Mr. Richard Lee, P.E.
Action Director, Office of Design
New York State Department of Transportation
50 Wolf Road
Albany, NY 12232

Dear Mr. Lee:

We have reviewed your Shoulder Rumble Strip on Secondary Highway, A Systematic Analysis Report and offer the following comments as you develop the EI and provisions in the HDM:

Has the Department considered a narrower rumble strip that would provide audible delineation yet provide sufficient shoulder width for bicyclists? Perhaps this “hybrid” rumble strip, say 6” wide, could be used in special cases where the accident rate or experience would warrant their placement, yet the Department’s policy would discourage or prohibit their use. While we understand that this “hybrid” rumble strip is not optimal, it may allow some level of audible delineation where the width of the shoulder or presence of guardrail would otherwise prohibit their use. The “hybrid” rumble strips would also be appropriate where there is a demonstrated problem with run off road type crashes, yet the criteria for rumble strips, based on this report, does not allow their use or placement.

In the selection criteria, and under the Bicyclists Accommodation – Exclusion Criteria, we would recommend that exceptions be made where there is an accessible, parallel bicycle facility within 200’ or the rumble strip is placed at least 1’ from the edge line along narrow shoulders, (or where targeted placement is recommended or necessary based on crash history). Exhibit 10 should allow the same caveat, i.e., unless a crash problem, for both maximum downgrade as well as the remaining shoulder for bikes. If there is a demonstrated problem, then the SHARDSs have shown a higher cost/benefit on more narrow shoulders. Realizing the detriment to bicyclists, we should only consider this option when there is a demonstrated crash problem.
FHWA recommends that the NYSDOT explore greater flexibility in the application and design of rumble strips on secondary highways, especially considering the user characteristics of the corridor or roadway, at high crash corridors, or where run-off-road type crashes are predominant. Providing a modified/hybrid rumble strip would provide greater protection for bicyclists and motorists without compromising safety for either.

In closing, FHWA endorses NYSDOT’s methodology and commends the Department for its exhaustive research into balancing the needs of all road users with that of safety. We also believe that this is the next logical step in reducing highway fatalities and serious injuries through a systematic approach to safety, especially on secondary highways.

Sincerely,

Michael Davies, P.E.
Acting Division Administrator