SOUND FIGHT IN BOSTON
Motorcyclists Challenging EPA-Stamp Requirement For Bikes

A group of motorcyclists hopes to overturn a Boston law that requires motorcycles to have a federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stamp certifying their exhaust pipes meet federal sound standards.

The ordinance, enacted in June 2009, imposes a $300 fine if an EPA stamp isn’t readily visible to law enforcement officers on a running or parked motorcycle in the city limits. However, it has yet to be enforced because of a legal challenge by five riders.

The riders claim the law isn’t valid because the state already has sound laws that govern motorcycles, and cities and towns must follow state law on the issue.

“A state inspection sticker on my motorcycle says I comply with the statutes and regulations, whether I’m in Amesbury or Boston or Worcester or anywhere in the state,” says Paul Cote, a member of the group of motorcyclists known as the “Justice Riders” that filed the lawsuit immediately after the Boston City Council enacted the ordinance in 2009.

In March, a Superior Court judge dismissed the suit, saying because the motorcyclists who brought the suit had received no citations they had no legal standing to sue.

The case has now gone to appeal. The Boston case is the latest skirmish over laws requiring motorcycle exhausts to display EPA stamps. Other local measures have been passed in Denver and North Hampton, N.H.

In the highest profile case, former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger signed Senate Bill 435 last year, requiring all California-registered motorcycles and exhaust systems built in 2013 and later to display an EPA label.

Schwarzenegger’s move was so sweeping and controversial that it earned him the AMA’s 2010 Motorcyclist of the Year designation, given to the individual or group that had the biggest impact, good or bad, on motorcycling during the calendar year.

“We’ve been saying for years that if the motorcycling community doesn’t police itself related to excessive sound, then the government would do it for us,” says Ed Moreland, AMA senior vice president for government relations. “Now we are seeing cities and states adopt EPA labeling measures that may seem reasonable on the surface, but in fact do little to solve the problem.

“We oppose efforts to require EPA labels because it’s not a guarantee of sound compliance, and the lack of a label is no guarantee that an exhaust is too loud. The only way to know if a motorcycle exhaust is compliant is to test its actual sound output,” explains Moreland.

“That’s why the AMA supports the SAE J2885 sound standard,” Moreland says. “It’s fair, practical, enforceable and economical, and we are working with cities and clubs around the country to adopt it. It’s the best tool we have as motorcyclists to control excessive motorcycle sound.”

AMA’S ROYCE WOOD HONORED
National Trails Group Praises Wood’s Advocacy Efforts

AMA Government Affairs Manager Royce Wood earned a prestigious State Trail Advocacy Award from the national group American Trails, awarded at the American Trails National Symposium Nov. 14-17 in Chattanooga, Tenn.

The group chose Wood for its State Trail Advocacy Award for Ohio for his successful efforts to influence public policy relating to trails.

“Royce Wood is a dedicated advocate of recreational trails across the country, paying particular attention to the trails in his current home state of Ohio,” American Trails said. “As a government affairs manager for the [AMA], Royce spends his professional day defending the rights of those that use all of America’s incredible trail systems.”

Among other things, the group said, Wood continues to promote the need for increased recreational trails funding in Ohio and safeguard the recreation community from harmful legislation.

“Royce practices what he preaches, and he volunteers multiple weekends during the riding season to the Trail Patrol [at the Wayne National Forest],” the group said.

American Trails is a nonprofit organization that works to create and protect trails on behalf of all trail interests, including motorcycling, hiking, bicycling, mountain biking, horseriding and more.