



February 27, 2008

The Honorable Hope Andrade  
Chair, Texas Transportation Commission (TTC)  
Texas Transportation Commissioners  
125 East 11<sup>th</sup> Street  
Austin, Texas 78701

Re: Resolving negative impact of for-profit specialty plate marketing agreement on non-profit organizations and state agencies

Dear Chairwoman Andrade and Commissioners,

On January 18 and January 23 of this year, the Texas Bicycle Coalition Education Fund (TBCEF) attended meetings with Personal Plates Queensland and their subsidiary My Plates, Inc. (PPQ/MPI) hosted by TxDOT. We discussed our concerns about the effect of the pending PPQ/MPI contract with Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) on the TBCEF "Share the Road" Specialty License Plate Program. There has been no experience or research to determine the impact on current specialty license plate sales. The underlying legislation and TxDOT have promised that new specialty plates would not compete with existing plates. Our concerns have not been addressed.

Pursuant to this unsatisfactory outcome, TBCEF requests the following TTC actions.

1. Postpone February 28<sup>th</sup> agenda item 9(a)(3) until unintended negative consequences to existing specialty plate beneficiary non-profit organizations and agencies programs can be identified, quantified and remedied.
2. Require a guarantee that non-profit specialty plate revenues will proportionally match the rates as projected by PPQ/MPI – as a “tide raising all boats.”
3. Develop and implement a review and appeals process if existing specialty plate beneficiary non-profit organizations and agencies believe a proposed or approved new plate is competing with an existing plate and appoint an appeals committee composed of beneficiaries of existing specialty plate programs.
4. Direct the TxDOT licensing and title division to work with specialty plate beneficiary non-profit organizations and agencies to conduct on-line specialty plate sales for their own plates separate from the My Plates website.
5. Commission an independent audit by the State Comptroller to reconcile the differing income projections of \$3 million by the Legislative Budget Board and \$40 million by TxDOT and PPQ/MPI.
6. Request the State Comptroller further review the “TxDOT estimate of lost revenue to certain sponsoring organizations and colleges through the General Revenue Fund of \$216,000 each year as a result of current specialty plate-holders switching to new designer plates authorized by the bill” as stated in the Legislative Budget Board review of May 26, 2005.

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7. Implement an annual review process so that future unintended negative consequences to existing non-profit and agency specialty plate programs can be identified, quantified and remedied.

The Texas Bicycle Coalition Education Fund provides bicycle safety education to more than 200,000 Texas school children annually, based on the results of a recent TBCEF survey.

In 2003, TBCEF initiated its specialty license plate legislative and sales efforts in good faith and with the belief that the legislature had provided a way for Texas cyclists to fund bicycle safety education for current and future generations without a state appropriation for this life saving work. Our investment and our core work as a non-profit traffic safety organization are endangered by the recent contract between TxDOT and PPQ/MPI.

Since 2004, and with great effort, TBCEF has brought its specialty plate sales to 2,500 plates annually. We are building on this foundation to ramp up annual sales five-fold to 12,500 as achieved by the Florida Bicycle Coalition with their Share the Road specialty plate. Our supporters have come to understand the importance of these plates to the safety of children and adults across Texas as they pursue active outdoor activities.

Texas Bicycle Coalition invested substantial time and resources into the specialty plate legislation in the 2003 Legislative Session (SB 715 and HB 1996.) The Texas Legislature has consistently favored use of the specialty plate program to fund non-profit organizations and state agencies to address important issues – parks, arts, scouts, universities and in our case, the bicyclist and motorist safety education. Please help us keep and grow this important tool, the Share the Road specialty plate program, so that we can fulfill our mission.

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,



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Cc: Chairman John Carona  
Senator Robert Deuell,  
Representative Larry Phillips  
Ben Wear, Austin American Statesman  
Rebecca Davio, Texas Department of Transportation  
Specialty plate beneficiaries