.9 million in new tourism spending in Michigan, and $3.2 million in sales taxes. Other forms of tax revenues, elusive to quantify, will also be generated.

It is possible to translate the revenue figures into job estimates. Using a factor of one job created for each $60,000 in tourism spending generates a direct job increase estimate of 539. These jobs also create additional jobs in the community through sequential rounds of spending. This multiplier effect will be at least 1.8 or .8 induced jobs created for each direct job. This brings the total tourism job impact to 970.

OTHER CONSUMER AND BUSINESS EXPENDITURES

There are other aspects as well. For example, registration fees to the state would be increased proportionately. National advertising from motorcycle companies and local motorcycle businesses would increase. Major motorcycle events attract national sponsorship money. A portion of the new employees hired may now be receiving State income maintenance benefits, thus relieving the state of that cost.

IMPACT TOTALS

The impacts from the increased sales and tourism activities are summarized below:

.Economic activity--direct

New sales..... $461.2 million

Resales increased..... 124.8 million

Accessory sales increased..... 27.7 million

Tourism ..... 53.9 million

Total direct..... $667.0 million

Impact including ripple effect..... $1.2 Billion

Sales tax direct..... $40.0 million

Employment

Direct (sales and tourism) jobs..... 1,500 new jobs

Total jobs, including from multiplier..... 2,700 new jobs

A significant portion of the economic impacts will be annually recurring, as well as the majority of the employment. As repeated several times, the actual potential for motorcycle tourism is far higher than the modest figures used in this report. Florida found that dramatic impacts occurred the first year after the modifications in their law were enacted. The speed of the impacts in Michigan may or may not differ, probably relating more to the regional economy than the ultimate results. It is clear that the law is appealing to a segment of the economy with disposal income and an interest in travel. It is also a segment that is certain to grow due to the graying of the baby boom generation.

SECTION FOUR

NOTES ON RELATED CONCERNS

REITERATION OF MISSION

As stated at the beginning, the mission of this study is to analyze the economic benefits of modification of the existing law that will stem from increased vehicle sales and tourism. This beneficial impact has been an under-appreciated element in past debates. It is not claimed that the economic benefits identified in this report should be viewed as dominant considerations in the legislative deliberations; but they merit inclusion in the discussions.

Given that other elements have usually been central to the debate, it is useful to at least identify within this document those aspects in order to provide a context for the economic impacts discussion. A wide variety of material and testimony has previously been submitted by various groups and researchers pertaining to these other aspects. The narrative below simply provides capsule summaries.

NOTES ON ADULT CHOICE

The past focus of modification proponents, at least as reported by the media, has been that an adult should have the right to choose whether or not to use a helmet. Even in states that allow adult choice, many still decide to use a helmet at all times or during inclement weather. Some motorcyclists believe that their vision is improved without a helmet, and thus are safer---while some will always use helmets, seek out the best ones for their needs, and wear them correctly. For most proponents of modification, it is not a matter of being anti-helmet, but the fundamental right of an adult to choose.

It is important to repeat that even if the modifications are enacted, Michigan would still be one of the more restrictive states in the nation. All operators under the age of 21 would still need to use a helmet. Even adult operators without experience (as proposed the length is two years) would need to use a helmet. The law would also enhance training requirements.

NOTES ON CRASH DATA

It is not the mission of the study to analyze in depth motor vehicle crash statistics. Proponents of modification point to a variety of data that suggests the value of a helmet in crashes is of little consequence, while opponents claim there is a safety benefit. Given that in a major accident with a fatality there likely are a variety of critical injuries, the applicability of common crash data can be questioned by analysts on both sides of the issue.

It is valuable to place the motorcycle crash figure in a proper context. Table B provides the motorcycle fatality figures in the State of Michigan for a 10 year period. In 2002, there were 82 fatalities involved in 81 crashes involving motorcycles.

TABLE B

MOTORCYCLE CRASHES AND FATAL CRASHES

MICHIGAN--1993 THROUGH 2002

All accidental deaths are tragic. On purely a comparative statistical basis, however, the 82 fatalities are not a large figure, particularly considering that there were over 1,279 fatalities in motor vehicle related accidents in Michigan, and an overall population that now exceeds 10,000,000. Pedestrian deaths represented more than twice the number of fatally-injured motorcyclists**. Motorcycles simply are not a major component of the vehicles safety challenges faced in Michigan or any other state.**

It is noteworthy that the number of fatalities changes significantly each year. The figure of 94 in 2001 was more than 80% higher than the 1998 figure, but then the 2002 figure dropped by 14%. Therefore, attempting to predict the absolute change in fatalities from a modification in the helmet law is extremely problematic. Claims of a "5%" or "10%" increase or decrease in fatalities due to any change in law or state programs simply are overwhelmed by the statistical chaos in the yearly data.

Furthermore, the proposed modification actually involves only a subset of the motorcycling operating population. As noted, those under 21 and operators without significant experience would still be required to use a helmet. Thus, statistically, the purported protection provided by a helmet would continue to apply to those most at risk and less able to make an informed personal judgment. Moreover, many adults would continue to use a helmet.

Advocates for forcing usage of helmets claim they save lives and prevent serious injury. This has never been accepted as an established fact by many motorcyclists. The official standards for a helmet only require that it must withstand a crash of a speed of 13 miles per hour or less. This also assumes that the helmet is appropriately chosen to fit snugly and worn correctly.

NOTES ON EDUCATION AND STATE PRIORITIES

The reality is that the State of Michigan has not made motorcycle operator training a priority, nor has it made motorcycle awareness by automobile operators an integral part of training and licensing. Passage of the legislation should enhance cooperation between the State and ABATE and other motorcycle groups, thus serving to place a higher and potential more effective emphasis on driver education and training.

The training component of the proposed legislation would emphasize the problem of drinking and driving of all vehicles, a major factor in both automotive and motorcycle accidents.

INFORMATION SOURCES

A wide variety of sources were reviewed during the preparation of this study. Those of most direct relevance to the findings are identified below.

¨ American Motorcycle Network, statement of Louisiana Governor Mike Foster, October, 2003.

¨ Bear Stearns & Co. Inc. America at Leisure, 2001.

¨ Biker Rights Online, States and Helmet Laws (list).

¨ Greater Milwaukee Convention and Visitors Bureau, website, information on impacts of National Motorcycle Rally.

¨ Michigan Department of Education, Traffic Safety Education Program, 2003.

¨ Michigan State Police, Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning, 2002 Michigan Traffic Crash Facts.

¨ Michigan Secretary of State, Motorcycle License Information Website.

¨ Motorcycle Industry Council, Statistical Annual 2002.

¨ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Evaluation of the Repeal of the Motorcycle Helmet Laws in Kentucky and Louisiana.

¨ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, National Center for Statistics and Analysis, Vehicles, Crash Data Report, 1990-1999.

¨ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, National Center for Statistics and Analysis, Motorcycles, Crash Data Report, 1990-1999.

¨ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, National Center for Statistics and Analysis, Traffic Safety Facts, 2001.

¨ National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, National Center for Statistics and Analysis, Fatality Analysis Reporting System, Web Based Encyclopedia.

¨ Standard & Poors, Harley-Davidson STARS Report.

¨ SYSTAN, Under contract with the California Highway Patrol, California Motorcyclist Safety Program,

¨ United States Census Bureau, County Business Patterns, Michigan, Employees, Payroll, and Establishments by Industry, 2001.

- United States Census Bureau, American Fact Finder, Motorcycle, Bicycle, & Parts Manufacturing.

- University of New Hampshire, Robert Gittell, Project Director, Economic Benefits of New Hampshire Primary (includes references to Laconia Motorcycle Race Week).

- University of Wisconsin-Madison, Wayne Bigelow, Wisconsin CODES Project, Motorcycle Crashes in Wisconsin, 1994-1998.

- A variety of material appearing on the WebPages of the various state ABATE associations throughout the country.

- A variety of testimony given to state legislatures in other parts of the country both from those advocating mandatory helmet laws and those advocating adult choice.

- A variety of media reports on motorcycle helmet legislation in other states.

- A variety of media reports on economic impacts of motorcycle rallies/events in other states.