

[Cite as *Drongowski v. Ohio Dept. of Transp.*, 2004-Ohio-3497.]

IN THE COURT OF CLAIMS OF OHIO

KAREN DRONGOWSKI :  
Plaintiff :  
v. : CASE NO. 2004-02865-AD  
OHIO DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION : MEMORANDUM DECISION  
Defendant :

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FINDINGS OF FACT

{¶1} 1) On February 12, 2004, plaintiff, Karen Drongowski, was traveling south on State Route 257 south of Shaughnessy Reservoir in Delaware County, when her automobile struck two large potholes causing damage to the vehicle.

{¶2} 2) Plaintiff filed this complaint seeking to recover \$403.89, the cost of automotive repair which plaintiff contends she incurred as a result of negligence on the part of defendant, Department of Transportation, in maintaining the roadway. Plaintiff submitted the filing fee.

{¶3} 3) Defendant has denied liability based on the fact it had no knowledge of the potholes prior to plaintiff's property damage occurrence.

{¶4} 4) On April 29, 2004, plaintiff filed a response to defendant's investigation report. She submitted photographic evidence showing the potholes had not been repaired as of April 26, 2004. However, plaintiff has not submitted any evidence to

indicate the length of time the potholes existed prior to the incident forming the basis of this claim.

{¶5} 5) Defendant has asserted maintenance records show three pothole patching operations were needed in the general vicinity of plaintiff's incident during the six-week period preceding the February 12, 2004, property damage event.

#### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

{¶6} 1) Defendant has the duty to keep roads in a safe, drivable condition. *Amica Mutual v. Dept. of Transportation* (1982), 81-02289-AD.

{¶7} 2) In order to recover on a claim of this type, plaintiff must prove either: 1) defendant had actual or constructive notice of the defects (potholes) 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.

{¶8} 3) There is no evidence defendant had actual notice of the damage-causing potholes.

{¶9} 4) 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 defective conditions (potholes) developed. *Spires v. Highway Department* (1988), 61 Ohio Misc. 2d 262.

{¶10} 5) Size of the defects (potholes) are insufficient to show notice or duration of existence. *O'Neil v. Department of Transportation* (1988), 61 Ohio Misc. 2d 297.

{¶11} 6) In order for there to be constructive notice, plaintiff must show sufficient time has elapsed after dangerous conditions (potholes) appear, so that under the circumstances, defendant should have acquired knowledge of the existence of the defects. *Guiher v. Jackson* (1978), 78-0126-AD.

{¶12} 7) No evidence has shown defendant had constructive notice

of the potholes.

{¶13} 8) Furthermore, plaintiff has failed to show defendant negligently maintained the roadway.

{¶14} 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.

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DANIEL R. BORCHERT  
Deputy Clerk

Entry cc:

Karen Drongowski  
5728 Morlick Sq.  
Dublin, Ohio 43017

Plaintiff, Pro se

Gordon Proctor, Director  
Department of Transportation  
1980 West Broad Street  
Columbus, Ohio 43223

For Defendant

DRB/RDK/laa  
5/19  
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