

[Cite as *Kujawa v. Ohio Dept. of Transp.*, 2004-Ohio-3764.]

IN THE COURT OF CLAIMS OF OHIO

CHRISTOPHER J. KUJAWA :

Plaintiff :

v. :

CASE NO. 2004-03748-AD

OHIO DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION-11:

MEMORANDUM DECISION

Defendant :

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FINDINGS OF FACT

{¶1} 1) On February 26, 2004, plaintiff, Christopher J. Kujawa, was traveling south on State Route 7 near the Rush Run Exit in Jefferson County, when his automobile struck a large pothole causing damage to the vehicle.

{¶2} 2) Plaintiff filed this complaint seeking to recover \$74.37, the cost of automotive repair which plaintiff contends he incurred as a result of negligence on the part of defendant, Department of Transportation, in maintaining the roadway. The \$25.00 filing fee was paid and plaintiff is seeking recovery of that amount as well as the claim for property damage.

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

{¶4} 4) On June 2, 2004, plaintiff filed a response to defendant's investigation report. However, plaintiff has not submitted any evidence to indicate the length of time the pothole

existed prior to the incident forming the basis of this claim. Plaintiff also included a letter from Chief Davis of the Tiltonsville Police Department who expressed his opinion about the general condition of the roadway but not about the pothole in question.

{¶5} 5) Defendant has asserted maintenance records show five pothole patching operations were needed in the general vicinity of plaintiff's incident during the eleven-week period preceding the February 26, 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 defect (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.

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

{¶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 condition (pothole) developed. *Spires v. Highway Department* (1988), 61 Ohio Misc. 2d 262.

{¶10} 5) Size of the defect (pothole) is 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 condition (pothole) appeared, 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 pothole.

{¶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:

Christopher J. Kujawa  
207 Novak Drive  
Dillonvale, Ohio 43917

Plaintiff, Pro se

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

For Defendant

DRB/RDK/laa  
6/9  
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