

**FINAL REPORT OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES ON**

# **Low Vision Study**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND  
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



## **SENATE DOCUMENT NO. 5**

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA  
RICHMOND  
1994**



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA  
*Department of Motor Vehicles*  
*2300 West Broad Street*

DONALD E. WILLIAMS  
COMMISSIONER

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FINAL REPORT  
on  
LOW VISION STUDY  
December 1993

To the General Assembly:

As required by Senate Joint Resolution 3, I am submitting the attached final report on the Low Vision Study, which the Department of Motor Vehicles was unable to conduct due to a lack of volunteers. This report documents the various strategies used by DMV to solicit volunteers for the study, and their net results.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Donald E. Williams".

Donald E. Williams  
Commissioner

DEW/reb

Attachment

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 3

*Requesting the Department of Motor Vehicles to study the licensing of low-vision drivers.*

Agreed to by the Senate, February 11, 1992

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 21, 1992

WHEREAS, licensing of drivers using bioptic telescopic lenses (BTL) has been proven to be successful; and

WHEREAS, the current vision standards require that individuals with visual acuity of between 20/40 and 20/70 be restricted to daylight driving; and

WHEREAS, the vision standard for BTL drivers is up to 20/200 through the carrier lens and is correctable to 20/70 through the bioptic telescopic lens; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Motor Vehicles has had five years of experience in testing and licensing BTL drivers; and

WHEREAS, the members of the Medical Advisory Board to DMV have been unable to locate substantive documentation for the current vision standard of 20/40 for an unrestricted license using corrective lenses; and

WHEREAS, there is no documentation for the vision standard of 20/40 through 20/70 for a restricted license for daylight driving using corrective lenses; and

WHEREAS, currently, there is no known analysis on vision standards being performed nationwide; and

WHEREAS, the Medical Advisory Board endorses the development and implementation of a pilot program which would test the driving ability of individuals with low vision (20/40 through 20/200); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Department of Motor Vehicles, with the assistance of the DMV staff physician and the Medical Advisory Board, be directed to design, conduct and evaluate a test of low-vision drivers (20/40 through 20/200); and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the drivers considered for participation in this test be individuals who until recently had been licensed to drive but were denied the privilege solely due to their visual acuity; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That DMV seek at least 50 individuals to participate in the test group; the standard for evaluation be the licensing test criteria used for BTL applicants; and testing be conducted by selected license examiners trained or experienced in dealing with low-vision applicants; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the examiners document each individual's skill and ability in backing, steering, following, paying attention, passing, stopping, heeding traffic signs, negotiating intersections, yielding or executing rights-of-way, making left or right turns, merging, and using corrective lenses; the examiners shall provide their documentation to the Medical Advisory Board for review; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That an evaluation of the gathered information be conducted by the licensed physicians of the Medical Advisory Board; the results of the evaluation and recommendation of the Board shall then be submitted to DMV management to determine what action should be taken; and be it

RESOLVED FINALLY, That the Department of Motor Vehicles submit an interim status report to the Governor and the 1993 General Assembly; the Department shall submit a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1994 Session of the General Assembly.

Both the interim and final reports shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for processing legislative documents.

## SUMMARY OF LOW VISION STUDY SOLICITATION EFFORTS

During the course of the study, DMV personnel worked closely with the Medical Advisory Board to develop strategies to increase participation in the study. All suggestions received from the Medical Advisory Board were pursued. The following summarizes each solicitation effort, and its results.

### Effort #1

During September and October of 1992, one hundred and thirty letters were mailed to ophthalmologists and optometrists in the Richmond area, asking them to review their files and encourage patients to participate in the study.

Also, Richmond area Vision Specialists with the Department for the Visually Handicapped encouraged their assigned optometrist's patients to participate in the study.

The net results of this effort were receipt of two applications from individuals ineligible for the study, as they were already licensed to operate a motor vehicle in Virginia. Two letters were also mailed to individuals identified from DMV files, but neither person responded.

### Effort #2

In December of 1992, DMV branch offices reported all vision screening failures for the month. Forty-one failures were reported, of which thirty-eight were licensed at a later date. The remaining three individuals were denied a license, but were not eligible to participate in the study due to their particular visual problems. This second effort produced no candidates for the study.

### Effort #3

In January of 1993, the Department for the Visually Handicapped allowed DMV personnel to review three hundred active case files which resulted in identification of sixty-seven potential candidates. Of these, thirty-two were already licensed to operate a motor vehicle in Virginia. No driver's record could be found for twenty-five of these individuals. Two of the candidates had voluntarily surrendered their Virginia license previously, and three of them had driver records, but had never held a license in Virginia. This left a total of five potential candidates. DMV mailed letters to these five candidates, but none of them responded.

#### Effort #4

In March of 1993, DMV expanded the strategy that was originally employed by mailing two hundred and seventy letters to ophthalmologists and optometrists statewide asking them to review their files and encourage patients to participate in the study.

Statewide, Vision Specialists with the Department for the Visually Handicapped encouraged their assigned optometrist's patients to participate in the study.

This effort resulted in no volunteers to participate in the study.

#### Effort #5

In April of 1993, DMV received assistance from the Retina Vitreous Center in Virginia Beach. The Center volunteered to review their files and encourage patients to participate in the study. One hundred patients who met the study criteria were identified. Of these, one patient was willing to participate in the study. As a DMV examiner would have had to undergo special training in order to test this one individual, and then travel to Virginia Beach in order to conduct the test, it was determined that this would not be cost effective for the Commonwealth. A letter of appreciation was sent to the individual, thanking him for his willingness to participate.

#### Conclusion

After taking the steps described above, it was decided that efforts to conduct this study should be curtailed, as all attempts to obtain enough volunteers had not been successful. DMV's staff physician and the members of the Medical Advisory Board concur with this decision. This concludes the final report on SJR 3 - Low Vision Study.