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26 November 2008

Hon. Trevor Taylor  
Minister, Department of Transportation and Works  
Confederation Building  
P.O. Box 8700  
St. John's, Newfoundland  
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Subject: Highway Shoulder Rumble Strips

Dear Mr. Taylor,

This is further to a letter sent to Dianne Whelan, 25 July 2008, and a subsequent meeting held at the offices of the Department of Transportation and Works on 15 September 2008. I had written to then-Minister Whelan to convey BNL's opinion regarding the use and usefulness of highway shoulder rumble strips in the province. I then met with Ms. Whelan and Cluney Mercer, ADM (Transportation), to discuss the issue.

As I made clear to Ms. Whelan and Mr. Mercer, BNL acknowledges the legitimate role that rumble strips play in highway safety. We are aware of the role they have played in preventing run-off-road accidents. However, I also made clear that BNL firmly believes their contribution to highway safety is limited to certain areas, defined by specific highway design characteristics. It is our opinion that where the positive impact of highway rumble strips is either not known, or known to be negligible, the known detrimental affect on cyclists should mandate against their installation.

Ms. Whelan and Mr. Mercer were both already aware of the issue, having received correspondence from BNL and from individual cyclists, and having read a story that had appeared in the Evening Telegram. They agreed that cyclists have a right to use the province's existing infrastructure (i.e. roads) and to provide input into its development. Generally speaking, they both seemed sympathetic to the needs of cyclists. Mr. Mercer summarized the Department's position as follows (I'm paraphrasing):

- the province has installed rumble strips only on those portions of highway that have been resurfaced in the last three years;
- every portion of the highway that was resurfaced over the past three years was resurfaced in accordance with national highway construction guidelines, so that the total paved area is 10.5m wide, including two vehicle lanes each 3.75m wide, and two paved shoulders each 1.5m wide;
- if contractors performed in accordance with the specifications, there should be 1.5m of paved shoulder wherever there are rumble strips; and

- since construction crews were instructed to install rumble strips within 10cm of the white line demarking the shoulder, and the rumble strips are 40 cm wide, there should always be 1.0m of paved shoulder to the right of the rumble strip.

I pointed out to Mr. Mercer that there are lengthy stretches of highway where construction crews have not followed these guidelines; where the rumble strip occupies half or more of the already limited paved shoulder. Particularly bad sections include the West-bound section of highway nearing Paddy's Pond, and both the East- and West-bound lanes between the Holyrood Access Road and Salmonier Line. Mr. Mercer seemed surprised to hear that. He agreed it is possible that 1) paving contractors have not met the specification regarding the total width of the road surface, or 2) if paving contractors have met the specifications, the white lines may be painted in the wrong place. White lines demarking the shoulder should be 5.25m from the centre of the road. Obviously, if they're painted further from the centre, they reduce the amount of paved shoulder.

Mr. Mercer promised to assist BNL in following up on the potential issue. BNL will provide details regarding the sections where the paved shoulder is less than 1.5m wide: Mr. Mercer will have the Department check them. We did not discuss any action the Department may take in the event the lines are in the wrong place, but we are prepared to suggest the following: the existing line should be moved to the left, providing a clear cycling between the white line and the rumble strip. Mr. Mercer also assured me that, next year, rumble strips will be installed only where there is 1.5m of paved shoulder.

It is BNL's responsibility to follow up, by providing information regarding the sections of highway that cause us concern. We will do that within the next several weeks.

Regards,

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Kevin Baldwin  
President  
Bicycle Newfoundland & Labrador

Cc Hon. Dianne Whelan, Minister of Municipal Affairs, Minister Responsible for Emergency Preparedness, and Registrar General,  
Mr. Cluney Mercer, ADM (Transportation),  
Bicycle Newfoundland and Labrador Board of Directors