

[Cite as *Finn v. Ohio Dept. of Transp.*, 2005-Ohio-3644.]

IN THE COURT OF CLAIMS OF OHIO

ERIN FINN :
Plaintiff :
v. : CASE NO. 2005-03555-AD
OHIO DEPARTMENT OF : MEMORANDUM DECISION
TRANSPORTATION :
Defendant :

[illegible]

FINDINGS OF FACT

{¶ 1} 1) On January 22, 2005, at approximately 10:30 p.m., plaintiff, Erin Finn, was traveling south on Interstate 75 near the State Route 562 (Norwood Lateral) entrance, when her automobile struck a pothole causing tire and wheel damage to the vehicle.

{¶ 2} 2) Plaintiff filed this complaint seeking to recover \$327.32, her total cost of automotive repair which plaintiff contends she incurred as a result of negligence on the part of defendant, Department of Transportation ("DOT"), in maintaining the roadway. The \$25.00 filing fee was paid.

{¶ 3} 3) Defendant denied liability based on the fact it professed to have no knowledge of the damage-causing pothole prior to plaintiff's incident. Defendant suggested the pothole plaintiff's car struck probably existed "for only a relatively short amount of time before the time of the incident." Defendant denied receiving any prior complaints about the pothole which DOT located at "milepost 7.91 in Hamilton County."

{¶ 4} 4) Plaintiff did not submit any evidence to establish the length of time the pothole existed prior to the January 22, 2005,

property damage event.

{¶ 5} 5) Furthermore, defendant explained DOT employees conduct roadway inspections on a routine basis and had any of these employees detected a roadway defect that defect would have promptly been repaired. Defendant contended, plaintiff did not produce sufficient evidence to prove DOT breached any duty of care owed to the traveling public in respect to roadway maintenance.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

{¶ 6} Defendant has the duty to maintain its highway in a reasonably safe condition for the motoring public. *Knickel v. Ohio Department of Transportation* (1976), 49 Ohio App. 2d 335. However, defendant is not an insurer of the safety of its highways. See *Kniskern v. Township of Somerford* (1996), 112 Ohio App. 3d 189; *Rhodus v. Ohio Dept. of Transp.* (1990), 67 Ohio App. 3d 723.

{¶ 7} In order to recover in any suit involving injury proximately caused by roadway conditions plaintiff must prove either: 1) defendant had actual or constructive notice of the pothole and failed to respond in a reasonable time or responded in a negligent manner, or 2) that defendant, in a general sense, maintains its highways negligently. *Denis v. Department of Transportation* (1976), 75-0287-AD. Defendant is only liable for roadway conditions of which it has notice, but fails to reasonably correct. *Bussard v. Dept. of Transp.* (1986), 31 Ohio Misc. 2d 1.

{¶ 8} Plaintiff has not produced any evidence to indicate the length of time the pothole was present on the roadway prior to the incident forming the basis of this claim. Plaintiff has not shown defendant had actual notice of the pothole. Additionally, the trier of fact is precluded from making an inference of defendant's constructive notice, unless evidence is presented in respect to the time the pothole appeared on the roadway. *Spires v. Highway Department* (1988), 61 Ohio Misc. 2d 262. There is no indication

defendant had constructive notice of the pothole. Plaintiff has not produced any evidence to infer defendant, in a general sense, maintains its highways negligently or that defendant's acts caused the defective condition. *Herlihy v. Ohio Department of Transportation* (1999), 99-07011-AD. Therefore, defendant is not liable for any damage plaintiff may have suffered from the pothole.

{¶ 9} Plaintiff has not shown, by a preponderance of the evidence, that defendant failed to discharge a duty owed to plaintiff, or that plaintiff's injury was proximately caused by defendant's negligence. Plaintiff failed to show that the damage-causing pothole was connected to any conduct under the control of defendant or that there was any negligence on the part of defendant or its agents. *Taylor v. Transportation Dept.* (1998), 97-10898-AD; *Weininger v. Department of Transportation* (1999), 99-10909-AD; *Witherell v. Ohio Dept. of Transportation* (2000), 2000-04758-AD.

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OHIO DEPARTMENT OF : ENTRY OF ADMINISTRATIVE
TRANSPORTATION : DETERMINATION
Defendant :
: : : : : : : : : : : : : : : : :

Having considered all the evidence in the claim file and, for the reasons set forth in the memorandum decision filed concurrently herewith, judgment is rendered in favor of defendant. Court costs are assessed against plaintiff. The clerk shall serve upon all parties notice of this judgment and its date of entry upon the

journal.

DANIEL R. BORCHERT
Deputy Clerk

Entry cc:

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Plaintiff, Pro se

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For Defendant

RDK/laa
6/2
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