

Reply from ODOT Director Gordon Proctor to the OBF

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OHIO DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

CENTRAL OFFICE, P.O. Box 899, COLUMBUS, OHIO 43216-0899

December 7, 2000

Mr. Chuck Smith, Chairman
Ohio Bicycle Federation
825 Olde Farm Court
Vandalia, OH 45377

Dear Mr. Smith:

This is in response to your November 11, 2000 letter regarding bicyclist access to Ohio's roadways.

The Ohio Bicycle Federation recommends reopening several roads that currently do not allow bicycle access. Specifically, the roads are:

- SR 2 at the Sandusky Bay Bridge;
- SR 7 along the Ohio River between the Moundsville bridge and East Liverpool;
- SR 104 in the City of Columbus between 1-71 and US 33;
- SR 161, the New Albany Bypass at Little Turtle;
- US 23 southbound in the City of Columbus between Nationwide Blvd. and Goodale St.;
- US 33 in Hocking County and in the City of Athens;
- US 35 in Fayette, Ross, Jackson and Gallia Counties;
- US 50 in the City of Cincinnati and in the City of Athens;
- US 52 along the Ohio River in the Portsmouth area;
- US 422 at SR 44 in Geauga County and at an underpass in the City of Warren.

Several of these roadways are not under ODOT's jurisdiction, therefore, please contact the following parties for these specific locations.

State Routes 104, 161, and US 23, are under the City of Columbus' jurisdiction. The contacts are Jim Music and Dale Hooper at the following addresses.

Jim Music
Division Administrator
Traffic Engineering
109 N. Front Street/2nd floor
Columbus, OH 43215

Bicycle Advisory Council
c/o Dale Hooper, Bikeway Coordinator
Public Service Department
Traffic Engineering
109 N. Front Street/2nd Floor
Columbus, OH 43215

The US 50 roadway in Hamilton County is within the City of Cincinnati's jurisdiction. The contact is Prem Garg, P.E., City of Cincinnati, 801 Plum Street, City Hall, Room 445, Cincinnati, OH 45202.

In regards to the underpass in Warren on US 422, please provide specific location information in your

correspondence to: William Totten, Assistant City Engineer, Warren Engineering, Planning and Building Department, 540 Laird Avenue SE, Warren, OH 44484.

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My staff has researched the remaining roadways listed and found that all are categorized as freeways, by law. The Ohio Revised Code, section 4511.01, defines a freeway as a "divided multi-lane highway for through traffic with all cross roads separated in grade and with full control of access". Code section 4511.051 contains "Prohibitions on the Use of Freeways" as follows: "No person shall operate a bicycle within the boundary lines of a freeway except where there exists a facility that is separate from the roadway and shoulders designed and appropriately marked for bicycle use."

Aside from being classified freeways, some roadways don't lend themselves to safe bicycle travel because of design, traffic congestion, or unique environmental influences. State Route 2 has wide approach shoulders but the bridge itself has a shoulder less than the minimum four-foot bike lane width. Strong cross winds are frequent occurrences on the bridge, and combined with the slope of the bridge, a bicyclists' ability to stay within the narrow shoulder would be severely impaired. This bridge averages 17,000 vehicles daily, including 4,300 trucks. Traffic in the summer is often bumper to bumper with traffic heading to the lakeshore and the islands.

State Route 7 is a freeway with full-width shoulders, but the shoulders, the median barriers and the rock fence protection exist largely to reduce crashes and road damage caused by landslides that commonly occur. When this route was rebuilt as a freeway, much of the old road was obliterated due to lack of space for both the old and the new roads. Average traffic counts vary from 5,000 to 35,000 per day, depending upon location. Some of the old road still exists, and is used by traffic. However, there is potential, although expensive, for counties or other local jurisdictions to create a bikeway within the corridor.

United States Route 35 has lengthy segments of freeway in the four counties named, plus Montgomery and Greene Counties. Traffic counts range from 9-24,000 daily. The old route is available for bicyclists from Washington Court House to Chillicothe. The old two-lane segment from 1-71 to Washington Court House is not recommended for bicyclists, even though legal. In Chillicothe, a detour onto SR 104 and Higby Road will reestablish a connection to US 35 although US 35 becomes a legal freeway just a few miles away, in Jackson County. Note that US 35 continues as a freeway across the Ohio River, thus bicyclists need to route themselves to Pomeroy or to Huntington in order to cross the River. The Jamestown Connector, and the Adena Trail (formerly Tri-County Triangle Trail) parallel US 35, and extensions to

each of these trails was approved in our last round of Transportation Enhancement (TE) awards, announced in November.

United States Route 52 in Scioto County, US 33 in Hocking and Athens Counties, and US 50 in Athens County are freeways also. Average daily traffic varies from 13-32,000. The Department recently upgraded US 50 on November 17, 2000, by opening a 16-mile segment between Athens and Coolville. A separate bikeway, the Hockhocking-Adena Bikeway, runs parallel to US. 33 on a former rail corridor. The City of Nelsonville and the City of Athens were awarded TE funds in November, to extend this bikeway into Nelsonville, and to the eastern limits of Athens, parallel to US 50 and State Street.

United States Route 422 is a freeway beginning in Cuyahoga County at I-271 and ending at Shaw Road on the east side of the Ladue Reservoir in Geauga County. Therefore, the sign located on the entrance ramp from SR 44 to eastbound US 422 is correct.

The bicyclists who are members of the Ohio Bicycle Federation may be highly experienced and roadwise riders who stay out of danger because they know the danger of sharing the roadway with vehicles traveling at high speeds. However, not every bicyclist is a good rider and we have concerns with the less experienced, recreational riders, bicyclists who may stop on the road when they are tired, drift into traffic, or pull in front of overtaking traffic. These riders would use the freeways as well. Merging with

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traffic at freeway entrance and exit ramps (cloverleaves in particular) would be very dangerous due to speed and size differences between bicyclists and motorized vehicles. For safety reasons, ODOT does not advocate mixing bicycle and automobile/truck traffic on freeways. As an alternative, ODOT works with local communities to develop a system of separate bikeways that as closely as possible connect the destinations served by freeways.

If you have any additional questions, please contact Heather Bowden at 614-752-4685.

Respectfully

Godon(sic) Proctor
Director