

April 25, 2006

Tom Norman, Director  
Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation  
1552 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1552

Dear Mr. Norman,

Members of the Capital Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Stakeholders Group wish to express their appreciation to the NCDOT Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation for its efforts to help create a more bicyclist-friendly North Carolina. NCDOT has a long history of proactively supporting bicyclists' right to use our public roadways safely, having established the first state program in the country devoted to bicycle transportation issues, and having developed the nation's first "Share the Road" program. We believe that one of the most important issues affecting the safety and comfort of cycling in North Carolina is public education, and we recognize that the Bicycle and Pedestrian Division has worked diligently for many years at this with limited resources and limited public support.

The purpose of this letter is to ask how the mission of public education regarding bicycling may be expanded and made more effective through assistance from other state departments and by involvement by local entities such as N.C. Capital Area MPO, and other Metropolitan and Rural Planning Organizations.

Recent bicyclist and pedestrian tragedies in the Triangle have highlighted the unfortunate degree of public misunderstanding about the basic rights, privileges, and responsibilities of bicyclists, motorists, and pedestrians using our roadways. We believe that the public is inadequately informed about how our existing traffic laws, when followed, can prevent these tragedies and allow everyone to get to their destinations safely regardless of their mode of travel. From our observations, we think the most important messages about safe road sharing that the public isn't getting are as follows:

1. Bicyclists are legally drivers of vehicles and are fully entitled to use public roadways by virtue of being members of the public.
2. Drivers of all vehicles, including cyclists, are legally required to limit their speed for safety according to conditions (including visibility) and must always be prepared to slow or stop for vehicles or persons moving slowly or stopped ahead on the roadway.
3. Bicyclists operating at night are legally required to equip their bicycles with a red rear-facing lamp or bright red reflector in addition to a white headlamp in order to ensure that other road users can see them.

Local organizations in the Triangle are attempting to spread these and other messages through local activities. The Durham Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission and the Capital Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Stakeholder Group are currently developing motorist and bicyclist education materials that will be distributed in hopes to better inform Triangle citizens of the rules of the road. We believe that the distribution of these and similar materials by the NCDOT Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation, the Division of Motor Vehicles, and law enforcement officials and will help to reduce accidents by fostering respect for those who share our roadways.

Efforts by local groups will help the situation in a limited geographic area; however, it is evident that a coordinated statewide education effort is necessary that would involve the NCDOT Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation, regional and local transportation planning agencies, the DMV, and relevant law enforcement agencies. We believe that the involvement of the DMV is necessary to ensure drivers' training curricula instill a consciousness of all users of a roadway regardless of mode. It is also crucial that law enforcement agencies partner in this effort since bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists rely on fair and balanced enforcement of traffic laws. Such an effort would be consistent with the vision of the Division of Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation. NCDOT may be the only state agency with the appropriate stature to organize an education effort of this magnitude.

We are certain that local stakeholders will need to assist in any statewide education effort; accordingly, we pledge our resources and support. Let us know how we may be of assistance in this or any other effort to support the rights, privileges and responsibilities of pedestrians and bicycle drivers in North Carolina.

Thank you,

Members of Capitol Area MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Stakeholders Group  
(CAMPO BSPG)

Julie Woosley,  
Chairperson

Cc:

Mr. Lyndo Tippet  
Secretary of Transportation  
Department of Transportation  
1501 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1501

Mr. Greg Loy, Chairman  
NC Bicycle Committee Division of Bicycle & Pedestrian Transportation  
Department of Transportation  
1552 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1552

George Tatum, Commissioner  
North Carolina Division of Motor Vehicles  
3101 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh NC 27699-3101

W. Fletcher Clay  
Commander of the North Carolina State Highway Patrol  
Patrol Headquarters 4702 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh NC 27699

Public Affairs Office  
Lieutenant Everett Clendenin  
State Highway Patrol Public Information Officer  
4701 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, N.C. 27699-4701

Darrell Jernigan, Director  
Governor's Highway Safety Program  
1508 Mail Service Center  
Raleigh, NC 27699-1508