

Perceptual Countermeasures' Trial

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Another 'perceptual countermeasures' trial. Is it time for the real thing?

Norwegian road authorities have begun testing new road markings designed to reduce motorcycle accidents on dangerous curves, in a pilot programme inspired by an Austrian scheme developed in Tyrol.

The markings consist of painted circular patterns placed on the road surface, intended to influence rider perception, encourage correct cornering lines, and reduce entry speeds into bends. The trial will be conducted on two road sections at undisclosed locations, with speed and rider behaviour monitored as part of the evaluation.

Authorities say the approach targets a known risk pattern in motorcycle crashes, particularly in left-hand bends where riders may enter too quickly or brake while cornering, increasing the likelihood of running wide.

Representatives of the motorcycling community view the initiative positively. The Norwegian Automobile Association for Motorcyclists, an organization with over 17,000 members, emphasizes that the project is preventive and aims to stop accidents before they happen. Motorcyclists point out that many riders struggle with proper motorcycle positioning in curves. The new markings are intended to help motorcyclists maintain the correct line and increase road safety.

Between 2018 and 2024, an average of 18 motorcyclists per year lost their lives on Norwegian roads. Most incidents occurred in curves.

The Austrian version of the scheme is reported to have delivered a significant reduction in accidents on treated sections, and Norway will assess whether similar results can be replicated, and whether the program can be expanded to other routes in the country, if the new markings influence motorcyclists' riding. Authorities say the results of the trial will determine whether the markings are expanded to other roads or remain a localised safety measure.

However, perceptual countermeasures of this type are not new. Similar concepts have been trialled internationally for at least a decade, including early implementations in Australia, observational use in New Zealand, and ongoing programmes such as the PRIME motorcycle safety trials in Scotland, which have also been extended to Wales. Comparable research initiatives have also appeared in parts of continental Europe.

The Norwegian trial will add further data to an expanding evidence base, but like previous schemes, its wider adoption will depend on whether measurable safety benefits persist beyond controlled test environments. While proponents argue that these interventions can influence rider behaviour and reduce crash rates, the problem isn't really whether the markings can work in a trial. It's whether you can reliably decide where to put them in the first place, and whether the measured effect survives once you move beyond carefully selected test sites.

Motorcycle fatal and serious injury crashes on any given corner are statistically rare events. One serious incident can make a location look like a hotspot, while another equally risky bend may go years without a recorded crash simply by chance. That makes it very difficult to separate genuine underlying risk from statistical variation.

If you pick sites based on crash history alone, you risk targeting places that were unlucky once (false positives) while missing structurally risky geometry that simply hasn't "*produced*" crashes yet (false negatives). You cannot reliably identify "*dangerous corners*" from crash history alone.

Add to that the fact that exposure varies massively — traffic volumes, speeds, rider mix, weather — and you very quickly find that "*most dangerous corners*" are not a stable category. They shift depending on the time window you choose.

So pilots tend to be run on locations that already look plausible or politically defensible, which can make them appear more effective than they might be at scale. Once you expand beyond those carefully chosen sites, the signal often gets weaker.

There's also the behavioural side. These markings rely on perception change — in other words, that riders will consistently adjust speed and line based on visual cues on the road surface. But those effects can fade as riders become familiar with the layout, or vary significantly between different types of rider.

So the real question isn't whether Norway can replicate the Austrian results on two test sections. It's whether any of these systems can move beyond being promising local trials, and actually deliver consistent, measurable safety benefits across an entire road network. And that doesn't just apply in Norway but anywhere these kind of markings might be used..

Here's a link to the story.

<https://www.mojanorwegia.pl/en/norway-launches-road-experiment-mysterious-signs-to-appear-on-roads-28558.html>

And to some Australian research.

<https://trid.trb.org/View/2169747>