



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

Ritchie, State Officials Join to Boost Motorcycle Safety

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Drivers are Urged to ‘Share the Road’ as Biker Numbers Soar

State Senator Patty Ritchie is joining with the New York State Thruway to urge drivers to use greater caution and “Share the Road” with a growing number of motorcycle riders who are appearing on area roadways as the summer riding season gets in full gear.

Beginning this weekend, the Thruway will use its electronic Variable Message Signs (VMS) to increase driver awareness. Senator Ritchie had asked for the state Thruway Authority’s help in the wake of a series of horrific motorcycle crashes that claimed the lives of a number of local bikers.

From June 1 to June 8, the Thruway will flash the messages, “Watch for Motorcycles” and “Share the Road” on signs boards across their system, from Buffalo to the New York City line—and also including Central New York. The signs could be seen by an estimated 750,000 motorists who use the highway each day.

“With rising temperatures comes an increase in the number of motorcycles on the road, and even the most cautious driver can sometimes miss seeing smaller cycles,” said Senator Ritchie. “That’s why it’s important to remind motorists to watch out and take extra care when driving our highways in the summer months, and throughout the year, and to be on the alert for motorcycles.”

“I want to thank the New York State Thruway Authority and its Executive Director Thomas Madison for this educational campaign that will help drive home the point that we all have a part to play in making our highways safer for everyone.”

Senator Ritchie was prompted to act following several high profile accidents last year in Oswego County and Central New York.

Her research found that the number of motorcycles on New York roadways has increased 12 percent over five years—but motorcycles registrations in Jefferson, St. Lawrence and Oswego Counties grew by 31 percent, 20 percent and 16 percent, respectively, during that time period, to more than 13,800.

And as the number of motorcycles increased, so did accidents. Statewide in 2010, there were 5,570 motorcycle accidents across the state, including 180 deaths. More than half of accidents involved a collision with another vehicle.

“Year after year, the Thruway has ranked among the safest superhighways in the nation, in large part because of the ongoing efforts of our staff to ensure the safety of all motorists,” said Thruway Director Thomas J. Madison. “And as summer motorcycling increases, it’s a good time to use our variable message boards to promote motorcyclist awareness and the need for all travelers to share the road.”

“I applaud the efforts of Senator Patty Ritchie and others who recognize that motorcycle accidents happen far too frequently,” said Bruce LePorte, Vice President of ABATE (American Bikers Aimed Toward Education) of Oswego County, a leading

motorcycle rider safety group. "Warmer weather and rising gasoline prices mean more motorcycles on the road. I urge all drivers to be patient and share the road so we all arrive safely."

"Because of their small size, motorcycles are often overlooked," said Sandy Mensch, Public Relations Officer for ABATE of Oswego County. "It is important to look twice and be aware that motorcycles are on the road, it could save a life."

In her effort to increase public awareness of motorcyclists and highway safety, Senator Ritchie also has introduced legislation (S.2113) that would require increased motorcycle safety awareness as a component of every new driver's training. The bill passed the Senate in 2012.