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AMA News & Notes is a monthly publication compiled and edited by the American Motorcyclist Association (AMA) Government Relations Department. Designed to inform motorcyclists of rights-related issues and events around the world, *AMA News & Notes* welcomes your input. Suggestions and editorial contributions can be sent to AMA Western States Representative Nick Haris by email at nharis@ama-cycle.org.

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Washington, D.C.: Renewed funding for motorized trails and a ban on funding for motorcycle-only checkpoints are included in a major federal transportation bill being considered by a key U.S. House committee. The House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has passed a transportation funding authorization bill -- H.R. 7, the "American Energy and Infrastructure Jobs Act of 2012." The measure would go to the full House for a vote before moving to the Senate for consideration.

Since the Senate has its own version of the bill, the spending plan would eventually end up in a House-Senate conference committee where differences would be worked out before going back to both chambers for final approval.

The House measure includes \$85 million a year through fiscal year 2016 for the Recreational Trails Program (RTP), which provides money to states to develop and maintain trails. Federal lawmakers had been looking at eliminating the dedicated funding for the program, which threatened to end the RTP.

Funds for the RTP come from the federal Highway Trust Fund and represent a portion of the federal motor fuel excise tax collected from non-highway recreational fuel use. In other words, taxes generated by fuel used for off-highway vehicle recreation -- by snowmobiles, all-terrain vehicles, off-highway motorcycles and off-highway light trucks -- fund the RTP.

Besides including RTP funding, the House measure bars the U.S. transportation secretary from providing grants to states and local governments for motorcycle-only checkpoints, which are opposed by the AMA. The AMA has been tracking the disturbing development of motorcycle-only checkpoints since they first appeared in New York several years ago.

The House bill also provides funding for state motorcycle safety programs. The AMA has long promoted motorcycle rider education and motorist awareness programs as essential strategies to prevent motorcycle crashes.

Full story: www.americanmotorcyclist.com/News/12-02-01/U_S_House_bill_has_trails_funding_no_money_for_motorcycle_checkpoints.aspx

Pismo, Calif.: A California appeals court has rejected a request by the Sierra Club to ban Off Highway Vehicle use on a county-owned parcel in Oceano Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area. A state Court of Appeals upheld a San Luis Obispo Superior Court decision that it is too late to review a coastal development permit issued in 1982 that allows off-highway vehicles on a 584-acre, county-owned parcel, called the La Grande Tract, within the park.

The Sierra Club had sued State Parks, arguing that the La Grande Tract is classified as a buffer area by San Luis Obispo County's local coastal plan and is, therefore, a nonvehicle area. Both courts ruled that State Parks is under no obligation to amend its general development plan to reflect the designation.

The Sierra Club was ordered to pay the costs of the appeal and is barred from further litigation over the 1982 permit. The lawsuit was the latest move in the club's efforts to curtail off-road riding in the park. The court noted that the Coastal Commission and county have closely monitored activities in the park for more than 20 years.

Source and full story: www.sanluisobispo.com/2012/01/10/1902441/oceano-dunes-sierra-club-lawsuit.html

Sacramento, Calif.: Assembly Bill 1047, sponsored by [Asm. Kevin Jeffries](#) (R- Lake Elsinore), would expressly prohibit state and local law enforcement agencies receiving grant money for a motorcycle safety program from using that money for the implementation of motorcycle-only checkpoints.

Santa Cruz, Calif.: Lt. Colleen McMahon, a veteran of the **Santa Cruz Police Department**, became the **first female motorcycle officer** in the department's 145-year history. Lt. McMahon completed a rigorous certification process through the Alameda County Sheriff's Motor Academy.

For the over seven years Lt. McMahon has taught at the California Motorcycle Safety Program at Cabrillo College, aiding new riders in motorcycle safety and defensive riding techniques. She received the RiderCoach Recognition Award from the California Highway Patrol for her effective motor instruction techniques.

Source and full story: www.cityofsantacruz.com/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=23400

Miami, Fla.: The American Motorcyclist Association (AMA) and AMA Grassroots Coordinator Jessica Irving have earned a prestigious Grassroots Innovation Award for their inventive campaign to involve the public in overturning a federal ban on the sale of kids' dirtbikes and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs).

[The Public Affairs Council](#) -- a nonpartisan, nonpolitical association for public affairs professionals -- presented the award to Irving in the "social media" category at its National Grassroots Conference held in Miami Beach, Fla., Jan. 30-Feb. 2.

The award was presented for the AMA Kids Just Want to Ride! grassroots campaign -- a

national educational and recruitment movement that encouraged people to get involved in efforts to overturn a law. Critical components of the campaign included Facebook and YouTube.

The campaign was instrumental in bringing hundreds of young motorcyclists, their parents and concerned riders from over 20 states to Washington, D.C., on May 26 for the AMA Family Capitol Hill Climb to lobby their U.S. representatives. The event was a strong demonstration of public opposition to the ban on the sale of kid-sized motorcycles and ATVs.

Full story: www.americanmotorcyclist.com/News/12-02-01/American_Motorcyclist_Association_earns_Grassroots_Innovation_Award.aspx

Atlanta, Ga.: Senate Bill 347, sponsored by [Sen. Curt Thompson](#) (D-Tucker), would prohibit additional HOT (high occupancy toll) lanes from being designated by the Georgia Department of Transportation on or after July 1, 2012, unless and until the General Assembly specifically authorizes the return of HOT lane designations through legislation.

St. Paul, Minn.: House File 2008, sponsored by [Rep. Bud Nornes](#) (R-Fergus Falls), would establish a motorcycle road guard certificate program that would allow qualified certificate holders to act as flaggers while escorting a motorcycle group ride. A flagger would be permitted to direct motorcyclists within a group ride or other vehicle traffic, overriding traffic-control devices including stop signs and traffic-control signals. Anyone operating a vehicle stopped by a flagger could proceed only on instruction by the flagger or a police officer.

Jefferson City, Mo.: Senate Bill 717, sponsored by [Sen. Bill Stouffer](#) (R-Napton), would make it a class C misdemeanor to operate a motor vehicle on roads and highways in a distracted manner. A vehicle crash involving distracted driving would elevate the penalty to a class A misdemeanor. Operating a motor vehicle while distracted would be defined as failure to give full time and attention or failure to maintain a proper lookout, or engaging in any other activity which caused the operator to be distracted from the primary mission of driving the vehicle.

Taos, N.M.: The New Mexico Off-Highway Vehicle Alliance ([NMOHVA](#)) has filed a protest with federal land managers over a proposed land trade with a northern New Mexico pueblo. NMOHVA says trading up to 3,200 acres of the El Palacio OHV Area to Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo would splice up an area that has been used for recreation for more than two decades.

The plan was revealed in an environmental impact statement for resource management that was recently prepared by the Bureau of Land Management's Taos office. The alliance contends that the draft environmental impact statement addressed only an exchange of 600 acres. The land in question includes El Palacio's parking area, the main access routes to the trails and BLM-approved trails that are used for the annual Rattlesnake 100 motorcycle and ATV race.

Source and full story: <http://nmohva.org/main/issues.php?id=68&archive=0>

Oklahoma City, Okla.: House Bill 2830, sponsored by [Rep. Sean Roberts](#) (R-Hominy), would require all motorcyclists over 18 years of age who choose to ride without a helmet to carry at least \$10,000 in medical benefits to cover injuries resulting from a crash while operating or riding a motorcycle.

Providence, R.I.: House Bill 7269, sponsored by [Rep. Robert Jacquard](#) (D-Cranston), would provide immunity from liability for property damage, personal injury, or wrongful death to landowners who allow their property to be used for an instructional educational course for a certified motorcycle rider education program.

Columbia, S.C: House Bill 4691, sponsored by [Rep. Todd Atwater](#) (R-Lexington), would prohibit the Transportation Commission and the Department of Transportation from discriminating against motorcycles, motorcycle operators, or motorcycle passengers when formulating transportation policy, promulgating regulations, allocating funds, and planning, designing, constructing, equipping, operating, and maintaining transportation facilities. The policy would also apply to transportation facilities and projects undertaken or operated by counties, cities, towns, and other political subdivisions of the state where public funds have been used in whole or in part to plan, design, construct, equip, operate, or maintain the facility or project.

Columbia, S.C.: [Governor Nicky Haley](#) has told riders she would veto a bill that proposes to change the state's helmet law. [Sen. Ralph Anderson](#) (D-Greenville) recently filed a bill that would change the language of the current helmet law from only requiring riders under 21 to wear a helmet to include all motorcycle riders.

Full story: www.foxcarolina.com/story/16492786/gov-haley-promises-to-veto-motorcycle-helmet-law

Nashville, Tenn.: House Bill 2483, sponsored by [Rep. Ryan Haynes](#) (R-Knoxville) and Senate Bill 2458, sponsored by [Sen. Becky Duncan Massey](#) (R-Knoxville), would authorize a Rolling Thunder new specialty earmarked license plate for motor vehicles. The plate would be designed in consultation with the leadership of the Tennessee chapters of Rolling Thunder and display an appropriate logo or design representative of the organization. Funds produced from the sale of the plates would be allocated to Rolling Thunder's Tennessee chapters for exclusively use to publicize Prisoner of War- Missing In Action (POW-MIA) issues.

San Antonio, Texas: New 4-H ATV Safety Program promotes safety awareness through a free ATV Safety Institute (ASI) RiderCourse. The program provides educational and hands-on training to 4-H clubs and school districts and is funded by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, the ASI, and the Yamaha Motor Corporation. Course materials are provided by the National Off Highway Vehicle Conservation Council (NOHVCC) and Treat Lightly! The program is administered by the Texas 4-H Foundation and Texas A&M University.

Source and full story: www.examiner.com/atv-in-san-antonio/atv-safety-ohv-education-texas-4-h-newest-program?CID=examiner_alerts_article

Price, Utah: Polaris recently awarded the Manti-La Sal National Forest an \$11,000 equipment grant, which will provide a Polaris RZR to use for trail improvements, education, and to ensure safety of visitors. The RZR will allow the forest to increase patrols on the trail system in an effort to increase safety, and improve maintenance. The new equipment will also make it possible to respond more quickly to emergencies and trail damage.

The grant is provided by the Polaris T.R.A.I.L.S. program, which promotes land access, safety and trail development programs. Its objective is to provide grants to national and state ATV organizations for trail development and maintenance projects, safety and education initiatives, lobbying and other projects to increase or maintain land access.

The Arapeen OHV Trail system, on the Wasatch Plateau, was developed by the Forest Service in cooperation with local users in nearby communities. It is maintained and patrolled by volunteers and Forest Service employees.

Source and full story: http://sunad.com/?tier=1&article_id=23940