

Cross Slope of Roads

In 2016, South Carolina Public Interest Foundation, acting as a gadfly, sued SCDOT seeking to recruit the judiciary to assist it in motivating SCDOT to give higher priority to adequately cross sloping its roads to enhance public safety by reducing propensity for hydroplaning. The suit papers included statistics about the prevalence of hydroplaning, the magnitude of claims that SCDOT had been paying for “water on roadway” incidents, drawings hosing sections of I-85 with deficient cross slope, and current good engineering design of cross slope.

The suit recognized the SCDOT had discretion to design its work. It was based on the concept that this discretion was less than absolute, must be compatible with current good engineering practice, and SCDOT’s unjustified abuse of that discretion. SCPIF sensed that it was unlikely to prevail and offered to settle. To SCPIF’s great surprise, SCDOT settled and paid SCPIF \$31,000 to dismiss the suit. This was contrary to SCDOT’s long established reputation to snicker at any external criticism of its internal practices.

SCDOT quickly gave higher priority to cross slope. An example is its rehabilitation of I-385 in Greenville from Stone Avenue to Roper Mountain Road. Its contract for procurement of construction services included cross slope compatible with current good engineering practice. This required much more paving materials than a routine resurfacing. Edge of lane drop-off during construction was limited to 2 inches.

This motivated the construction contractor to have special instruments manufactured to measure cross slope during construction. This is evidence that prior thereto, cross slope was being generally ignored by SCDOT and its construction contractors.

This required extensive paving of short sections of roadway, giving the public the impression of mass of patches, and has delayed the work for years. It’s not finished yet. It’s a great improvement and deterrent to hydroplaning. SCDOT is giving similar priority to deficient cross slope on the I-85/385.

Interchange, I-85 rehabilitation in Spartanburg and Cherokee Counties, and statewide.

Even with proper cross slope, new tires, and fastened seat belts, to avoid frequently fatal hydroplaning, drivers should not exceed 45 MPH when there’s a significant thickness of film of water on the road. It’s perilous to ignore heavy rain, steep grades and rutted pavement.