

Michigan Governor's Traffic Safety Advisory Commission
Richard H. Austin Traffic Safety Award

Acceptance Comments
Dan Petterson, Ed.D., SMARTER President
May 27, 2021

Thank you

I am honored to accept this Governors Traffic Safety Advisory Commission award on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Skilled Motorcyclist Association - Responsible, Trained and Educated Riders.

We extend our appreciation to Emily with OHSP and Chad, recently retired from MDOS for their nomination of our association.

In 1985 Mr. Jon Twork, a Yamaha dealer in Scottville recruited me to become a rider instructor. The training I attended was led by Dr. Don Smith, now professor emeritus MSU with the assistance of Mr. Rich Henrion. Mr. Tom Hampton, the coordinator of Michigan's rider training program, attended our last day of training and welcomed the successful graduates to the family of Michigan rider education.

Now fast forward to 2007. MI's lifesaving all rider helmet law was under threat of repeal. More than 20 years after I first met Mr. Twork, Mr. Henrion, Mr. Hampton and Dr. Smith these four would become founding members for the non-profit educational association we would incorporate. Mr. Henrion is our current board chairman and Dr. Smith our current vice-chairman.

Dr. Smith was the driving force behind our organization. He told us how hard Richard Austin had worked as chairman of the Michigan State Safety Commission and as Secretary of State to retain our life-saving all rider helmet law and here we were 36 years later facing the same battle.

As you all know, Michigan motorcyclist safety efforts took a huge step backward when that law was repealed in April of 2012. The helmet law repeal has resulted in an increase of about 20 fatalities per year. We are in the middle of our 10th year since the law change so that decision has resulted in about 200 riders needlessly killed. Helmetless riders involved in a crash die at about 2X the rate of riders wearing a helmet at the time of their crash.

The helmet law is a clear example of how in the world of motorcyclist safety we are woefully inadequate in the use of data and research as a basis for our decisions.

Our association has become the nationally recognized one-stop spot for accessing ALL aspects of motorcyclist safety research. Our mission, is to gather, examine, catalogue, share, post and distribute motorcyclist safety factual information and research and to advocate for the use of such knowledge as the basis of decisions.

Thank you Chad, Emily, Director Prince and the others at OHSP involved in recognizing the value of our mission and accomplishments.

And lastly but most important thanks to my spouse Susan who not only puts up with my rants about motorcyclist safety issues but also serves as the number one and best editor of everything I write.