

AMERICA BUILDS: A REVIEW OF PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS ROADWAY SAFETY

(119-7)

HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT OF THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

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U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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FEBRUARY 7, 2025

SUMMARY OF SUBJECT MATTER

TO: Members, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
FROM: Staff, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
RE: Subcommittee Hearing on “*America Builds: A Review of Programs to Address Roadway Safety*”

I. PURPOSE

The Subcommittee on Highways and Transit will meet on Wednesday, February 12, 2025, at 10:00 AM ET in 2167 of the Rayburn House Office Building to receive testimony at a hearing entitled, “*America Builds: A Review of Programs to Address Roadway Safety*.” The purpose of the hearing is to provide Subcommittee Members with the opportunity to receive testimony on policies and programs focused on improving roadway safety within the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT). At the hearing, Members will receive testimony from witnesses on behalf of the National Association of Counties (NACo), the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA), the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA), and the Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates).

II. BACKGROUND

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s (NHTSA’s) mission is to “save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce economic costs due to road traffic crashes, through education, research, safety standards, and enforcement.”¹ NHTSA works closely with State Highway Safety Offices (SHSOs) to deliver its mission.² The Subcommittee on Highways and Transit has jurisdiction over select NHTSA behavioral safety programs under chapter 4 of title 23, United States Code (U.S.C.), including State Highway Safety Grants (Section 402), Highway Safety Research and Development (Section 403), the High Visibility Enforcement Program (Section 404), and National Priority Safety Programs (Section 405).³

Section 402 provides flexible apportioned funding to states to support a highway safety program that is designed to reduce traffic crashes and deaths, injuries, and property damage resulting from those crashes.⁴ Section 402 requires states to develop a triennial Highway Safety Plan that include strategies for states to meet per-

¹ DOT, NHTSA, *About NHTSA*, available at <https://www.nhtsa.gov/#:~:text=About>.

² DOT, *National Highway Traffic Safety Administration: Key Grant Programs*, (Nov. 17, 2023), available at <https://www.transportation.gov/rural/grant-toolkit/usdot-discretionary-grants-by-agency/nhtsa>.

³ SUBCOMM. ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT OF THE H. COMM. ON TRANSP. AND INFRASTRUCTURE, Jurisdiction and Activities, 119th Cong. (Jan. 2025), (on file with Comm.) [hereinafter *Jurisdiction and Activities*].

⁴ 23 U.S.C. § 402.

formance targets and improve safety outcomes.⁵ Section 405 authorizes the Secretary of Transportation to make grants that address selected national priorities to reduce highway deaths and injuries.⁶ Eligible projects include those to address impaired driving, occupant protection, state traffic safety information system improvements, distracted driving, motorcyclist safety, nonmotorized safety, preventing roadside deaths, and driver and officer safety education.⁷

Section 403 authorizes the Secretary to conduct research and carry out demonstration projects on highway safety and traffic conditions, including human behavioral factors and different countermeasures to increase highway and traffic safety, such as occupant protection and alcohol- and drug- impaired driving.⁸ Section 404 requires the Secretary to coordinate and administer at least three Nationwide high-visibility traffic safety enforcement campaigns each year.⁹ Funding authorized under this section may be used for advertising and public outreach by state and local law enforcement to further the goals of the campaigns.¹⁰

TRAFFIC FATALITY TRENDS

NHTSA estimates that in 2023, 40,990 people died in motor vehicle crashes. This is a 3.6 percent decrease from the 42,514 fatalities in 2022.¹¹ Respectively, this equates to 1.26 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) compared to 1.22 per 100 million VMT in 2022.¹² Early estimates from the first half of 2024 indicate a continued decline in traffic deaths with 18,720 fatalities, a 3.2 percent decline in fatalities from the first half of 2023, marking the ninth straight quarter of declines.¹³ According to NHTSA data, in 2022, the latest year for which detailed data is available, fatal crashes were attributed to several factors, including: 18.5 percent driving too fast for conditions, in excess of posted speed limit, or racing; 11 percent driving under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or medication; 8.9 percent operating vehicle in a careless manner; 7.4 percent failure to yield right-of-way; 5.7 percent failure to keep in proper lane; 5.2 percent distracted, including by phone, talking, eating, or an object.¹⁴

Notably, these numbers are still elevated compared to pre-pandemic levels. A report from Cambridge Mobile Telematics found that from the announcement of the pandemic on March 11, 2020, to April 15, 2020, driving trips had fallen by 60 percent, but speeding risk rose by 64 percent and phone distraction by 18.5 percent.¹⁵ In 2021, traffic fatalities escalated 10.5 percent to the highest number of traffic fatalities since 2005.¹⁶ Then-acting NHTSA Administrator Ann Carlson further attributed the increase in fatalities to open roads during the pandemic, leading to higher instances of speeding, distracted driving, and impaired driving.¹⁷ Reports suggest that, while enforcement of traffic violations tapered during the pandemic, enforcement efforts have not rebounded in recent years.¹⁸

⁵ GOVERNORS HIGHWAY SAFETY ASS'N, *Section 402 State and Community Highway Safety Grant Program*, available at <https://www.ghsa.org/about/federal-grant-programs/402>.

⁶ GOVERNORS HIGHWAY SAFETY ASS'N, *Section 405 National Priority Safety Program*, available at <https://www.ghsa.org/about/federal-grant-programs/405>.

⁷ 23 U.S.C. § 405.

⁸ 23 U.S.C. § 403.

⁹ 23 U.S.C. § 404.

¹⁰ 23 U.S.C. § 404.

¹¹ DOT, NHTSA, *Early Estimates of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities and Fatality Rate by Sub-Categories in 2023*, (May 2023), available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813581>.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ Press Release, DOT, NHTSA, *NHTSA Estimates Traffic Fatalities Declined in the First Half of 2024*, (Sept. 5, 2024), available at <https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/nhtsa-estimates-traffic-fatalities-declined-first-half-2024>.

¹⁴ DOT, NHTSA, *Traffic Safety Facts 2022*, (Dec. 2024), available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813656>.

¹⁵ *2022 US Distracted Driving Report*, CAMBRIDGE MOBILE TELEMATICS, (2022), available at <https://2903147.fs1.hubspotusercontent-na1.net/hubfs/2903147/CMT%202022%20US%20Distracted%20Driving%20Report.pdf>.

¹⁶ David Shepardson, *U.S. Traffic Deaths Down 3.6% in 2023 but Above Pre-pandemic Levels*, REUTERS, (Apr. 1, 2024), available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-traffic-deaths-down-36-2023-above-pre-pandemic-levels-2024-04-01/>.

¹⁷ David Shepardson, *U.S. Traffic Deaths Down in 2023 but Remain Above Pre-pandemic Levels*, REUTERS, (Sept. 28, 2023), available at <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-traffic-deaths-down-2023-remain-above-pre-pandemic-levels-2023-09-28/>.

¹⁸ Emily Badger and Ben Blatt, *Traffic Enforcement Dwindled in the Pandemic. In Many Places, It Hasn't Come Back.*, N.Y. TIMES, (July 24, 2024), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/07/29/upshot/traffic-enforcement-dwindled.html>.

RURAL ROAD SAFETY

According to NHTSA, in 2022, 41 percent of all traffic fatalities occurred in rural areas, despite only 20 percent of the population living in rural areas.¹⁹ In 2022, the fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) was 1.5 times higher in rural areas than in urban areas.²⁰ A 2024 report by TRIP examining rural infrastructure challenges found that traffic crashes and fatalities on rural non-Interstate roads are disproportionately high, while noting that rural roads are more likely to have narrow lanes, limited shoulders, sharp curves, exposed hazards, pavement drop-offs, steep slopes and limited clear zones along roadsides.²¹ According to NHTSA, 64 percent of fatalities in rural areas in 2022 were in roadway-departure crashes.²² Additionally, in 2022, GHSA and State Farm Insurance reported that disproportionate rates of rural fatalities may be caused by several factors; including lack of safety resources, simpler roadway infrastructure, poor emergency medical services, and behavioral risks including failure to use a seat belt, impaired driving, speeding, or distraction.²³

URBAN TRAFFIC FATALITIES

According to NHTSA, in 2022, 59 percent of all traffic fatalities occurred in urban areas. In 2022, 58 percent of traffic fatalities in urban areas occurred on arterial roadways.²⁴ The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety reviewed traffic fatalities from 2010 to 2019 and found, “Prior to 2015 traffic fatalities in rural areas were higher than in urban areas, however between 2010 and 2019, motor vehicles crash fatalities in urban areas increased by 34 percent, while those in rural areas decreased by 10 percent.”²⁵ Consequently, in 2019, traffic fatalities in urban areas were higher than in rural areas.²⁶ NHTSA data also indicates that pedestrians accounted for 18 percent of all traffic fatalities and bicyclists accounted for 2.6 percent of all traffic fatalities.²⁷ The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), however, reports that 82 percent of all bicyclist fatalities (889) and 84 percent of all pedestrian fatalities (6,323) occurred on urban roads in 2022.²⁸

¹⁹ DOT, NHTSA, *Rural Urban Traffic Fatalities*, (July 2024), available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/Publication/813599> [hereinafter *Rural Urban Traffic Fatalities*].

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ TRIP, *Rural Connections: Examining the Safety, Connectivity, Condition and Funding Needs of America’s Rural Roads & Bridges*, (Sept. 2024), available at https://tripnet.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/TRIP_Rural_Connections_Report_September_2024.pdf.

²² *Rural Urban Traffic Fatalities*, *supra* note 19.

²³ Press Release, GOVERNORS HIGHWAY SAFETY ASS’N, *America’s Rural Roads: Beautiful and Deadly*, (Sept. 1, 2022), available at <https://www.ghsa.org/resources/news-releases/GHSA/Rural-Road-Safety22>.

²⁴ Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, *Fatality Fact 2022, Urban/Rural Comparison*, (June 2024), available at <https://www.iihs.org/topics/fatality-statistics/detail/urban-rural-comparison> [hereinafter *Urban/Rural Comparison*].

²⁵ FOUNDATION FOR TRAFFIC SAFETY, *Traffic Fatalities on Urban Roads and Streets in Relation to Speed Limits and Speeding, United States, 2010–2019*, (July 2022), available at <https://aaafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Traffic-Fatalities-on-Urban-Streets-2010-2019-July-2022.pdf>.

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ DOT, NHTSA, *Traffic Safety Facts, 2022 Data, Pedestrians*, (July 2024), available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/Publication/813590>; *see also*, DOT, NHTSA, *Traffic Safety Facts, 2022 Data, Bicyclists and Other Cyclists*, (July 2024), available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/Publication/813591>.

²⁸ *Urban/Rural Comparison*, *supra* note 24.

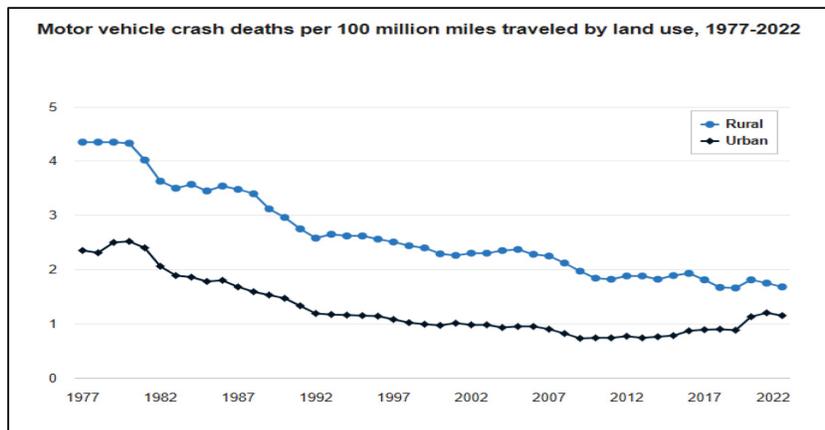


Figure 1: Distribution of Motor Vehicle Crash Deaths by Land Use, 1977–2022²⁹

III. SELECT FEDERAL ROADWAY SAFETY PROGRAMS AND RULES

HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (HSIP)

HSIP is a core Federal-aid highway program, funded out of the Highway Trust Fund (HTF).³⁰ HSIP provides Federal funding for projects that will achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on public roads, including local roads and roads on tribal land.³¹ In order to use HSIP funding, the state must have an approved, comprehensive, and data-driven strategic highway safety plan (SHSP) that defines state safety goals and describes a program of strategies to improve safety.³² The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) (P.L. 117–58) increased funding for HSIP to \$15.6 billion, a 34 percent increase when compared to the previous authorization, the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act (P.L. 114–94).³³

Funding provided under HSIP is apportioned to state departments of transportation (DOTs) to implement highway safety improvement projects identified in the state’s SHSP.³⁴ The state DOT is responsible for selecting projects, administering the funding, ensuring compliance with all applicable Federal requirements, and overseeing the project to completion.³⁵ Each state DOT must evaluate the SHSP on a regular basis to ensure the accuracy of the data in the plan and the priorities of the proposed safety strategies.³⁶

Congress has created several special rules to address key safety problems, including high-risk roads, older drivers, vulnerable road users, and rural roads.³⁷ For example, the special rule for high risk rural roads requires states to expend HSIP funds for safety projects on roads that the state determines pose a significant safety risk pursuant to Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) guidance.³⁸ In fiscal year (FY) 2024, 24 states triggered the special rule, and \$103.7 million was obligated for

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ 23 U.S.C. § 148; *America Builds: Highways to Move People and Freight: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Highways and Transit of the H. Comm. on Transp. and Infrastructure*, 119th Cong. (Jan. 22, 2025) (testimony of Jim Tymon, Executive Director, American Ass’n of State Highway and Transp. Officials) (on file with Comm.); DOT, FHWA, *Highway Safety Improvement Program*, (Jan. 30, 2025), available at <https://highways.dot.gov/safety/hsip>.

³¹ 23 U.S.C. § 148(b).

³² 23 U.S.C. § 148(c)(1).

³³ DOT, FHWA, *Federal-Aid Highway Program Authorizations Under the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act*, available at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact/esty20162020auth.pdf>; DOT, *IIJA, Public Law 117–58, Authorized Funding, FY 2022 to FY 2026*, available at https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2022-01/DOT_Infrastructure_Investment_and_Jobs_Act_Authorization_Table_%28IIJA%29.pdf.

³⁴ *Supra* note 33.

³⁵ DOT, FHWA, *Funding Federal Aid Highways*, (Jan. 2017), available at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/olsp/fundingfederalaid/>.

³⁶ 23 U.S.C. § 148(c)(1)(C).

³⁷ 23 U.S.C. § 148(g)(1)–(3).

³⁸ 23 U.S.C. § 148.

safety projects on high risk rural roads.³⁹ IIJA established the special rule on vulnerable road users safety, which requires states to expend HSIP funds on projects that address the safety of bicyclists, pedestrians, and other non-motorized users if vulnerable road user fatalities represent more than 15 percent of total annual crash fatalities in the state.⁴⁰

SAFETY PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Since the enactment of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) (P.L. 112-141) in 2012, states have been required to establish performance management targets and measures within several identified areas to increase the accountability and transparency of the Federal-aid highway program and improve project decision making through performance-based planning and programming.⁴¹ MAP-21 established a national safety goal to achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on public roads.⁴² MAP-21 directed the Secretary to establish performance measures for states to use to assess serious injuries and fatalities per VMT and the total number of serious injuries on public roads.⁴³

Pursuant to the law, FHWA established the Safety Performance Management (Safety PM) measure to support the HSIP program. The Safety PM Final Rule, issued in 2016, establishes five performance measures: the number of fatalities; the rate of fatalities per 100 million VMT; the number of serious injuries; the rate of serious injuries per 100 million VMT; and the number of non-motorized fatalities and non-motorized serious injuries.⁴⁴

The Safety PM Final Rule also required state DOTs to establish and report annual safety targets.⁴⁵ Recognizing the differences between rural and urban areas in the states, MAP-21 permitted states to provide different targets for those areas.⁴⁶ Additionally, the Safety PM Final Rule established a process for FHWA to assess if state DOTs have met or made significant progress toward achieving safety performance targets. A state DOT is determined to have met or made significant progress toward meeting its targets when at least four out of five safety performance targets are met. State DOTs are required to use obligation authority equal to the HSIP apportionment from the prior fiscal year on safety related projects if it has not met or made significant progress toward meeting safety performance targets.⁴⁷

ROAD DESIGN STANDARDS

Roads with clear markings, proper lighting, and safe pedestrian crossings help to significantly reduce accidents and are crucial for road safety.⁴⁸ FHWA's *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways* (MUTCD) and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials' (AASHTO's) *Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets* (known as the "Green Book") provide standards that govern road design through Federal statutes and regulations.⁴⁹ FHWA is responsible for updating the MUTCD, whereas AASHTO updates the Green Book. FHWA, however, does contribute to the Green Book's development and must adopt each subsequent update by reference for it to be recognized as a binding Federal standard on the National Highway System (NHS).⁵⁰

The MUTCD is the national standard for all traffic control devices—signs, signals, and markings—installed on any street, highway, or bicycle path open to public trav-

³⁹ DOT, *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Computational Tables, Table 5: Highway Safety Improvement Program*, available at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/bipartisan-infrastructure-law/comptables/table5p2.cfm>.

⁴⁰ IIJA, Pub. L. No. 117-58, § 11111.

⁴¹ 23 U.S.C. § 150(a).

⁴² 23 U.S.C. § 150(b)(1).

⁴³ 23 U.S.C. § 150(c)(4).

⁴⁴ DOT, FHWA, *Safety Performance Management* (hereinafter Safety PM), available at <https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/hsip/spm/>.

⁴⁵ DOT, FHWA, *Let's Talk Performance Webinar FAQs: Safety Performance Management Measures*, available at <https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/hsip/spm/docs/LetsTalkPerfWebinarFAQspdf.pdf> [hereinafter Let's Talk Performance Webinar FAQs].

⁴⁶ 23 U.S.C. § 150(d)(2).

⁴⁷ Let's Talk Performance Webinar FAQs, *supra* note 46.

⁴⁸ Anthony Davis, *Enhancing Road Safety—Best Practices and Strategies*, HIGHWAYS TODAY, (June 11, 2024), available at <https://highways.today/2024/06/11/road-safety-strategies>.

⁴⁹ 23 U.S.C. § 109.

⁵⁰ DOT, FHWA, *Guidance on NHS Design Standards and Design Exceptions*, (Mar. 6, 2019), available at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/design/standards/qa.cfm>.

el.⁵¹ The MUTCD also provides guidance on setting speed limits. On December 19, 2023, a final rule was published in the Federal Register, adopting the 11th Edition of the MUTCD, requiring states to adopt the new standards within two years of the effective date, January 18, 2024.⁵²

The Green Book provides minimum standards and guidance for the geometric design of roadways, such as lane width and design speed. Earlier versions of the Green Book often dictated high-speed designs for urban and rural arterial roadways, but the latest update, in 2018, allows for more flexible, multimodal, and performance based designs.⁵³ While the Green Book only applies to facilities on the NHS, state standards that control Federal-aid projects off the NHS are often consistent with Green Book requirements.⁵⁴ To provide additional flexibility for local governments that wish to deviate from state design standards, IIJA clarifies that local jurisdictions may use design guides that are different from state standards on the roads they own, that are not part of the NHS, without approval from the state.⁵⁵

AASHTO also publishes the Manual for Assessing Safety Hardware (MASH). This manual sets guidelines for crash testing permanent and temporary highway safety features, such as guardrails.⁵⁶ Guardrails make roads safer and lessen the severity of crashes. Ideally, a guardrail should deflect the vehicle back to the roadway, bring the vehicle to a stop, or slow a vehicle down significantly as it passes the guardrail.⁵⁷ A guardrail works by absorbing the energy of the moving vehicle. Additional speed or weight of the vehicle impacts how the guardrail functions.⁵⁸ Research has indicated that existing guardrails may not be designed to adequately respond to the increased number of electric vehicles on the Nation's roadways, as these vehicles tend to be heavier than those powered by internal combustion engines.⁵⁹

SAFE STREETS AND ROADS FOR ALL (SS4A)

IIJA established SS4A, a discretionary grant program available to local governments, to improve roadway safety by significantly reducing or eliminating roadway fatalities and serious injuries for all road users, and authorized \$200 million annually for the program from FY 2022 to FY 2026.⁶⁰ Separately, IIJA provided \$5 billion in advance appropriations for the program. Funding is eligible for both development and implementation of comprehensive safety action plans, but applicants must have a safety action plan or similar plan in place to apply for an implementation grant under this program.⁶¹ After three years of SS4A awards, approximately 75 percent of the Nation's population is covered under a safety action plan, and almost half of the communities receiving awards are in rural areas.⁶² Eligible activities for implementation grants are infrastructure, behavioral, or operational activities identified in the action plan directly related to addressing the roadway safety problems identified in the application and action plan.⁶³ Eligible activities for implementation grants include improvements to multimodal networks, applying low cost safety treatments along high crash corridors, speed management projects, safety enhancements, and making street design changes.⁶⁴

⁵¹ DOT, FHWA, *Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*, "Overview," (June 7, 2024), available at <https://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/kno-overview.htm>.

⁵² National Standards for Traffic Control Devices; the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways; Revision, 88 Fed. Reg. 87,672, (Dec. 19, 2023), available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/12/19/2023-27178/national-standards-for-traffic-control-devices-the-manual-on-uniform-traffic-control-devices-for>.

⁵³ DOT, FHWA, *Complete Streets Report to Congress*, (Mar. 2022), available at <https://highways.dot.gov/sites/fhwa.dot.gov/files/2022-03/Complete%20Streets%20Report%20to%20Congress.pdf>.

⁵⁴ 23 U.S.C. § 109(c); (o).

⁵⁵ IIJA, Pub. L. No. 117-58, § 11129.

⁵⁶ DOT, FHWA, *AASHTO Guidance*, (June 20, 2023), available at <https://highways.dot.gov/safety/rwd/reduce-crash-severity/aashto-guidance>.

⁵⁷ DOT, FHWA, *Guardrail 101*, (Dec. 10, 2014), available at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/guardrailsafety/guardrail101.pdf>.

⁵⁸ *Id.*

⁵⁹ Kris Van Cleave and Analisa Novak, *Electric Vehicles Raise Concerns About Whether Safety Infrastructure Can Handle Their Weight in a Crash*, CBS NEWS, (Sept. 18, 2024), available at <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/electric-vehicles-safety-infrastructure-barriers/>.

⁶⁰ IIJA, Pub. L. No. 117-58, § 24112.

⁶¹ *Id.*

⁶² DOT, *Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program*, (Jan. 2025), available at <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/SS4A>.

⁶³ IIJA, *supra* note 61.

⁶⁴ *Id.*

WORK ZONE SAFETY

In January, the Association of General Contractors (AGC) testified that construction companies have reported a “greater frequency of reckless driver behavior since the COVID–19 pandemic resulting in 64% of contractors reporting that a motor vehicle has crashed into their work zones in the past year alone attributed mainly to extreme speeding, distractions, and impairment.”⁶⁵ The National Work Zone Information Clearinghouse estimated 96,000 work zone crashes, 37,000 related injuries, and 891 fatalities occurred in 2022.⁶⁶ IIJA included several programs to address work zone safety, including allowing states to create work zone safety contingency funds to pay for additional safety measures for projects that have unforeseen safety risks.⁶⁷

On September 20, 2023, FHWA published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) and request for comments to update regulations pertaining to highway and street work zones.⁶⁸ The NPRM seeks to make changes to many provisions addressed in a 2004 FHWA final rule intended to bolster work zone safety.⁶⁹ Specifically, the NPRM proposes requiring states to “identify the safety and mobility performance measures that will be used to monitor and manage performance,”⁷⁰ as part of their work zone safety and mobility policy. It would also formally require states to develop and implement systematic procedures to assess work zone impacts in project development, and to manage safety and mobility during project implementation.⁷¹ The final rule was published on November 1, 2024, to allow for consideration of a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to the broader safety and mobility impacts of work zones across project development stages.⁷²

IV. WITNESSES

- The Honorable. James H. Willox, Commissioner, Converse County, Wyoming, *on behalf of the* National Association of Counties (NACo)
- Mr. Michael Hanson, Director, Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety, *on behalf of the* Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA)
- Ms. Haley Norman, Co-Owner, Direct Traffic Control, Inc., *on behalf of the* American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA)
- Ms. Cathy Chase, President, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

⁶⁵*America Builds: The State of the Nation’s Transportation System: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Transp. and Infrastructure*, 119th Cong. (Jan. 15, 2025) (testimony of Seth Schulgen, Vice President, Williams Bros. Construction).

⁶⁶NAT’L WORK ZONE SAFETY INFO. CLEARING HOUSE, *Work Zone Data*, available at <https://workzonesafety.org/work-zone-data/>.

⁶⁷IIJA, Pub. L. No. 117–58, 135 Stat. 429.

⁶⁸Work Zone Safety and Mobility and Temporary Traffic Control Devices, 88 Fed. Reg. 64,836 (Sept. 20, 2023), available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/09/20/2023-19701/work-zone-safety-and-mobility-and-temporary-traffic-control-devices>.

⁶⁹Work Zone Safety and Mobility, 69 Fed. Reg. 54,562 (Sept. 9, 2004), available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2004/09/09/04-20340/work-zone-safety-and-mobility>.

⁷⁰*Supra* note 69.

⁷¹*Id.*

⁷²Work Zone Safety and Mobility and Temporary Traffic Control Devices, 89 Fed. Reg. 87,282 (Nov. 1, 2024), available at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/11/01/2024-25065/work-zone-safety-and-mobility-and-temporary-traffic-control-devices#h-14>.

AMERICA BUILDS: A REVIEW OF PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS ROADWAY SAFETY

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2025

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT,
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10 a.m., in Room 2167, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. David Rouzer (Chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. ROUZER. The Subcommittee on Highways and Transit will come to order.

Welcome, everyone.

I ask unanimous consent the chairman be authorized to declare a recess at any time during today's hearing.

Without objection, so ordered.

I also ask unanimous consent that Members not on the subcommittee be permitted to sit with the subcommittee at today's hearing and ask questions.

Without objection, so ordered.

As a reminder, if Members wish to insert a document into the record, please also email it to DocumentsTI@mail.house.gov. Again, that's DocumentsTI@mail.house.gov.

I now recognize myself for the purposes of an opening statement for 5 minutes.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. DAVID ROUZER OF NORTH CAROLINA, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT

Mr. ROUZER. Today's hearing continues the subcommittee's efforts to improve highway safety through policy and program reviews within the Department of Transportation as we work towards reauthorizing our Nation's surface transportation programs.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, or NHTSA for short, estimates nearly 41,000 people died in motor vehicle-related crashes in 2023. While this was a 3.6-percent decline from 2022, fatalities are still up compared to the last decade.

Driver behavior has changed considerably since 2020. After pandemic-era closures began in March of 2020, driving trips dropped by 60 percent and speeding risk increased by 64 percent. These risks have only increased as traffic enforcement declined after police officers were discouraged from, quote, "nonessential contact" and radical political movements called for the defunding of police across the country. This came to a head in 2021 when traffic fatali-

ties jumped more than 10 percent, the highest number of fatalities since 2005 and the largest percentage increase since 1975.

Today, car travel has returned to normal, but traffic enforcement has not. According to a New York Times report, traffic stops have declined by as much as 91 percent in cities since 2020. Again, 91 percent in cities since 2020. Underfunded and understaffed police forces mean there are no real consequences for drivers' illegal actions, and it has only paved the way—pardon the pun there—for drivers to speed, drive while impaired, and make reckless decisions endangering others on the road.

We have also seen the increase in traffic fatalities disproportionately affect our rural communities. In 2022, NHTSA found 40 percent of all traffic fatalities occurred in rural areas on non-interstate roads, despite the fact that only 20 percent of the population resides in these rural areas. Fatality rates remain 1½ times higher in rural areas than in urban areas.

Our rural roads often have narrow lanes, limited shoulders, exposed hazards, and limited clear zones, and drivers tend to be riskier when there is less traffic and fewer traffic patterns that require slower speeds. Sixty-eight percent of our public roads are in rural areas, and 77 percent of all roadways are maintained by local governments. The backlog for rural road and bridge maintenance was more than \$180 billion in 2022.

States and local governments need flexibility to implement programs that address the shortfalls in our rural communities. States also need reliable and consistent programming, such as the Highway Safety Improvement Program, which addresses maintenance backlogs and ensures roads meet safety standards.

Our current and future road design standards can help drive down fatalities across our communities. Pavement and guardrail standards should adapt to new vehicle technology, such as electric vehicles, which weigh more than traditional vehicles. We should consider if updates to the design standards for guardrails are necessary to absorb the heavier weight and help prevent these heavier vehicles from crossing the median into oncoming traffic.

We also need to continue to address work zone safety. Reckless driving puts our roadside workers at greater risk of injury or death. According to the Associated General Contractors of America, 64 percent of contractors reported a motor vehicle had crashed into their work zone since 2020. Now, this number is simply unacceptable. Again, enforcement can discourage reckless driving in work zones, but we can also look at ways to better design work zones and related traffic patterns to curtail these incidents.

So, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today, who will be able to share what is working, what's not, and how we can continue to make our roadways safer. We don't have unlimited funds, as we all know, and it's crucial that we make strategic investments that are proven to save lives.

[Mr. Rouzer's prepared statement follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. David Rouzer, a Representative in Congress from the State of North Carolina, and Chairman, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit

Today's hearing continues the Subcommittee's efforts to improve highway safety through policy and program reviews within the Department of Transportation as we work towards reauthorizing our nation's surface transportation programs.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates nearly 41,000 people died in motor vehicle related crashes in 2023. While this was a 3.6 percent decrease from 2022, fatalities are still up compared to the last decade.

Driver behavior has changed considerably since 2020. After pandemic-era closures began in March of 2020, driving trips dropped by 60 percent and speeding risks increased by 64 percent. These risks have only increased as traffic enforcement declined after police officers were discouraged from "nonessential" contact and radical political movements called for defunding police forces across the country. This came to a head in 2021, when traffic fatalities jumped over 10 percent, the highest number of fatalities since 2005, and the largest percentage increase since 1975.

Today, car travel has returned to normal, but traffic enforcement hasn't. According to a New York Times report, traffic stops have declined as much as 91 percent in cities since 2020. Underfunded and understaffed police forces mean there are no real consequences for drivers' illegal actions and have only paved the way for drivers to speed, drive while impaired, and make reckless decisions endangering others on the road.

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I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today, who will be able to share what's working, what's not, and how we can continue to make our roadways safer. We don't have unlimited funds, and it's crucial we make strategic investments that are proven to save lives.

Mr. ROUZER. I now recognize my distinguished ranking member, Ms. Norton, for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I would like to thank subcommittee Chair Rouzer for holding this hearing on the safety of our Nation's surface transportation. Safety

must continue to be the cornerstone of our work as the subcommittee considers the next surface transportation reauthorization bill.

Make no mistake. We are living through a public health crisis in transportation: 40,990 people died on our roadways in 2023. Urban and rural communities alike suffer from infrastructure that has traditionally prioritized the quick movement of cars over the safe movement of people.

These deaths are not inevitable. Taking a comprehensive approach to safety saves lives. That includes designing roads that prioritize safety for all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists, equipping vehicles with the latest safety technologies, and continuing to crack down on impaired driving. A safe systems approach ensures that when human error does occur, it need not be a death sentence.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law took safety seriously. States and localities now have unprecedented resources to tackle the safety crisis. The BIL increased funding for the Highway Safety Improvement Program by 34 percent to help States implement data-driven safety plans. It created a new Vulnerable Road User Special Rule to direct more dollars to projects that protect those not traveling in vehicles, and through the Safe Streets and Roads for All program, the BIL covered 75 percent of the Nation's population with roadway safety plans.

The BIL's targeted investments are making a difference. The troubling upward trend in traffic fatalities has declined since 2022, and projects that adhere to Complete Streets design principles are making a difference.

Vehicle design is also part of the solution. Last year, NHTSA issued a new standard to require automatic emergency braking to reduce crashes. This rule is anticipated to save 360 lives and prevent at least 24,000 injuries per year.

We have the knowledge and tools to respond to the urgency of the roadway safety crisis. The rhetoric around traffic safety has finally begun to change. Transportation leaders now acknowledge the shared responsibility to build roads that are safer for everyone.

But words are not enough. The surface transportation reauthorization bill this subcommittee considers must take concrete steps to design, build, and rebuild roads that prioritize the safe movement of people, regardless of how they move. We must enhance the transparency and accountability of our transportation infrastructure design-making to tackle our safety crisis. The BIL is making important progress toward the mission of zero roadway deaths. We must keep this positive momentum going.

Thank you to our witnesses today. I appreciate your input regarding the safety of the Nation's transportation system, and I look forward to our discussion about the challenges ahead. I yield back.

[Ms. Norton's prepared statement follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton, a Delegate in Congress from the District of Columbia, and Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit

I would like to thank Subcommittee Chairman Rouzer for holding this hearing on the safety of our nation's surface transportation. Safety must continue to be the cornerstone of our work as this Subcommittee considers the next surface transportation reauthorization bill.

Make no mistake—we are living through a public health crisis in transportation. 40,990 people died on our roadways in 2023. Urban and rural communities alike suffer from infrastructure that has traditionally prioritized the quick movement of cars over the safe movement of people.

These deaths are not inevitable. Taking a comprehensive approach to safety saves lives. That includes designing roads that prioritize safety for all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists, equipping vehicles with the latest safety technologies and continuing to crack down on impaired driving. A safe systems approach ensures that when human error does occur, it need not be a death sentence.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law took safety seriously. States and localities now have unprecedented resources to tackle the safety crisis. The BIL increased funding for the Highway Safety Improvement Program by thirty-four percent to help states implement data-driven safety plans. It created a new Vulnerable Road User Special Rule to direct more dollars to projects that protect those not traveling in vehicles. And through the Safe Streets and Roads for All program, the BIL covered seventy-five percent of the nation's population with roadway safety plans.

The BIL's targeted investments are making a difference. The troubling upward trend in traffic fatalities has declined since 2022 and projects that adhere to complete streets design principles are making a difference.

Vehicle design is also part of the solution. Last year, NHTSA issued a new standard to require automatic emergency braking to reduce crashes. This rule is anticipated to save three hundred sixty lives and prevent at least twenty-four thousand injuries per year.

We have the knowledge and the tools to respond to the urgency of the roadway safety crisis. The rhetoric around traffic safety has finally begun to change. Transportation leaders now acknowledge the shared responsibility to build roads that are safer for everyone.

But words are not enough. The surface transportation reauthorization bill this Subcommittee considers must take concrete steps to design, build and rebuild roads that prioritize the safe movement of people, regardless of how they move. We must enhance the transparency and accountability of our transportation infrastructure decision-making to tackle the safety crisis.

The BIL is making important progress toward the vision of zero roadway deaths. We must keep this positive momentum going.

Thank you to our witnesses today. I appreciate your input regarding the safety of the nation's transportation system and look forward to our discussion about the challenges ahead.

Mr. ROUZER. I would now like to recognize our ranking member of the full committee, Mr. Larsen, for up to 5 minutes.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RICK LARSEN OF WASHINGTON, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for holding the hearing to highlight safety and transportation.

Tragically, nearly 41,000 people were killed on U.S. roads in 2023. These fatalities make me and make thousands of families ask: Is safety a priority or not? Roughly 95 percent of fatalities in our transportation system occur on our roadways. So, as we work on a surface reauthorization bill, we have to make sure that improving safety is a top priority.

We can invest in infrastructure while prioritizing safety at the same time, so when America builds, Americans travel safely.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law takes safety seriously. It provides: \$16 billion for highway safety improvement to help States improve road and bridge infrastructure; nearly \$6 billion for the new Safe Streets and Roads for All to support local governments in deploying safety solutions; and over \$8 billion to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for efforts to improve driver safety.

The BIL also reforms how we build and protect road users. New safety measures include incorporating Complete Streets principles in roadway designs and equipping new cars with new safety technology like automatic emergency brakes. These efforts work together to make infrastructure safer, raise driver awareness, and reduce high-risk scenarios, and the next bill must put safety first and build upon the funding and policies in the BIL.

Now, in my State, 813 people died in 2023 on our roadways. That represents a 10-percent increase from 2022 and the highest number of traffic deaths since 1990. The year 2023 also marked the worst year on record for pedestrian and motorcyclist fatalities in my State. Impaired driving, speeding, and distracted driving were the leading causes of these tragedies.

So I have worked with communities in my district to raise awareness of our safety challenges and deliver Federal funding to improve safety and save lives. In my district, Safe Streets and Roads for All funding will help Tribes and other communities, including the Lummi Nation, the Samish Indian Nation, the city of Everett, and the city of Sedro-Woolley to plan for and build safer streets.

The city of Burlington received a \$2 million grant to look at removing a dangerous railroad crossing, and the Stillaguamish Tribe has received an \$8.5 million award for a crossing project to reduce dangerous interactions with wildlife across Highway 20.

Tragically, Tribal communities themselves disproportionately feel the impact of our safety crisis. Native Americans are seven times more likely to be killed in a motor vehicle crash than other Americans. The BIL doubles the funding for the Tribal transportation safety set-aside.

If safety is a priority, then we must keep these funding streams going. You can't have a big-league economy with little-league infrastructure. This is because these investments support the movement of people and connect them with jobs.

In the case of safety projects, the right investments, carried out with accountability and where they are needed most, save lives. It does not get more personal than that.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimated that, in 2019, traffic crashes cost the economy \$340 billion.

Across the country, our main streets and downtown areas depend on safe and accessible mobility to support local economies. So, when people feel safe to drive, walk, or bike in their communities, they are more active. Investing in safety is therefore an investment in our families, in our communities, and our local economies.

The Safe Streets and Roads for All grants program empowers communities to plan and execute projects safely to improve mobility in ways that reflect local realities. More than 75 percent of the Nation's population will be covered by local safety plans funded by these grants.

So Congress has to act and continue to provide the historic investment levels from the BIL with a renewed focus on outcomes so that the communities can turn safety plans into reality, meaning lives saved and livelihoods improved. I am ready to make that investment. Let's keep it going.

I want to thank the witnesses for being here today, and I look forward to your testimony.

With that, I yield back.

[Mr. Larsen of Washington's prepared statement follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Rick Larsen, a Representative in Congress from the State of Washington, and Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Thank you, Chairman Rouzer, for holding this hearing to highlight safety in surface transportation.

Tragically, 40,990 people were killed on U.S. roads in 2023—a public health crisis. These fatalities make me and thousands of families ask: is safety truly a priority, or isn't it?

Roughly 95 percent of fatalities in our transportation system occur on our roadways, so as we work on a surface reauthorization bill, we must make sure safety is our top priority.

We can invest in infrastructure while prioritizing safety at the same time. When America builds, Americans travel safely.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) takes safety seriously. It provides:

- \$16 billion for Highway Safety Improvement to help states improve road and bridge infrastructure;
- Nearly \$6 billion for the new Safe Streets and Roads for All to support local governments in deploying safety solutions; and,
- Over \$8 billion to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration for efforts to improve driver safety.

The BIL also reforms how we build and protect road users. New safety measures include incorporating complete street principles in roadway designs and equipping new cars with new safety technology like automatic emergency brakes.

These efforts work together to make infrastructure safer, raise driver awareness, and reduce high risk scenarios.

The next surface reauthorization bill must put safety first and build upon the funding and policies in the BIL.

In my state, 813 people died in 2023 on our roadways. This represents a 10 percent increase from 2022 and the highest number of traffic deaths since 1990.

2023 also marked the worst year on record for pedestrian and motorcyclist fatalities in Washington State.

Impaired driving, speeding, and distracted driving were the leading causes of these tragedies.

I have worked with communities in my district to raise awareness of our safety challenges and deliver federal funding to improve safety and save lives.

In my district, Safe Streets and Roads for All funding will help tribes and communities, including Lummi Nation, Samish Indian Nation, the City of Everett and the City of Sedro-Woolley, plan for and build safer streets.

The City of Burlington received a \$2 million grant to look at removing a dangerous railroad crossing, and the Stillaguamish Tribe received an \$8.5 million award for a crossing project to reduce dangerous interactions with wildlife across Highway 20.

Tragically, tribal communities disproportionately feel the impact of our safety crisis. Native Americans are seven times more likely to be killed in motor vehicle crashes than other Americans.

The BIL doubles the funding for the tribal transportation safety set aside. If safety is a priority, then we must keep it going.

You cannot have a big league economy with little league infrastructure. That is because these investments support the movement of people and connect them with jobs.

In the case of safety projects, the right investments, carried out with accountability and where they are needed most, save lives. It does not get more personal than that.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimated that in 2019, traffic crashes cost the economy \$340 billion.

Across the country, our main streets and downtown areas depend on safe and accessible mobility to support local economies.

When people feel safe to drive, walk or bike in their communities, they are more active. Investing in safety is therefore an investment in families, communities, and the economy.

The Safe Streets and Roads for All grants program empowers communities to plan and execute projects safely to improve mobility in ways that reflect local realities. More than 75 percent of the nation's population will be covered by local safety plans funded by these grants.

Congress has to act to provide historic investment levels from the BIL with a renewed focus on outcomes so that communities can turn safety plans into reality, save lives, and improve livelihoods.

I am ready to make that investment. Let's keep it going.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today. I look forward to your testimony.

Mr. ROUZER. I thank the gentleman.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses and thank each of you for being here today. I am going to introduce each of you, but first, I am going to yield to my friend and colleague from Minnesota to introduce Mr. Hanson.

Mr. Stauber, if you would like to introduce Mr. Hanson.

Mr. STAUBER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I appreciate this opportunity, and I am excited to introduce a witness today who hails from the great State of Minnesota who brought the snow in with him last night.

Mr. Mike Hanson is the director of Minnesota Department of Public Safety's Office of Traffic Safety. He has held this position since November of 2017. In addition to his role as director, Hanson also serves as Minnesota's representative to NHTSA and coordinates Minnesota's participation in NHTSA's State and community Safety Grants Program. He also cochairs the Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths program and chairs the Advisory Council on Traffic Safety.

In October, Director Hanson was elected to serve as chair of the Governors Highway Safety Association, the national nonprofit association of State and Territorial Highway Safety Offices that addresses behavioral traffic safety issues. He is here testifying on behalf of GHSA today.

I am especially proud to have Director Hanson here, Mr. Chair, as he also wore the law enforcement uniform. He served the Minnesota State Patrol for 32 years, retiring as captain. And I often say, even though my time in uniform is over, my watch never ends.

Your continued dedication, Mr. Hanson, to safety after your service is a testament that the saying holds true for all those in law enforcement. I look forward to hearing your testimony. Your expertise in safety cannot be overstated.

Mr. Chair, one last thing. Mr. Hanson could be anywhere today with his family and friends celebrating his 39th birthday. Happy birthday.

Mr. ROUZER. Thank you very much.

We also have with us the Honorable Jim Willox, commissioner of Converse County, Wyoming, here on behalf of the National Association of Counties.

In addition, we have Ms. Haley Norman, co-owner of Direct Traffic Control, Incorporated, here on behalf of the American Traffic Safety Services Association. And I understand that you have two daughters here with you as well; so, welcome to them.

And, last but certainly not least, president of the Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, Ms. Cathy Chase. Thank you very much for being here.

Now, it's pretty simple. As we move forward, Mr. Willox, I will recognize you for up to 5 minutes. Pay attention to the light system. Green means go, yellow means wind it down, and red means close it up as soon as you possibly can.

Mr. Willox.

TESTIMONY OF HON. JAMES H. WILLOX, COMMISSIONER, CONVERSE COUNTY, WYOMING, ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES; MICHAEL HANSON, DIRECTOR, MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, OFFICE OF TRAFFIC SAFETY, ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNORS HIGHWAY SAFETY ASSOCIATION; HALEY NORMAN, CO-OWNER, DIRECT TRAFFIC CONTROL, INC., ON BEHALF OF THE AMERICAN TRAFFIC SAFETY SERVICES ASSOCIATION; AND CATHERINE CHASE, PRESIDENT, ADVOCATES FOR HIGHWAY AND AUTO SAFETY

TESTIMONY OF HON. JAMES H. WILLOX, COMMISSIONER, CONVERSE COUNTY, WYOMING, ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

Mr. WILLOX. Well, thank you, Chair Rouzer and Ranking Member Norton, for this opportunity to be before the subcommittee today.

My name is Jim Willox, and I am in my 19th year as a commissioner in Converse County, Wyoming, and today, I represent the National Association of Counties who I serve as the vice chair of the transportation committee.

NACo is the only national organization that represents all 3,069 counties, parishes, and boroughs in the United States. Counties themselves are very diverse and have a wide range of responsibilities, many of which are delegated to us by the States or the Federal Government. Counties own or operate 44 percent of the public roads and 38 percent of the bridges. In Wyoming, counties own over 14,000 miles of road, and 96 percent of those are categorized as rural.

As major stakeholders, counties recognize that we have an important role to play when it comes to road safety, and we want to do our part to protect American lives. Today, I want to highlight a few challenges that counties—especially rural counties—face in our shared mission to make our roads safer as well as offer some solutions to help counties improve safety. By working together and relying on our intergovernmental partnerships, I believe there are real opportunities to advance road safety, save lives, and strengthen our communities.

First, rural communities have unique challenges and needs when it comes to transportation safety. One of our biggest challenges is that rural communities have limited tax bases, which makes it dif-

difficult for us to raise revenue for infrastructure projects. With restricted financial capacity, county officials must often make the hard decision between choosing between a safety project or regular maintenance of another mile of road.

Another challenge is that rural communities often rely on non-traditional infrastructure, like one-lane bridges and gravel roads, which present unique safety concerns. In my county, we are larger than the State of Rhode Island, and we have over 500 miles of gravel roads. When it comes to road safety, you may think of rumble strips or center lines, but neither of those are good options on gravel. Instead, gravel roads need dust suppression, longer culverts, and regular blading to avoiding washboarding. This is an area where I believe the Government can do more to support rural communities by empowering local leaders to implement safety strategies that work for them.

We also face challenges implementing road safety due to our Nation's broken permitting system. Although the issue impacts urban and suburban areas alike, it is particularly taxing in rural counties, especially out West, given the enormous Federal presence. Before counties can begin many infrastructure projects, they must navigate a maze of Federal permits.

Currently in my county, we want to reduce and grade and pave an existing gravel road, and yet the U.S. Forest Service and BLM are requiring substantial permitting and review, delaying the project for another year. The standard permitting processes under NEPA can be costly, complex, and time-consuming. By streamlining permitting, even by just increasing the categorical exclusions, Congress could enable rural counties to take on more projects with less money.

Lastly, I believe the key way to improve road safety is by strengthening county involvement in Federal policymaking like you are doing today. The vast majority of Federal transportation funds flow through States. While my State of Wyoming does an excellent job of allocating money to our local partners and projects, I know that is not true for all States. Despite owning half the roads and one-third of the bridges, counties are not getting their fair share of the funding.

Strengthening our intergovernmental partnerships is not just about money. It is about ensuring that counties have a seat at the table to share our local expertise. There is a tremendous opportunity in this upcoming surface transportation bill to hear from leaders at all levels of Government to strengthen our partnership and to protect our communities.

Mr. Chair and Ranking Member, I want to close with an anecdote one of my fellow commissioners experiences as a cattle rancher south of Glenrock, Wyoming. In order for him to get his cattle to market, he must travel across a series of roads: 6 miles of county gravel road, 5 miles of paved county road, 3 miles of a State highway, 68 miles of the interstate, 49 miles of a U.S. highway, finally into a city street to deliver the cattle to market. To ensure road safety, there cannot be a weak link in that network. The interstate can be lined with pillows and mattresses, but if the county roads are unsafe, we have not done enough to keep our road users safe.

Please note that counties from across the country are looking to be partners in working hand in hand with our Federal and State partners to protect our residents and to strengthen our Nation's infrastructure.

Mr. Chairman, Madam Ranking Member, thank you for this opportunity, and I look forward to the questions.

[Mr. Willox's prepared statement follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. James H. Willox, Commissioner, Converse County, Wyoming, on behalf of the National Association of Counties

Chair Rouzer, Ranking Member Norton and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the importance of rural road safety and the tools needed to protect our shared constituents.

My name is Jim Willox, I am the Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners in Converse County, Wyoming, and have served on that Board since 2007. Today, I am representing the National Association of Counties (NACo), where I serve as a Vice Chair for the Transportation Policy Steering Committee.

ABOUT NACO

NACo is the only national organization that represents all 3,069 counties, parishes and boroughs in the United States, including all 23 counties in Wyoming. We take pride in uniting county leaders from across the nation to advocate for the interests of America's counties as an essential partner in our nation's intergovernmental system. Founded in 1935, NACo assists the nation's counties, parishes and boroughs in pursuing excellence in public service to produce healthy, vibrant, safe and resilient communities.

ABOUT AMERICA'S COUNTIES

Counties are highly diverse, not only in my state of Wyoming, but across the nation, varying immensely in natural resources, social and political systems, economic and structural circumstances and public health and environmental responsibilities.

Many of our responsibilities are mandated by the federal government and state governments. Although country obligations differ widely between states, most states give their counties significant authority including the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges and other infrastructure, the assessment of property taxes, record keeping, running elections, overseeing jails and court systems and public hospitals. Counties are also responsible for child welfare, consumer protection, economic development, employment/training, land use and water quality. We enact zoning and other land use ordinances to safeguard valuable natural resources and protect our local communities depending on state law and local responsibility.

Counties play a pivotal role in America's transportation systems. We own, operate and maintain 44 percent of public road miles and 38 percent of bridges; we oversee a third of the nation's transit systems and airports; and we even own numerous deepwater ports that facilitate billions of dollars in trade every year. In Wyoming, counties own 14,596 miles of road, which amounts to nearly 50 percent of all road miles in the state. More than 96 percent of these road miles are classified by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) as "rural."

This ownership comes at a significant cost to counties, which spend more than \$146 billion on infrastructure and more than \$60 billion on transportation every year. Given our central role in funding and maintaining infrastructure, I appreciate having the opportunity to speak with you today on behalf of myself and thousands of other county leaders across the country.

ABOUT CONVERSE COUNTY

Converse County is located in east central Wyoming and is home to approximately 14,000 hard-working residents. Converse County spans over 4,000 square miles, making it larger than Rhode Island, like all Wyoming counties. Additionally, with just over three residents for every one square mile of land, Converse County has a lower population density than the State of Wyoming, which is already the second least population-dense state in the country.

Our county is proud to offer a broad range of essential services to our population, including maintaining our roads and bridges, running the Converse County Airport, enforcing public safety and providing emergency response and health services. While we primarily fund these efforts using local property tax revenue, we also rely on our intergovernmental partners. Collaboration with federal and state agencies is crucial for addressing today's road safety challenges, especially in rural communities, and seizing future opportunities.

Mr. Chairman and members of the Subcommittee, I will focus my remarks on the primary safety challenges facing rural counties and recommendations for how Congress may address these urgent issues. America's counties agree on the following principles:

- Rural counties face numerous and unique transportation challenges, including limited funding and road conditions.
- Streamlining the federal permitting process will help expedite essential safety projects in rural communities, ensuring that critical infrastructure improvements are completed more efficiently and cost-effectively.
- Given our unique and essential role in the nation's transportation system, counties believe a coordinated federal-state-local approach is critical to building a resilient and efficient transportation system.

Rural counties face numerous and unique transportation challenges, including limited funding and nontraditional road types.

Rural counties grapple with unique transportation challenges that make it difficult to address the myriad safety concerns that face our communities. Chief among these concerns is our ongoing population losses, which reduce our tax base and directly impact our ability to fund infrastructure projects and maintain a large number of road miles.

In addition to constraints on our tax base, counties are often limited in their ability to adjust tax rates as well. The main general revenue sources for many counties are property and sales taxes. In fact, 45 states place limitations on county property tax authority, and the number of restrictions has expanded significantly since the 1990s. Only 29 states authorize counties to collect sales taxes, but almost always under various restrictions: 26 impose a sales tax limit and 19 require voter approval. Additionally, 42 states limit the authority of counties to raise or change property taxes. Only 12 states authorize counties to collect their own local gas taxes, which are limited to a maximum rate in most cases and often require additional citizen and/or state approvals for implementation.

Wyoming limits counties' ability to generate revenue through county-wide taxes, capping rates on real property, sales, and lodging taxes. Since counties rely on local revenue for infrastructure, this creates financial challenges.

Beyond population and budgetary constraints, many rural counties have economies that are reliant on commodity-based industries, like agriculture and energy production. For example, in Converse County we produce the oil and gas that powers the rest of the country and keeps the lights on for hundreds of millions of families. While these industries are vital for our success, it does mean that heavy trucks are a staple on our county roads. Even at the current 80,000-pound federal threshold for truck weights, they can cause substantial wear and tear on county-owned roads and create safety risks. Without adequate investment in rural infrastructure, counties like Converse County—and many others across the country—struggle to maintain the roads that are essential for transporting agricultural goods, energy resources and other commodities that fuel the national economy.

Lastly, the infrastructure in rural areas is not as standard as it is in suburban and urban communities. This includes using timber bridges instead of concrete or steel structures and having unpaved dirt roads rather than asphalt ones. In Converse County, we have gravel roads, with 512 out of 618 county-owned road miles being unpaved gravel.

These features—timber bridges and gravel roads—are essential parts of rural counties' transportation networks, but they do create different safety considerations. For example, gravel roads have less traction than traditional paved roads, leading to an increased risk of sliding, skidding and losing control of vehicles. Additionally, driving on gravel roads can kick up dust, which reduces visibility and can lead to accidents. This means that safety measures in rural areas will look very different from ones used elsewhere in the country.

Streamlining the federal permitting process will help expedite essential safety projects in rural communities, ensuring that critical infrastructure improvements are completed more efficiently and cost-effectively.

While counties are appreciative of the historic investments provided by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, we have been limited in our inability to invest these resources to meet the safety and efficiency needs of our transportation systems.

Lengthy and complex federal approval processes, particularly transportation permitting and reviews under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), create significant delays, drive up project costs and undercut efforts to make our roads safer.

Before counties can even begin essential infrastructure projects, we must navigate a maze of federal permits, often waiting months or even years for approvals. This is especially true in Western states, given the large amount of federal land that increases the need for consultations and approvals.

In Converse County, for example, it recently took us over nearly ten months to obtain a Bureau of Land Management (BLM) right-of-way determination for a road that has existed since 1892—before even beginning the standard environmental review process. We have faced similar issues with the U.S. Forest Service while working on a project that would ultimately make an existing road safer. These unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles prevent timely repairs and allow known safety risks to continue or even worsen.

NEPA has become an overly complex and time-consuming process that slows critical infrastructure improvements. While environmental reviews are important, maintaining existing roads should not be subject to the same level of scrutiny as entirely new projects. Wildlife considerations meant to protect endangered species from construction projects in previously undisturbed habitats should not delay our ability to perform routine maintenance activities like road grading and repairs. Greater flexibility in NEPA reviews would allow rural communities to move projects forward faster and improve road safety for residents.

Permitting delays are particularly frustrating in Converse County due to our extremely short construction season. Harsh weather conditions limit the timeframe in which crews can complete essential work, meaning even minor projects must be planned more than a year in advance. Unanticipated delays caused by NEPA or other federal regulations can cause counties to miss this window, pushing projects back by a year or more.

Finally, permitting delays during periods of high inflation can push project costs out of the budget for rural communities. The price of materials used for road maintenance like steel, asphalt and concrete has surged over recent years, meaning that even going through the normal multi-year permitting timeline can increase overall costs by 30 percent or more. Delays make these costs spike even higher, often forcing counties to scale back, postpone or cancel projects altogether. Reforming federal permitting processes would be a major step toward improving rural road safety, and counties stand ready to work with Congress to enact meaningful reforms in the next surface transportation bill.

Given our unique and essential role in the nation's transportation system, counties believe a coordinated federal-state-local approach is critical to building a resilient and efficient transportation system.

A strong federal, state and local partnership is essential for strengthening the nation's infrastructure and ensuring safe, reliable transportation networks. As stated before, counties own and maintain 44 percent of the nation's public roads, nearly 40 percent of bridges and a significant portion of public transit systems, making them key players in infrastructure development and maintenance. However, without direct collaboration and input from county governments, policies and funding decisions made at the federal and state levels may fail to address the unique challenges counties face, particularly in rural areas where road maintenance and upgrades are critical for public safety and economic growth.

While there has been an influx in federal transportation funding under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, most of this money—roughly 90 percent—goes to state departments of transportation. Although state departments of transportation can share these critical funds with local partners, a recent study from the Brookings Institution found that, on average, only 14 percent of state transportation funding is sub-allocated to locals.

Without access to formula funds, counties and other local governments must compete for the remaining 10 percent available through competitive grants—often against state agencies that are also eligible. This funding model disproportionately disadvantages rural communities, which face challenges in applying due to limited capacity and resources.

However, intergovernmental partnerships are about much more than funding. They are also about information sharing and ensuring that local expertise is being properly utilized to drive successful outcomes from federal and state investments.

This is particularly true when it comes to safety. Going back to something I mentioned earlier, a unique safety challenge we have in Converse County is our gravel roads. While in some areas, road safety might look like adding rumble strips or protecting a bike lane, in Converse County, we need to implement dust suppression techniques to maintain visibility and prevent crashes.

Unfortunately, dust suppression work is currently an ineligible use for federal transportation safety funding, meaning we have had to rely on environment-focused funding to pay for this critical work. This is a prime example of what can happen when counties do not have a seat at the table. This oversight has delayed and hampered our ability to perform safety-focused work.

Another area where county input can be valuable is when Congress or the Administration considers new mandates, even ones with a safety focus. Take the example of road striping, a basic way to keep drivers and vehicles on the path and prevent accidents. I have been in some discussions to increase the standard width of road lines from 4 inches to 6 inches, in order to increase visibility and ensure that sensors on new vehicles can detect the lines.

While this seems like a simple change, for counties with limited budget capacity, this is a 50 percent increase in the amount of paint needed to re-stripe the road. With many counties owning hundreds, if not thousands, of road miles, a 50 percent increase can be a serious financial burden. As Congress and the Administration considers changes or new mandates, having local voices at the table to raise concerns like this can help ensure that we are being deliberative and smart about how to effect positive change without creating unintended or undue consequences.

Going forward, America's counties look forward to working hand-in-hand with state and federal leaders to strengthen intergovernmental partnerships in this upcoming surface transportation bill in order to save lives and improve overall safety.

CONCLUSION

Chair Rouzer, Ranking Member Norton and members of the Subcommittee, thank you again for inviting me here to testify today.

Rural transportation networks rely on strong collaboration between local, state and federal governments to ensure safe and efficient travel. From county roads to federal highways, every part of the system must function properly to support residents, industries and visitors. A weak link anywhere in the network can create safety risks and disrupt essential transportation.

We look forward to the continued dialogue with the Subcommittee on our shared goal of protecting our residents while strengthening the nation's infrastructure systems.

Mr. ROUZER. Thank you very much.

Mr. Hanson, you are recognized.

TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL HANSON, DIRECTOR, MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, OFFICE OF TRAFFIC SAFETY, ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNORS HIGHWAY SAFETY ASSOCIATION

Mr. HANSON. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Good morning. My name is Michael Hanson, and I am the Governor-appointed highway safety representative from Minnesota and the director of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety's Office of Traffic Safety. I also have the privilege of serving as the chair of the Governors Highway Safety Association.

It is an honor to be testifying before the subcommittee today. I offer my thanks to subcommittee Chair Rouzer, Ranking Member Holmes Norton, as well as full committee Chair Graves and Ranking Member Larsen, for holding this hearing on such a critically important topic.

GHSA is a national nonprofit association representing the State and Territorial Highway Safety Offices. The State Highway Safety Offices implement statewide programs to address behavioral highway safety issues and are the recipients of grants under the

NHTSA Highway Safety Grant Program. State Highway Safety Offices are all public agencies in all States and Territories and are run or overseen by a Governor-appointed representative.

GHSA's members work to reduce motor vehicle crashes by implementing programs to address the behavioral aspects of highway safety like speeding, impaired driving, seatbelt use, and distracted driving.

Roadway safety is a topic I am extremely passionate about. Prior to my time serving as the director of the State Highway Safety Office, I proudly served the Minnesota State Patrol for 32 years. During that time, I had direct exposure to the unsafe driving behavior on our roadways and the life-changing and far too often life-ending impacts they can have.

Traffic crashes are one of the leading causes of preventable death in the United States. Crashes kill more than 40,000 people every year on our highways. More than two-thirds of those crashes are caused by either an impaired driver or by speeding. Programs that are implemented by the State Highway Safety Offices to address these unsafe driving behaviors are crucial in addressing the increasing roadside fatalities we are seeing.

One of the key tools available to address unsafe driving behavior is traffic law enforcement. Over the past several years, due to several factors—including concerns for fair policing practices, reduced public support, and staffing shortages—the amount of traffic enforcement being conducted across the country has significantly decreased. We have seen a corresponding increase in unsafe driving behavior, especially in the areas of impaired driving and speeding.

GHSA strongly supports the proven role of traffic enforcement and the wider criminal justice system in preventing crashes and stopping dangerous drivers. Traffic law enforcement holds drivers accountable for poor choices that, without intervention, can be deadly. By focusing on data-driven, unsafe driver behaviors in traffic stops instead of citations for administrative requirements, we can help ensure the traffic stops are fair and address those unsafe driving behaviors.

State Highway Safety Offices receive formula- and program-specific funding from NHTSA which are commonly referred to as the section 402 and 405 grants. In order to participate in these programs, States must submit a highway safety plan every 3 years, an annual grant application, and an annual report. Additionally, States are routinely subject to oversight activities from NHTSA, including comprehensive compliance reviews.

State Highway Safety Offices across the country are doing their best to implement meaningful programs to improve driver behavior, but we are bogged down by the amount of administrative red-tape and limitations on how we can spend funds that we receive from NHTSA. Over the past several years, there has been an increase in this administrative burden associated with these programs.

An example of this amount of detail that NHTSA is requiring is the approval for the annual grant application. What was intended to be a brief update to our highway safety plan has ballooned into several-hundred-pages-long documents in order to meet all of the

NHTSA requirements, some of which reached lengths of 300 to 500 pages.

Across the entire Highway Safety Program, NHTSA's oversight activities have increased significantly. GHSA supports appropriate oversight and recognizes the importance of transparency when using Federal funding, but the current level of oversight is burdensome. These programs need to be more efficiently administered by NHTSA so that more of the Federal funding can work towards improving safety instead of expending resources demonstrating compliance.

As challenges with roadway safety continue, we need to make sure the Federal funding is structured in a way that allows for new and innovative ideas like technology deployments, novel data, new safety countermeasures, and more. Congress should look for opportunities to reform the 402 and 405 programs to provide less funding restrictions and more eligibility for States to try new approaches and implement programs that address their unique challenges.

In conclusion, State Highway Safety Offices work hard to implement meaningful and effective programs to save lives, but there is room for improving the NHTSA grant programs to better support the States. The Highway Safety Grants Program is hampered by excessive administrative burdens and a lack of flexibility. This diverts valuable resources away from implementing safety programs, streamlining these programs, reducing paperwork, and empowering the States to tailor their initiative to these specific needs.

GHSA looks forward to working with the subcommittee as it works to tackle the safety challenges on our roadway and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of Federal grant programs. Thank you for the opportunity to address the subcommittee today, and I look forward to your questions.

[Mr. Hanson's prepared statement follows:]

Prepared Statement of Michael Hanson, Director, Minnesota Department of Public Safety, Office of Traffic Safety, on behalf of the Governors Highway Safety Association

INTRODUCTION

Good morning. My name is Michael Hanson and I am the governor appointed highway safety representative for Minnesota and the Director of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety's Office of Traffic Safety. I also serve as the Chair of the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA). It is an honor to be testifying before the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee's Highways and Transit Subcommittee. I want to extend my appreciation to subcommittee Chair Rouzer and Ranking Member Holmes Norton as well as full committee Chair Graves and Ranking Member Larsen for holding this hearing on such an important topic.

For those that aren't familiar with GHSA, the organization is a national nonprofit association representing the State and territorial Highway Safety Offices (SHSOs). The SHSOs implement statewide programs to address behavioral highway safety issues and are the recipients of grants under the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Highway Safety Grant Program. SHSOs are public agencies in all states and territories, including the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, and are run or overseen by a Governor appointed representative. Approximately half of SHSOs are a part of their respective state department of transportation, while the others are independent organizations or housed within a department of public safety, department of motor vehicles or related agency.

GHSA's members work to reduce motor vehicle crashes by implementing programs that leverage traffic enforcement, community engagement, public education, highway crash monitoring and other countermeasures to prevent crashes, deaths, and injuries on our roads. The SHSOs are focused on the behavioral aspects of highway safety, including impaired driving; inadequate adult and child occupant protection; speeding and aggressive driving; distracted and drowsy driving; younger and older driver safety; motorcycle safety; the safety of bicyclists, pedestrians and non-motorized road users; the safety of new vehicle technologies; traffic enforcement; traffic records; emergency medical services; driver education; and highway safety workforce development.

Roadway safety is a topic that I am extremely passionate about. Prior to my time serving as the director of the highway safety office, I served the Minnesota State Patrol for 32 years. During that time, I had direct exposure to the unsafe driving behavior on our roadways and the life changing and too often life ending impacts that they can have. It's because of those years as a state trooper that I believe so deeply in the work that highway safety offices do to change driver behavior and prevent crashes.

ROADWAY SAFETY CHALLENGES

Traffic crashes are one of the leading causes of preventable death in the United States. Crashes kill more than 40,000 people each year and injure another 2.4 million. That's more than 100 deaths and 6,500 injuries every single day. These crashes—and the loss of life and severe injuries they cause—are entirely preventable.

According to a NHTSA study, the critical reason for the overwhelming majority of crashes is unsafe driver behavior.¹ More than two-thirds of those crashes are caused by either impaired driving or speeding.

Programs that are implemented by the SHSOs to address these unsafe driving behaviors are crucial in addressing roadway fatalities. Some traffic safety stakeholders argue that we can solve all of our problems by rebuilding the roads. While improved infrastructure can address some safety problems, it alone cannot address driver behavior. It will not make drivers buckle their seat belts or put their children in the right child restraint. It will not prevent drunk drivers from getting behind the wheel, hold them accountable, or help them overcome addiction. Eliminating behavioral approaches altogether would be a major mistake. Rather, we must implement all types of countermeasure strategies simultaneously to bring down fatal crash rates.

Impaired Driving

Alcohol-impaired driving arguably remains our number one highway safety challenge. According to NHTSA, in 2022 alcohol-impaired driving crashes accounted for 32 percent of the fatalities on our roadways. Alcohol impairment is notably over-represented in crashes involving young adults, motorcyclists, bicyclists, pedestrians and speeding.

GHSA is likewise concerned about the increasing prevalence of drug-impaired driving, even as alcohol-impaired driving is still a major traffic safety problem. Though we know the data is incomplete, there is reason to believe that drugged driving is increasing. Further, states are finding that impaired driving cases increasingly involve alcohol and drugs used in combination, further suggesting a need to think about impaired driving holistically.

States continue to implement programs to prevent impaired driving including educational campaigns to encourage drivers not to drive impaired and high visibility enforcement efforts to identify unsafe impaired drivers and remove them from the road.

In the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), Congress took a historic step to end impaired driving. Section 24220 of IIJA, which was previously known as the HALT Act, directed NHTSA to complete a rulemaking to require advanced impaired driving detection technology in all new vehicles. This technology, once implemented, would prevent an impaired driver from operating a vehicle and harming themselves or others. NHTSA published an ANPRM in March of 2024 soliciting feedback on a Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) for the technology. The agency then missed the statutory November 15, 2024, deadline for completing the rulemaking. The Trump Administration has a once in a generation opportunity to end impaired driving by completing this rulemaking and establishing this technology in new vehicles. GHSA strongly supports swift action to establish this FMVSS, which would significantly reduce the number of fatalities on our roads.

¹ <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812506>

Speeding

29 percent of the total traffic fatalities involved speeding and higher speeds are tied to an increased risk of crashes and increased crash severity². Further, speeding vehicles present a unique threat to other more vulnerable road users. Unlike other leading highway safety issues for which we have successfully shifted cultural attitudes, speeding remains widely socially acceptable. Most drivers speed and despite ongoing speeding enforcement efforts, most drivers still have low expectations of receiving a citation or causing a crash.

States are using various combinations of proven engineering, enforcement and education countermeasures to address speeding. Because the public is generally not behind us, even proven countermeasures face political barriers and some states are even increasing speed limits and banning scientifically-proven solutions.

IIJA permitted the use of federal funds for the installation of speed safety cameras in work and school zones to help control speeds in these high-risk areas. These cameras have proven to be effective at changing driver behavior, especially when paired with community outreach that communicates the safety benefits and ensures drivers know that the cameras are active, and unsafe speeding will result in a citation. Given the success of these programs, eligibility for federal grant funds should be expanded to allow states to use funds to install speed safety cameras more broadly.

Pedestrian Safety

Another area of critical concern is the alarming surge in pedestrian injuries and fatalities. GHSA aggregates preliminary pedestrian safety data each year from its state members to identify pedestrian safety trends prior to the availability of final national data for those years. Based on preliminary state data, GHSA estimates that the nationwide number of pedestrians killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2023 was 7,318. This is a 5 percent decrease from 2022, but that is still a 14 percent increase since 2019. As we work to address the underlying behavioral causes of crashes, we must also take steps to protect pedestrians. To address these challenges, we must continue to take a holistic look at improving traffic safety and address the underlying causes of crashes while also designing infrastructure and vehicles that protect pedestrians.

TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT

One of the key tools available to address unsafe driving behavior is traffic enforcement. Over the past several years, due to several factors including concerns for fair policing practices, reduced public support and staffing shortages, the amount of traffic enforcement being conducted across the country has significantly decreased. We have seen a corresponding increase in unsafe driving behavior.

While national data on how the decrease in traffic enforcement has impacted unsafe driving behavior isn't readily available, there have been numerous reports of decreased enforcement leading to an increase in crashes. For example, DUI arrests fell by nearly 40% in Virginia and Washington, DC between 2010 and 2021 and DUI-related fatalities have risen by 33 percent³. St. Louis, Missouri has seen similar trends, in 2021 St. Louis police made 45,154 traffic stops, a little more than half of the 85,622 made in 2009. During that period traffic deaths in St. Louis have doubled⁴. In Austin, Texas the police budget was cut by one-third in 2020 which reduced staffing and traffic enforcement⁵. As a result, speeding citations dropped by 90 percent. Shortly after, Austin reached a record number of traffic deaths⁶.

It's clear that traffic enforcement is a crucial tool for addressing unsafe driver behavior. GHSA supports the proven role of traffic enforcement and the wider criminal justice system in preventing crashes and stopping dangerous drivers. Traffic enforcement holds drivers accountable for poor choices that without intervention can be deadly. High-visibility enforcement, in particular, remains an approach upheld by research and data. By focusing on data driven unsafe driver behaviors in traffic

² <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/#!/PublicationList/82>

³ <https://www.nbcwashington.com/investigations/not-enough-officers-to-catch-the-ones-we-dont-get-dui-arrests-down-as-deaths-rise/3414906/>

⁴ https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/accident-and-incident/traffic-stops-and-tickets-have-plummeted-in-st-louis-traffic-deaths-have-gone-up/article_7d7844fc-73ae-5574-8cdc-f4571b4429ac.html

⁵ <https://www.kut.org/transportation/2022-06-03/txdot-wants-cops-to-crack-down-on-speeders-but-apds-traffic-enforcement-units-are-understaffed>

⁶ <https://www.kut.org/transportation/2022-06-03/txdot-wants-cops-to-crack-down-on-speeders-but-apds-traffic-enforcement-units-are-understaffed>

stops instead of citations for administrative requirements, like expired tags, we can help ensure traffic stops are fair and address unsafe driver behavior.

NHTSA HIGHWAY SAFETY GRANT PROGRAMS

NHTSA's mission is "to save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce economic costs due to road traffic crashes, through education, research, safety standards, and enforcement." SHSOs aren't connected with NHTSA's authority to regulate vehicle safety standards. Instead, they focus on improving driver behavior.

SHSOs primarily do this using federal funds that come from the NHTSA State and Community Highway Safety Grant Program and the NHTSA National Priority Safety Program, which are commonly referred to as the Section 402 and Section 405 grants, respectively. In order to participate in these programs, states must submit a highway safety plan every three years that includes a performance plan with performance targets that demonstrate constant or improved performance, a data-driven countermeasure strategy that links to performance targets and NHTSA uniform guidelines, a description of how federal funds are planned to be used and a performance report for the last three years. Additionally, each year states are required to submit an Annual Grant Application (AGA) that includes any updates of the analysis in the triennial highway safety plan, identification of projects and subrecipients to be funded the following year and applications for any 405 grants the state wants to receive. States must also submit an Annual Report at the end of each fiscal year detailing what grant activities occurred during the fiscal year. Additionally, states are routinely subject to NHTSA conducted compliance reviews known as management reviews.

Section 402—State and Community Highway Safety Grant Program

Slightly less than half of NHTSA grant funding is allocated to Section 402, the State and Community Highway Safety Grant Program. Under Section 402, which is administered through a funding formula, states are permitted to program their funding for a wide range of highway safety purposes based on their data-driven problem identification. States use data to determine their unique highway safety needs and allocate resources accordingly.

Funds can be spent in accordance with national guidelines for programs to reduce drug- and alcohol-impaired driving; reduce speeding; encourage the use of occupant protection; encourage the use of child restraints; improve motorcycle safety; improve pedestrian and bicycle safety; reduce school bus deaths and injuries; reduce crashes from unsafe driving behavior; improve enforcement of traffic safety laws; reduce crashes caused by driver misuse of vehicle technology; increase vehicle recall awareness; prevent deaths among children unattended in vehicles; reduce roadside crashes; reduce crashes involving unsecured loads; improve driver performance; improve traffic records; enhance emergency services; increase awareness of commercial motor vehicles; and support school-based driver's education classes.

Section 405—National Priority Safety Program

The remaining half of funding is allocated under Section 405, the National Priority Safety Program, which is comprised of eight separate grant programs on Congressionally designated priority issues, each with different eligibility standards and allowable uses:

- Section 405(b): Occupant Protection: 13%
- Section 405(c): State Traffic Safety Information System Improvements: 14.5%
- Section 405(d): Impaired Driving Countermeasures: 52.5%, including 12% for ignition interlocks incentives and 3% for 24–7 sobriety program incentives
- Section 405(e): Distracted Driving: 8.5%
- Section 405(f): Motorcyclist Safety: 1.5%
- Section 405(g): Nonmotorized Safety: 7%
- Section 405(h): Preventing Roadside Deaths: 1%
- Section 405(i): Driver and Officer Safety Education: 1.5%

Regulatory and Administrative Burden

Over the past several years there has been an increase in the administrative burden associated with the funding that states receive from NHTSA. In order to participate in NHTSA's grant programs, states are required to comply with an excessive number of separate program rules and separate sets of qualifications. States face onerous, duplicative record-keeping and reporting requirements. This administrative red tape is taking up a significant amount of the resources that should be used for the implementation of safety programs.

An example of this is the amount of detail that NHTSA is requiring for approval of the AGAs, which was intended to be a brief annual update on planned grant ac-

tivities to supplement the triennial highway safety plan. Congress intended for the restructuring of the planning and grant application process in IIJA to reduce the administrative requirements, but instead the AGA's have ballooned to several hundred pages long in order to meet all of the NHTSA requirements. The required detail has resulted in several AGAs reaching between 300–500 pages.

We have also seen other requirements in IIJA expand beyond the bill's intention like the public participation and engagement requirements which focus on reaching impacted communities in the traffic safety planning process. While GHSA supports the goal of this program, NHTSA's implementation has been heavy handed and focused on oversight of the process for implementing it not on SHSO's achieving the desired outcomes. In addition to expanding the program to be a significant focus of the highway safety grants, NHTSA has limited the funding source available for implementation of the program to 402 Planning and Administration (P&A) funds. This limitation is not in line with the language in IIJA and makes it difficult for states to meet the requirements without impacting other safety programs.

Across the entire Highway Safety Grant program, NHTSA's oversight activities have increased significantly, creating an increased burden on states to demonstrate compliance. GHSA supports appropriate oversight and recognizes the importance of transparency when using federal funding, but the increased focus on oversight of the planning process for grants instead of the outcomes of the grant activities is creating a significant regulatory burden on states which in turn reduces the resources available for implementing safety programs.

The NHTSA behavioral safety programs are a critical element of tackling the roadway safety challenges that we see and SHSOs across the country are doing their best to implement meaningful programs to improve driver behavior but are bogged down by the amount of administrative red tape and limitations on how they can spend funding. These programs need to be more efficiently administered by NHTSA so that more of the federal funding can work towards improving safety instead of expending resources on meeting federal requirements to receive the funding.

Funding that Supports Innovation

As challenges with roadway safety continue, we need to make sure federal funding is structured in a way that allows for new and innovative ideas like technology deployments, novel data, new safety countermeasures, and more. Congress should further expand the purposes for which 402 funds are allowed to be used to meet emerging behavioral highway safety concerns and provide states with the flexibility to try and evaluate new approaches to traffic safety. An example of this is the utilization of 402 funding to assist state emergency medical service (EMS) partners in providing whole blood at crash sites. This is a countermeasure that has been touted by NHTSA as a game changer for improving the survivability of crashes through post-crash care, yet states have had related projects rejected by NHTSA under 402 funding because of the current eligibility restrictions. Additionally, the safety areas identified within the 402 requirements should be considered eligible options for using the funds, not elements that are required to be included in a state's program.

While it may have once seemed helpful to dedicate funding to various specific priorities areas through the 405 program, this bifurcation of programs ultimately hurts more than it helps. As programs are subdivided further and further, states receive less money and face more complicated application and program rules. For each grant, states must provide separate qualification information and provide detailed accounts of state laws or programs. When grants are awarded, each grant also comes with its own unique restrictions that needlessly complicate the highway safety planning process as states must carefully consider how they can and cannot use the funding. This has resulted in some states opting out of receiving the funds because the administrative requirements to document and demonstrate compliance with all of the various requirements isn't worth the amount of funding available. This ultimately undermines the intent of the program because funds aren't being distributed to tackle the safety challenge they are intended for.

The best way Congress can address this issue would be to move all of the funding from the Section 405 programs and invest it into Section 402. This way, Congress can keep this funding dedicated to highway safety purposes. Section 402 provides states the most flexibility and the ability to closely tailor their programs to the actual needs on the ground, which does not always fit a nationwide model.

However, if Congress decides to continue to invest in Section 405 as a separate grant program, GHSA strongly encourages Congress to significantly reform these existing programs to dramatically increase state eligibility and allowable uses and eliminate administrative burdens. For example, the eligibility for the 405(c) program on state traffic safety information system improvements should be expanded to

allow state's to utilize novel data sources like telematics data in order to gain a deeper understanding of when and where unsafe driver behavior is occurring and evaluate the effectiveness of countermeasures.

States need the flexibility to implement programs that address their unique safety challenges. Further, they need to be able to try new and innovative approaches to improving safety. By removing funding barriers we will be able to make a greater impact on roadway safety.

Performance Management

As part of participating in national highway safety programs and receiving federal grants, states maintain performance plans in which they set targets to achieve high-level safety goals. States have three performance measures that are shared between NHTSA and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)-funded programs—overall fatalities, serious injuries and fatalities per vehicle mile traveled (VMT). NHTSA-funded programs also set goals for a range of other key outcomes that are unique to these programs, like reducing unbelted fatalities, impaired driving fatalities, observed seat belt use, etc. that are linked to all of the various safety programs that states implement. States are required to use a data-driven process to set targets for each performance measure. They will typically examine historical data, trends and the anticipated impact of planned future programs, and then set a goal.

As part of a transition to a triennial highway safety plan, IIJA shifted NHTSA performance reporting to a triennial period. The IIJA also amended 23 U.S.C. 402 (k)(4)(A)(ii) to indicate that performance targets must “demonstrate constant or improved performance.” This prohibition on “regressive” performance targets has further divorced performance management from the data. Aggressively set targets are more likely to exceed what has historically been possible and they are less likely to be met. Although, NHTSA has argued that the consequences of not meeting a target are not “penalties” in terms of a “sanction” or loss of funding, the additional oversight and administrative steps for states that aren’t meeting their targets do constitute a “penalty” because they divert resources from other activities, reflect poorly on the state, and have been cited by advocates as a reason for further oversight.

Additionally, many of the current performance measures consider outcomes that have many contributing factors that are outside of the control of a SHSO. As a result, a SHSO may be implementing effective programs that improve driver behavior but be considered to be underperforming as a result of factors outside of their control.

In January, NHTSA published an update to the performance measures for states that will go into effect in 2026. While this update takes a step in the right direction by allowing states more flexibility to customize performance measures based on the safety challenges in their state, it doesn’t address many of the underlying structural challenges with performance measures.

OTHER ROADWAY SAFETY ISSUES

NHTSA Leadership

NHTSA has been without a Senate-confirmed administrator for much of the past 8 years. GHSA strongly encourages the appointment of a safety focused leader who can successfully be Senate confirmed. By appointing a proven leader with the expertise and vision to address critical safety issues, the Trump Administration can deliver meaningful change and save countless lives.

Automated Vehicle Technology

GHSA supports the creation of a national regulatory framework for automated vehicle technology. This framework should maintain the traditional state and federal regulatory roles governing motor vehicles and driving. Federal law should not inappropriately preempt state and local highway safety laws. GHSA also urges Congress to make a priority of preparing and empowering NHTSA to play its part in this framework.

Outside of the Congressional discussion on automated vehicle policy, GHSA’s broader focus has been to prepare SHSOs for what to expect and how to anticipate future trends. Automated vehicle technologies have the potential to offer significant safety benefits and GHSA agrees that we should promote their use. However, the best available evidence suggests that most of the United States will feature a mix of vehicles across the spectrum of automation for the foreseeable future.

New modes of automation will likely present novel behavioral safety risks and changes for law enforcement and first responders. Further, human behavior will still play a prominent, long-term role in highway safety and we need to both con-

tinue to invest in programs to address all of today's highway safety risks while proactively planning for an increasingly automated future.

Vehicle Safety Technology

GHSA supports the expedited deployment of advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS) and crash avoidance systems for their life-saving benefit to the human-operated driving environment. The safety community should collaborate on solutions to address the driver behavioral risks posed by ADAS systems where driving responsibility is shared by the vehicle and driver. It's imperative that drivers understand the capabilities and limitations of the technology on their vehicles.

CONCLUSION

Addressing the complex challenge of roadway safety demands a multifaceted approach that recognizes the critical interplay between infrastructure improvements, technological advancements, and, driver behavior. While upgrading roads and implementing new technologies like ADAS are vital, they cannot fully address the root causes of many crashes, which stem from unsafe driving practices. Therefore, a balanced strategy that prioritizes behavioral programs, alongside engineering and technology solutions, is essential.

SHSOs work hard to implement meaningful and effective programs to save lives but there is room for improving grant programs to better enable states to implement effective safety countermeasures. The highway safety grants program is hampered by excessive administrative burdens and a lack of flexibility. The complex web of regulations and reporting requirements diverts valuable resources away from implementing safety programs. Streamlining these programs, reducing paperwork and empowering states to tailor their initiatives to their specific needs is crucial for maximizing the impact of federal funding. Furthermore, allowing states greater flexibility to explore innovative approaches, such as utilizing novel data sources and supporting emerging needs like improved post-crash care, will foster creativity and accelerate progress in roadway safety. A one-size-fits-all approach simply cannot address the diverse challenges faced by different states and communities.

GHSA looks forward to working with the subcommittee as it works to tackle the safety challenges on our roadways and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of federal grant programs.

Thank you for the opportunity to address the subcommittee today, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. ROUZER. Ms. Norman, you are recognized.

TESTIMONY OF HALEY NORMAN, CO-OWNER, DIRECT TRAFFIC CONTROL, INC., ON BEHALF OF THE AMERICAN TRAFFIC SAFETY SERVICES ASSOCIATION

Ms. NORMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning. My name is Haley Norman, and I am the co-owner of Direct Traffic Control out of Muskogee, Oklahoma.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify today about reducing roadway fatalities.

Our company is a small, family-owned business that currently employs 127 team members across the State of Oklahoma. We make roads safer through the installation of pavement markings, traffic signs, guardrail, and the management of roadway work zones.

I am testifying today in my role as the chair-elect of the American Traffic Safety Services Association. ATSSA members manufacture, distribute, and install roadway safety infrastructure devices such as guardrail and cable barrier, traffic signs and signals, pavement markings, and work zone safety devices.

Reaching zero fatalities remains a very serious challenge. According to the most recent estimate from NHTSA, over 40,000 people died on roadways across the country in 2023, as we have heard numerous times today. Everyone on this committee and on this panel

recognizes the severity of the current roadway safety crisis. Collectively, we need to work together to identify actions that will address this crisis while working to develop new solutions for the future as well.

As this committee works on the next surface transportation bill, I wanted to highlight the important programs and areas that contribute directly to saving lives.

The Highway Safety Improvement Program is key to achieving the goal of zero deaths and provides dedicated safety funds to each State and DC to address their specific safety needs, and while the IIJA significantly increased funding for HSIP by providing nearly \$16 billion, we hope that this program will continue to be a priority in the next highway bill.

I have seen firsthand that the projects funded through HSIP have saved the lives of road users across Oklahoma. I believe that any discussion regarding safety must put an emphasis on the men and women that put their lives in harm's way in roadside work zones. I have seen the dangers that these workers face. I know that many ATSSA members have lost a friend or a colleague in a work zone crash. I have watched the dashcam footage of our own workers—some are my family and all are my friends—narrowly avoiding being struck in a work zone by a distracted driver. These stories recommit my company and our industry to reach our mission of zero deaths.

As we look to improve roadway safety, we cannot overlook rural and Tribal roads. Tragically, while only 20 percent of Americans live in rural areas, 43 percent of all roadway fatalities occur on rural roads. American Indian and Alaska Native adults have a traffic fatality rate seven times higher than any other ethnic group. The IIJA made good inroads in these areas to improve safety. However, we do believe that Congress has more work to do to protect our users of rural and Tribal roads.

While we know that there are difficulties in administering and implementing discretionary grant programs, the Safe Streets and Roads for All program works to protect vulnerable road users through the deployment and installation of lifesaving roadway safety infrastructure devices.

The IIJA set a new baseline with historic levels of funding in roadway safety, but many challenges still face our industry. We support the goal of increasing the American manufacturing sector and creating good-paying jobs across the country by expanding the application of Build America, By America requirements. However, without a thoughtful approach to implementing the By America requirements, this expansion has the potential for catastrophic impacts on the roadway safety infrastructure industry.

Small businesses such as my own face price increases, product scarcity, and a mountain of paperwork and certifications. The costs associated with having a small, family-owned business are mounting. Inflation has sharply increased the price of products, and therefore, the IIJA has not funded as many projects as we had hoped. Frivolous litigation and rapidly rising insurance premiums have also diverted far too many resources away from improving roadway safety.

Let me end my statement with a sobering statistic. By the end of this day, over 110 people will have died on our roadways. This is a number that is incredibly tragic and completely unacceptable. As a safety professional, a business owner, and a mother, I believe that we must all work together to make our roads and communities safe. ATSSA members are ready to do what we do best: roll up our sleeves and get to work.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

[Ms. Norman's prepared statement follows:]

Prepared Statement of Haley Norman, Co-Owner, Direct Traffic Control, Inc., on behalf of the American Traffic Safety Services Association

Chairman Rouzer, Ranking Member Norton, and members of the Subcommittee, my name is Haley Norman, I am the co-owner of Direct Traffic Control, Inc., and I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the important topic of reducing roadway fatalities and serious injuries in this country. Direct Traffic Control, Inc., located in Muskogee, Oklahoma, has been in business since 1999 and we proudly make roads safer through the installation of pavement markings, traffic signs, guardrail and the management of roadway work zones. I am testifying today in my role as the Chair-Elect of the American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA). ATSSA applauds this Committee for your tireless leadership and dedication to improving roadway safety.

Incorporated in 1970, ATSSA is an international trade association focused on advancing roadway safety. Our members manufacture, distribute, and install roadway safety infrastructure devices such as guardrail and cable barrier, traffic signs and signals, pavement markings and high friction surface treatments, and work zone safety devices, among many others. ATSSA was the first U.S. non-governmental organization to adopt a Towards Zero Deaths vision in 2009 and ATSSA members remain committed to making zero fatalities a reality nationwide.

Tragically, reaching zero fatalities remains a serious challenge. In 2023, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), there were an estimated 40,900 roadway deaths in this country—that is an average of 112 deaths each and every day.¹ Despite the best efforts of ATSSA members, the broader construction industry, state departments of transportation (state DOTs) and the organizations represented by my colleagues on this panel, we continue to see unacceptable numbers of fatalities and serious injuries on our nation's roadways. We can and must do better.

Everyone in this room and on this panel recognizes the severity of the current roadway safety crisis. But recognizing the problem is just the first step. Collectively, we need to work together to identify actions we can take now to address this crisis—while working to develop new solutions for the future. As Congress begins the process of drafting the next surface transportation authorization bill, now is the time to bring stakeholders and policymakers together so we can chart a new path forward. We must address the challenge of improving roadway safety head on, and today's hearing provides us with an opportunity to share the experiences and expertise of ATSSA's roadway safety professionals.

As much I wish we could make drivers slow down, put away their phones, not drive impaired and focus on the roadway, we need to recognize that humans make mistakes. Too often these mistakes are the cause of fatal or serious crashes. That is just a fact. But these mistakes should not result in death. Improving roadway safety infrastructure can make a difference. ATSSA is grateful that US Department of Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy understands this concern, saying during his confirmation hearing, "I will prioritize road safety, ensuring lives and families aren't forever changed by preventable accidents."

In terms of investment in roadway safety, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) increased the funding made available for safety programs and set the new and higher baseline for roadway safety infrastructure investments for the next surface transportation reauthorization. The IIJA provides nearly \$30 billion over the

¹National Highway Traffic Safety Administration <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813561>

five-year lifespan of the bill for roadway safety projects. While this is a significant increase in funding for roadway safety compared to what was included in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), I believe we must continue to further the investment in safety to begin to plateau and reverse the increase in roadway fatalities and serious injuries. I would like to highlight a few of these important programs.

HIGHWAY SAFETY IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) is a critical component to achieving the goal of eliminating fatalities on our roadways. Introduced as part of the SAFETEA-LU legislation in 2005, it is a federal formula program that provides dedicated safety funds annually to each state DOT. The IIJA significantly increased funding for HSIP by providing \$15.6 billion over five years, plus an additional \$1.2 billion for rail-highway grade crossings.

Because Highway Safety Improvement Program funds can be used on all public roads, not just state-owned ones, the program is an important tool to help reduce the fatality rate in all parts of a state, including on rural roads. In addition, state DOTs can, and often do, use other federal formula funds to address roadway safety needs.

We remain concerned that while traffic fatalities continue to rise, both the IIJA and previous transportation authorizations allowed states to transfer their HSIP funds to other core Federal-Aid Highway programs. We believe that congressionally approved safety funds should be used for safety projects and should not be allowed to be transferred for other uses.

An example of one of these vital safety projects that my company has worked on in Oklahoma is SW0776, which is a statewide pavement marking project funded through HSIP. This project removes and replaces faded or out of specification pavement markings—replacing them with brighter and safer markings to help the traveling public get home safely. Through this project alone, we have installed approximately 4.5 million linear feet of line striping and 100,000 linear feet of rumble strips. When Oklahoma set the new standard of pavement markings to an easier-to-see 6-inch width, HSIP funds were there to fund this state-specific safety need and enhance safety throughout my state.

Having dedicated HSIP funding for roadway safety has been critical to addressing safety needs. Addressing roadway safety through the HSIP was a bipartisan priority in the IIJA and we urge Congress to keep the program as a priority in the next authorization bill as well.

WORK ZONE SAFETY

While vulnerable road users (VRUs) are a focus area in the IIJA, the often-overlooked VRUs are roadway construction workers. I am here today to tell you firsthand that roadway workers are very much vulnerable road users.

For ATSSA members that install and maintain roadway safety devices across the country, our roadway work zones are becoming increasingly dangerous. I have heard too many stories from my industry colleagues of near misses, serious injuries and fatalities in work zones. I know of too many ATSSA members that have lost a friend or a colleague in a work zone crash. In 2023, while one of our crews was working in a work zone in Oklahoma, we almost became one of those ATSSA members to lose a worker. As a driver barreled down the highway, they ignored both the advanced warning signs and devices put in place to warn of an approaching work zone. The driver swerved at the last minute to avoid a type III device, crashing into our work zone and striking a trailer. From a dashcam video of a truck positioned behind the trailer, you see several of our workers standing where the car struck the trailer just moments prior to impact. We were seconds away from a complete disaster and loss of life.

According to the National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse, there were 891 fatalities in roadway work zones in 2022.² Although the majority of these fatalities are vehicle occupants, the men and women working in work zones are consistently in danger. Tragically, this nation has lost an average of 115 workers in work zone fatalities each year over the last five years. These men and women put their lives on the line every day to make our roads safer and work to ensure that the traveling public returns home safe every night.

²National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse <https://workzonesafety.org/work-zone-data/worker-fatalities-and-injuries-at-road-construction-sites/>

Technology is coming online today which will greatly enhance the safety of workers and drivers alike leading up to and in work zones. As connected and automated vehicles (CAVs) become more and more prevalent, these vehicles must be able to interact with smart work zones so that catastrophic crashes between autonomous vehicles and roadway workers can be avoided.

Given the continued loss of life in work zones, I urge this Subcommittee, and Congress as a whole, to make work zone safety a priority in the next surface transportation reauthorization bill. Enhancing work zone training grants, encouraging innovation and the exchange of best practices can help states do more to address work zone safety challenges.

RURAL ROAD SAFETY

As we look to improve roadway safety, we need to remember the rural areas of the country. According to NHTSA, 20 percent of Americans live in rural areas, yet 43 percent of all roadway fatalities occurred on rural roads. In my home state of Oklahoma, 59 percent of fatalities occurred on rural roads. In 2022, the fatality rate on rural roads was 1.68 fatalities per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT), while the national average was 1.33 fatalities per 100 million VMT.³

The IIJA included a new Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program funded at \$2 billion over five years to be used, in part, to address safety needs in rural areas. Of that \$2 billion, 15 percent, or \$300 million, is reserved for recipients to address rural roadway fatalities due to lane departure. This is the first time that Congress has included dedicated rural roadway safety funding in transportation authorization legislation since the 2005 SAFETEA-LU law.

We know that there are a number of rural road-specific challenges, including the fact that rural roads are often owned by local governments, who may not have the technical expertise, grant writing specialists and resources to combat the crash and fatality rates discussed earlier. State DOTs are critical to assisting local governments in effectively deploying much-needed safety countermeasures and we encourage a collaborative approach to addressing safety needs.

Living and working in Oklahoma, I know how vital investment in rural road safety is. Through rural road safety funding included in the IIJA, we have been able to enhance safety for all road users throughout the state. A good example of one of these projects took place over an eight mile stretch along the historic Route 66. Our crews installed rumble strips and increased the visibility of pavement markings on this rural roadway, all funded through a rural road safety program included in IIJA. We ask that Congress continue to ensure that safety funds can get to the rural communities and roadways that need this critical investment.

TRIBAL ROAD SAFETY

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), American Indian and Alaska Native children (0–19 years old) have a traffic crash death rate eight times higher than other racial and ethnic groups, while Native American and Alaska Native adults (20 years old and older) have a traffic crash death rate seven times higher than other racial and ethnic groups.⁴

I am a Muscogee Creek Nation citizen. Our business is TERO certified and works on tribal road safety projects throughout the tribal lands in our region. Across our work on these tribal roads, we provide lifesaving installations of rumble strips, signage, pavement markings, and guardrail to communities in great need of roadway safety improvements.

The IIJA took steps in the right direction to improve tribal road safety by increasing funding for the Tribal Transportation Program to \$3 billion over five years and doubling the safety set aside, formally known as the Tribal Transportation Program Safety Fund, from two to four percent of the TTP. We believe that the data shows that we need to continue this investment, and I know that more can be done to improve road safety on tribal lands.

SAFE STREETS AND ROADS FOR ALL PROGRAM

The IIJA also included the Safe Streets and Roads for All Program. This discretionary grant program provides \$1 billion each year to metropolitan planning organizations, local and tribal governments to help prevent roadway deaths and serious

³National Highway Traffic Safety Administration <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813599>

⁴U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/tribal-road-safety/about/index.html>

injuries. As the name of the program implies, it is intended to address not just safety for the motorist but for other users of the transportation system such as pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorcyclists. By providing funding for planning and implementation of roadway safety strategies, this program has been an important tool for communities looking to address and improve safety outcomes. While we recognize the difficulties in administering discretionary grant programs, we ask that Congress continue to provide a focus on ensuring the safety of vulnerable road users throughout the roadway system.

FUNDING NECESSARY FOR IMPORTANT SAFETY INVESTMENTS

Federal transportation programs rely on federal fuel excise taxes and fees to provide revenue into the Highway Trust Fund (HTF). The federal HTF is a unique feature of the federal transportation program, and it allows Congress to enact multi-year surface transportation bills. These multi-year bills provide much-needed funding certainty that allows state DOTs and local governments to effectively develop and carry-out transportation construction projects.

But since 2005, spending out of the Highway Trust Fund has outpaced these HTF revenues, with billions of dollars being transferred from the General Fund of the Treasury into the HTF to maintain spending levels. ATSSA members understand that General Fund transfers are not the ideal way to pay for surface transportation programs and ATSSA stands ready to work with Congress to identify future funding solutions.

In order to provide a long-term funding solution for the HTF, Congress needs to closely analyze the merits of alternative user fee mechanisms, including vehicle miles traveled fees and national registration fees. ATSSA and its members are disappointed that, as of the date of this hearing, the US Department of Transportation (USDOT) has yet to undertake the nationwide pilot program on a vehicle miles traveled user fee funding solution as was directed by the IIJA and we are looking forward to working with the incoming team at USDOT to get this pilot underway.

In addition, Congress should ensure that all highway users pay their fair share into the system, including electric vehicles, who currently pay nothing into the HTF.

Finding a HTF revenue solution is critical to improving roadway safety and addressing traffic fatalities and injuries. Without a user fee financed system, it can be difficult to maintain a dedicated trust fund for transportation construction projects, including roadway safety infrastructure projects. And without dedicated funding from the HTF, it will be impossible to make strategic investments in roadway safety infrastructure projects, which will lead to roads that are less safe and constituents that are in more danger.

INDUSTRY CHALLENGES

While the IIJA provided an increase in funding to vital safety programs such as the Highway Safety Improvement Program, it has also created challenges for the roadway safety industry.

Build America, Buy America

ATSSA and its members support the goal of increasing the American manufacturing sector and creating more good-paying jobs across the country by expanding the application of Build America, Buy America (BABA) requirements. However, without a thoughtful approach to implementing the BABA requirements, this expansion has the potential for catastrophic impacts on roadway safety infrastructure manufacturers and contractors.

ATSSA was very disappointed to see the final rule issued by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) on January 14th of this year that ended a long-standing waiver of BABA requirements for manufactured products on federal-aid highway projects. The final rule terminating the 1983 general purpose waiver for manufactured products ignores concerns of both industry and state departments of transportation in the implementation of these new BABA standards.

With traffic fatalities continuing at unacceptable levels, ATSSA had asked that FHWA recognize the difficulties that will be experienced by the roadway safety infrastructure industry across the country if the current Buy America manufactured product waiver were to be eliminated. ATSSA members do not believe there is currently an adequate domestic sourcing and manufacturing capability in existence today to domestically source materials for all critically important roadway safety hardware and products.

There are also certain roadway safety components, devices and products that include materials that currently have no domestic supply chain at all. It is not possible, despite the desire of policy makers, to create entirely new industries to domes-

tically supply the roadway safety industry overnight. Creating new domestic supply chains takes time. Without allowing the time necessary to create these industries in the United States, projects will be delayed or cancelled. Failure to allow for the proper ramp up time could result in the halt of the manufacturing of vital life-saving devices and products that are required for deployment on our roadways—products and devices that keep the traveling public safe.

ATSSA strongly urges the FHWA to consider the use of targeted waivers for safety products and devices until domestic manufacturing capabilities reach a level that would allow for no slowdown of project delivery, significant project cost increases or the deployment of these critical products and devices.

We look forward to working with this Subcommittee to ensure that we do not have to sacrifice safety at any step of the way as we work with our partners to comply with these new BABA requirements.

Rising Costs for Small Businesses

Rising costs are not only attributed to BABA expansion, but nationwide inflation has increased construction costs as well. According to the National Highway Construction Cost Index (NHCCI), which tracks the prices paid by state departments of transportation for roadway construction materials, highway construction costs increased by 70 percent between October 2020 to June 2024.⁵

Our business has seen increases in material prices across the board since 2020 and while material prices have begun to steady, the constant need to keep up with inflation in pay rates to maintain top talent and ensure properly trained professionals in our industry has greatly increased the cost of doing business.

Small businesses such as mine are also dealing with an increase in frivolous litigation and rapidly rising insurance costs for contractors performing roadway safety work.

As a subcontractor for temporary traffic control, many of the long-term projects our company works on are high-risk by nature, often with traffic control devices in place for extended periods of time. In the last 10 years, we have seen an increase in frivolous lawsuits, leading to skyrocketing insurance costs for our industry. In the majority of cases, we are found to be in compliance with all state and federal standards for our work, and yet we still have to pay out claims due to the current state of this type of litigation in the United States. The direct impact to our business is the high cost of insurance premiums and the fear of becoming uninsurable for doing the work we are contracted and directed to do. Our entire industry has seen insurance costs increase and our cost of doing business increase—ultimately leading to increasing costs to install life-saving safety devices on our roadways. These cost increases diminish the impact of the funding Congress provided through the IIJA.

The roadway safety industry is not alone in dealing with these issues. As Congress works on a surface transportation authorization bill, ATSSA would like to engage this Subcommittee in a discussion of steps that can be taken to address these concerns.

Approval and certification of new products

Another challenge facing our industry is a delay in the approval and certification of new products into the marketplace. Technology advances happen quickly. We believe that to make our roads as safe as possible, we must be able to deploy the most modern technologies in a timely manner. ATSSA manufacturers continue to face significant delays in product approval, which stifles innovation.

A group of 14 ATSSA member companies report that they currently have a total of 20 outstanding eligibility letters to FHWA regarding the approval of innovative safety products. These 20 letters currently average 10 months of wait time without a response since the day they were submitted. We want to work with FHWA to ensure that the products we are deploying are safe for all road users, but also want to underscore the importance of getting the most advanced safety products deployed to combat the more than 40,000 deaths on our roadways.

We look forward to addressing all these business challenges throughout the reauthorization process and will continue to work with our state partners and related stakeholders on solutions.

CONCLUSION

The number of traffic fatalities in the U.S. is incredibly tragic. As a safety professional, business owner and mother of two young children, the numbers are unac-

⁵National Highway Construction Cost Index https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policy/otps/nhcci/NHCCI_Narrative_Article_2024_Q2.pdf

ceptable, and I know we can do better by working together. We are at a critical point in the fight to make our roads safer, and today's hearing demonstrates that this Subcommittee understands the need to address this issue as part of a new surface transportation authorization bill. All of us will need to work together to make progress on this collective challenge—including Congress, safety stakeholders, state DOTs, and tribal and local governments.

I know that I join my colleagues on this panel in confirming our commitment to getting the job done. Targeted investments, the use of technological innovations and increased public education will be critical. ATSSA members are ready to do what we do best—roll up our sleeves and get to work.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Mr. ROUZER. Ms. Chase, you are recognized.

TESTIMONY OF CATHERINE CHASE, PRESIDENT, ADVOCATES FOR HIGHWAY AND AUTO SAFETY

Ms. CHASE. Good morning, Chair Rouzer, Ranking Member Norton, Ranking Member Larsen, and subcommittee members. I am Cathy Chase, president of Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety.

Advocates is a national alliance of leading property and casualty insurance companies and agents and public health consumer, law enforcement, and safety groups working together to prevent crashes, save lives, reduce injuries, and curb economic costs.

Thank you for holding today's hearing on roadway safety at a critical time when motor vehicle fatalities are at historic highs. Nearly 43,000 people were killed and 2.4 million more were injured in 2022. Of particular note, more than 7,500 pedestrians and more than 1,000 bicyclists were killed, representing a 56- and 50-percent increase, respectively, over the past decade. Additionally, motorcycle riders experienced the highest fatality toll since data collection began in 1975, with more than 6,000 riders being killed. Fatal truck crashes also have been on the rise, increasing by 76 percent since 2009. Nearly 6,000 people were killed and over 160,000 people were injured in crashes involving large trucks.

These are not just statistics. They are family members, friends, and members of communities throughout the country. They include Transportation Secretary Duffy's family and numerous Members of Congress. Many victim advocates are joining us today virtually. I want to extend my condolences for their losses and thank them for their perseverance to advance effective solutions to prevent crashes.

In addition to the physical and emotional repercussions of crashes, the annual economic cost is approximately \$340 billion. Moreover, the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety finds that crashes cost employers more than \$72 billion in direct crash-related expenses in 2019.

Since Advocates' inception in 1989, we have worked with victim advocates and safety stakeholders to advance a holistic approach to improving traffic safety by focusing on safe vehicles, safe road users, and safe roadway environments. This approach is akin to what is known as the Safe System Approach, which has the additions of safe speeds and post-crash care, which are also vitally important.

Considering today's hearing is focused on roadways, I will discuss steps that can be taken now to improve our streets, roads, and

highways, but I would just like to note that the advances in all three areas go hand in hand and are available and needed.

America's roads move an ever-increasing number of people and goods. We all rely on our infrastructure system for household good supplies to be delivered, for family vacations to be enjoyed, and for our Nation's economy to thrive. Unfortunately, our roadways and bridges are in urgent need of improvements and preservation. The American Society of Civil Engineers has given America's roads a grade of D, with 43 percent in poor or mediocre condition. Not much better, our bridges received a C grade, with 42 percent being at least 50 years old and more than 46,000 considered structurally deficient.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act authorized upgrades to the Highway Safety Improvement Program that will help protect vulnerable road users and provide robust funding for the Safe Streets and Roads for All program, or SS4A, to provide direct access to localities to make roadway improvements. These changes promote infrastructure features that consider multimobile use, calm traffic, reduce vehicle speeds, and prevent or mitigate harmful interactions among road users.

Infrastructure improvements consistent with the SS4A are supported by Federal grants, including speed-curbing features like speed humps, road diets, and roundabouts. In fact, intersections converted from traffic signals or stop signs to roundabouts have reduced injury crashes up to 80 percent and cut all crashes by nearly half. Moreover, roundabouts are efficient in keeping travelers moving and can be implemented both in urban and rural areas under a wide range of traffic conditions.

We also support the Highway Safety Program section 402 and National Priority Safety Program section 405 grants. As with all Federal safety grants, it is critical that these programs include clear and transparent measures for success to ensure funds are spent as intended and result in actual safety benefits and improvements.

As was stated, before the end of today, 116 Americans will be killed on our roadways. That equals more than all the people in this room about right now. We can and must implement proven solutions to improve our roadways and make them safer for all. Thank you very much.

[Ms. Chase's prepared statement follows:]

Prepared Statement of Catherine Chase, President, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

INTRODUCTION

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) is a coalition of public health, safety, law enforcement and consumer organizations, insurers and insurance agents that promotes highway and auto safety through the adoption of federal and state laws, policies and regulations. Advocates is unique both in its board composition and its mission of advancing safe vehicles, safe motorists and road users, and safe roadway infrastructure.

MOTOR VEHICLE CRASHES ARE A DEVASTATING AND COSTLY PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS,
AND THE PUBLIC IS KEENLY AWARE OF THE DANGERS

America’s roads move an ever-increasing number of people and goods.¹ We all rely on our infrastructure system for household supplies to be delivered, for family vacations to be enjoyed, and for our Nation’s economy to thrive. However, Americans suffer a significant death and injury toll caused by preventable crashes. On average, 116 people were killed every day on roads in the U.S., totaling just over 42,500 fatalities in 2022.² This is a 26 percent increase in deaths in just a decade.³ An additional 2.38 million people were injured.⁴ Early projections for 2023 traffic fatalities remain at a similar historic high level; nearly 41,000 people are estimated to have died that year.⁵

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) reports “these vital lifelines are frequently underfunded, and over 40% of the system is now in poor or mediocre condition.”⁶ In their 2021 Report Card, roads received a grade of “D,” with 43 percent in poor or mediocre condition.⁷ Bridges received a “C,” with 42 percent being at least 50 years old and more than 46,000 considered structurally deficient.⁸ Moreover, our deteriorating roads are forcing the Nation’s motorists to spend nearly \$130 billion each year in extra vehicle repairs and operating costs.⁹

In addition to the physical and emotional repercussions of motor vehicle crashes, the annual economic cost is approximately \$340 billion (2019 dollars).¹⁰ This figure equates to every person living in the U.S. essentially paying an annual “crash tax” of over \$1,000. Moreover, the total value of societal harm from motor vehicle crashes in 2019, which includes loss of life, pain and decreased quality of life, was nearly \$1.4 trillion.¹¹ When adjusted solely for inflation, this figure amounts to over \$1.72 trillion.¹² Research from the Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS), finds motor vehicle crashes cost employers \$72.2 billion in direct crash-related expenses in 2019.¹³

These devastating crashes impact millions of Americans each year including the family of U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Secretary Duffy and Members of Congress. These tragedies result in long-lasting impacts which often are not accounted for in statistics alone. For every single death and serious injury, there is a horrific ripple effect forever changing the lives of children, parents, friends and communities.

To take the temperature of the public on the impact of motor vehicle crashes, Advocates commissioned a public opinion survey conducted in December 2024. It showed that while Americans are not aware of the total magnitude of the motor vehicle crash fatality and injury toll, they are highly concerned about roadway safety dangers.¹⁴ The poll results clearly illustrate that people have significant trepidations about a multitude of roadway safety hazards including speeding, distracted driving, impaired driving, lack of seat belt use, child passenger safety seat use, being a vulnerable road user (VRU), sharing the roads with large trucks, and driverless cars and trucks, among others.

¹ 2021 Report Card for America’s Infrastructure, American Society of Civil Engineers, <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/cat-item/roads-infrastructure/>

² Traffic Safety Facts 2022: A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crash Data, NHTSA, Dec. 2024, DOT HS 813 656 (Annual Report 2022).

³ Annual Report 2022; [comparing 2012 to 2022].

⁴ Annual Report 2022.

⁵ Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats, Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities in 2023, NHTSA, Apr. 2024, DOT HS 813 561 (Early Estimates 2023).

⁶ <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/cat-item/roads-infrastructure/>

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, NHTSA, Dec. 2022, DOT HS 813 403. (Economic and Societal Impact 2019).

¹¹ Economic and Societal Impact 2019.

¹² CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, available at https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm, calculated from Jan. 2021–Jan. 2024.

¹³ Cost of Motor Vehicle Crashes to Employers—2019, Network of Employers for Traffic Safety, March 2021.

¹⁴ Online CARAVAN Survey (Dec. 2024), available at: <https://saferoads.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Advocates-December-2024-Poll-Report-12-4-24.pdf>

IMPROVING TRUCK SAFETY

Since 2009, the number of fatalities in large truck crashes has increased by 76 percent.¹⁵ In that same timespan, the number of people injured in crashes involving large trucks rose by 117 percent.¹⁶ In fatal two-vehicle crashes between a large truck and a passenger motor vehicle, 96 percent of the fatalities were occupants of the passenger vehicle.¹⁷ In 2022, 5,936 people were killed and over 160,000 people were injured in crashes involving large trucks.¹⁸

According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), traffic incidents, which include crashes, are one of the seven main causes of traffic congestion which erodes the reliability of travel time.¹⁹ The report notes that for truck operators, “[t]he cost of unexpected delay can add another 20 percent to 250 percent” to their hourly costs.²⁰ The cost to society from crashes involving large trucks and buses was estimated to be \$128 billion in 2021, the latest year for which data is available.²¹ When adjusted solely for inflation, this figure amounts to over \$151 billion.²²

This safety epidemic should be a clear indicator that essential protections, including federal truck size and weight limits (TSW), should not be weakened or repealed. Retaining current TSW also impacts roadway infrastructure as larger, heavier trucks could result in an increased prevalence and severity of crashes and cause increased wear and damage to our roadway infrastructure and bridges.

Additional improvements, such as ensuring adequate truck parking to help mitigate the well-known and documented safety issue of truck driver fatigue, should be undertaken as well. Advocates recognize that the lack of safe and convenient truck parking is an issue that merits federal action. However, simply dedicating more federal funding to build parking facilities will likely not solve the issue alone. Studies have demonstrated that the parking shortage is often most acute in areas of the country, such as along the Interstate 95 corridor in the Northeast, where building facilities for parking may not be realistic due to costs and scarcity of open land.²³ As such, along with providing funding to address this issue, Advocates urges policymakers to examine additional remedies to address this problem such as use of existing dormant facilities.

PROTECTING VULNERABLE ROAD USERS

Vulnerable road users (VRUs) who do not have the protections afforded to people in vehicles are particularly imperiled in a crash, and they have been experiencing rises in fatalities. In 2022, 7,522 pedestrians and 1,105 bicyclists were killed, representing a 56 percent and 50 percent increase respectively in the past decade.²⁴ Additionally, motorcycle riders experienced the highest fatality total in a single year in 2022 since data collection began in 1975; 6,218 motorcycle riders were killed.²⁵

Commonsense solutions are available to improve the safety of VRUs. According to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), automatic emergency braking (AEB) systems with pedestrian detection (PAEB) have the capability to reduce pedestrian crashes by 27 percent and pedestrian injury crashes by 30 percent.²⁶ The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that requiring

¹⁵ *Id.* Note, the 76 percent figure represents the overall change in the number of fatalities in large truck involved crashes from 2009 to 2022. However, between 2015 and 2016 there was a change in data collection at U.S. DOT that could affect this calculation. From 2009 to 2015 the number of fatalities in truck-involved crashes increased by 21 percent, and between 2016 to 2022, it increased by 27 percent, and between 2015 and 2016, it increased by 14 percent.

¹⁶ *Id.* Note, the 117 percent figure represents the overall change in the number of people injured in large truck involved crashes from 2009 to 2022. However, between 2015 and 2016 there was a change in data collection at U.S. DOT that could affect this calculation. From 2009 to 2015 the number of people injured in truck-involved crashes increased by 59 percent, and between 2016 to 2022, it increased by 19 percent, and between 2015 and 2016, it increased by 14 percent.

¹⁷ Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), Large Trucks. <https://www.iihs.org/topics/fatalitystatistics/detail/large-trucks>.

¹⁸ Annual Report 2022.

¹⁹ Traffic Congestion and Reliability: Trends and Advanced Strategies for Congestion Mitigation, March 2020, FHWA. Available here: https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/congestion_report/chapter2.htm

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ 2023 Pocket Guide to Large Truck and Bus Statistics, FMCSA, Dec. 2023, RRA-23-003.

²² CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, available at https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm, calculated from Jan. 2021–Jan. 2024.

²³ Federal Highway Administration, Commercial Motor Vehicle Parking Shortage (May 2012).

²⁴ Annual Report 2022; [comparing 2012 to 2022].

²⁵ Annual Report 2022.

²⁶ IIHS, Real World Benefits of Crash Avoidance Technologies (Dec. 2020).

PAEB on light vehicles will save at least 362 lives and mitigate 24,321 non-fatal injuries annually.²⁷ It also is estimated to result in a yearly net benefit of between \$5.8–\$7.2 billion.²⁸ The agency issued a Final Rule requiring PAEB on light vehicles in May 2024 (a separate rulemaking to require AEB on heavy trucks remains outstanding).²⁹ While the new rule takes effect for most new cars in September 2029, automakers do not need to wait to install this lifesaving technology, nor do commercial motor vehicle (CMV) manufacturers.

In September 2024, NHTSA issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to establish a new Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) to ensure passenger vehicles are designed to mitigate the risks of serious injuries and fatalities in crashes involving pedestrians.³⁰ The standard proposed in the NPRM would save 67 lives annually with the benefits far outpacing the costs by establishing test procedures simulating a head-to-hood impact and performance requirements to minimize the risk of head injury.³¹

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) enacted in 2021 with bipartisan support included a provision directing NHTSA to issue a Notice for Public Comment on updating hood and bumper standards for passenger vehicles to “to reduce the number of injuries and fatalities suffered by pedestrians, bicyclists, or other vulnerable road users.”³² The measure also required the agency to provide a report to Congress. NHTSA has yet to complete these actions even though doing so could help to protect VRUs.

The IIJA also required NHTSA issue a standard for adaptive driving beam (ADB) technology. With 78 percent of pedestrian fatalities occurring in the dark,³³ improvements to vehicle lighting would afford drivers additional time to identify and respond accordingly to VRUs and animals in the roadway. In 2022, the NHTSA published a Final Rule allowing but not requiring ADB systems on passenger vehicles.³⁴ Similarly, these systems can be installed now in vehicles without the issuance of a mandate.

THE SAFE SYSTEM APPROACH AND FEDERAL GRANT PROGRAMS ARE ESSENTIAL TO IMPROVING PUBLIC SAFETY

Roadway infrastructure and design play a critical role in improving the safety of the public. Roadway design, maintenance and building throughout the country can and should prioritize getting from Point A to Point B safely for all users as well as quickly and efficiently to avoid hazardous scenarios. The Safe System Approach (SSA) is “an effective way to address and mitigate the risks inherent in our enormous and complex transportation system. It works by building and reinforcing multiple layers of protection to both prevent crashes from happening in the first place and minimize the harm caused to those involved when crashes do occur.”³⁵ SSA assumes that humans will make mistakes and that we must anticipate this and make accommodations to account for limited human injury tolerances through five elements: Safe Vehicles, Safe Road Users, Safe Roads, Safe Speed and Post-Crash Care.

Roadway infrastructure improvements consistent with the SSA to limit conflicts include: reducing speed limits; employing automated enforcement to augment traditional enforcement; adding speed curbing features like speed humps; performing road diets; and, installing roundabouts as well as educating on driver behavior such as using real-time speed feedback signs.

Other examples of infrastructure to promote safety include adding lighting and improving sight lines; installing leading intervals and pedestrian hybrid beacons; ensuring curb extensions, accessible sidewalks, protected intersections and separated bike lanes; and, prioritizing road separations and rumble strips. Localities can advance these and other infrastructure improvements systemically by requiring their adoption as appropriate in road projects.

²⁷ 89 FR 39686, 39687 (May 9, 2024).

²⁸ 89 FR 39686 (May 9, 2024); available at <https://www.regulations.gov/document/NHTSA-2023-0021-1065>.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ 89 FR 79622 (Sep. 19, 2024).

³¹ 89 FR 76926.

³² Pub. L. 117–58, § 24214 (2021).

³³ Traffic Safety Facts: 2022 Data, Pedestrians, NHTSA, Jul. 2024, DOT HS 813 590, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813590>.

³⁴ Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards: Lamps, Reflective Devices, and Associated Equipment, Adaptive Driving beam headlights, Final Rule, 87 FR 9916, Feb. 22, 2022, available at <https://www.regulations.gov/document/NHTSA-2022-0013-0001>.

³⁵ U.S. DOT, What is a Safe System Approach? Available here: <https://www.transportation.gov/safe-system-approach>.

Traffic circles or “roundabouts” have been found by IIHS to be a safer alternative to traffic signals and stop signs by reducing speed and conflict points.³⁶ In fact, intersections converted from traffic signals or stop signs to roundabouts have reduced injury crashes up to 80 percent and cut all crashes by nearly half (47 percent).³⁷ Moreover, along with improving safety the FHWA has noted traffic circles are efficient in keeping travelers moving and “can be implemented in both urban and rural areas under a wide range of traffic conditions.”³⁸ Federal funding for states and localities to build roundabouts and other proven infrastructure upgrades is available through the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program and should be preserved.

The IIJA authorizes safety upgrades to the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) that will help to protect VRUs and provides robust funding for the SS4A program to provide direct access to localities to make roadway improvements consistent with SSA and Complete Streets policy. These changes promote infrastructure features that consider multimodal use, calm traffic, separate different types of road users, reduce vehicle speeds, and prevent or mitigate harmful interactions among road users. Advocates supports enhancing HSIP to allow for funding of projects that can strengthen protections for VRUs, perpetuating and expanding access to SS4A funding opportunities, advancing Complete Streets measures and ensuring that all communities across the Nation can take advantage of federal dollars to implement these innovative approaches to improving public safety on their roadways.

Initially authorized by the Highway Safety Act of 1966, the Highway Safety Program, known as Section 402, which is jointly administered by NHTSA and FHWA, provides federal funding to states to reduce motor vehicle crashes and address dangerous driving behaviors.³⁹ To receive funding, states are required to have a highway safety program that is approved by the U.S. DOT. Advocates supports this program as it is critical in assisting states in addressing roadway safety. In addition, Advocates has supported expanding eligible uses of the dollars under the program to combat emerging issues of concern such as drugged driving and distracted driving.

In 2012, as part of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), Congress established the National Priority Safety Program, known as Section 405.⁴⁰ The program was subsequently amended and currently includes grant programs to address some of the major contributors to crashes including impaired and distracted driving. In addition, it includes grant programs to improve the safety of motorcycle riders and non-motorized road users. Funds also can be spent to assist states in improving transportation information systems by collecting critical data.

As with all federal safety grants, it is critical that these programs include clear and transparent measures for success to ensure funds are spent as intended and result in actual safety benefits and improvements. Advocates supports the continuation and funding for these safety grant programs to help reduce the death, injury and financial toll on American roads.

MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS OF CRASHES MUST BE ADDRESSED WITH EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS

Between 1968 and 2019, FMVSS saved 865,706 lives and reduced the number of individuals injured by 49,206,849.⁴¹ During that same period, net comprehensive benefits totaled \$16.3 trillion and net economic benefits alone were \$2.7 trillion.⁴² Yet, several driver behavioral issues continue to be leading factors in traffic fatalities including alcohol impairment, distraction, speeding and lack of restraint use.⁴³ We can and must continue to increase these numbers with effective solutions.

³⁶ IIHS, Roundabouts, available at: <https://www.iihs.org/topics/roundabouts>.

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ FHWA, Roundabouts, available at: <https://highways.dot.gov/safety/proven-safety-countermeasures/roundabouts>.

³⁹ 23 U.S.C. 402.

⁴⁰ 23 U.S.C. 405.

⁴¹ Fatalities, Injuries, and Crashes Prevented by Vehicle Safety Technologies and Associated FMVSS, 1968 to 2019—Passenger Cars and LTVs, NHTSA, DOT HS 813 611.

⁴² NHTSA: 50 Years of Vehicle Safety Standards Saved Hundreds of Thousands of Lives, Prevented Millions of Injuries, Dec. 2024, <https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/50-years-vehicle-safety-standards>.

⁴³ National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2024, April). Overview of motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2022 (Traffic Safety Facts Research Note. Report No. DOT HS 813 560). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Impaired Driving

According to NHTSA, between 2011–2020, an average of almost 10,500 people were killed each year due to alcohol impaired driving crashes.⁴⁴ Since our inception in 1989, Advocates has been a leading safety voice in the fight against alcohol-impaired driving. Our organization supported the development of breathalyzer technology which is essential to enforcement of impaired driving laws and keeping drunk drivers off the road. Additionally, together with Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) and others, Advocates was a leading supporter in federal and state efforts to reduce blood alcohol concentration (BAC) laws from .10 to .08 percent and achieve a national law.⁴⁵ Advocates has long supported a .05 percent BAC threshold for drunk driving and the enactment of all-offender ignition interlock device (IID), child endangerment and open container laws, and measures to curb marijuana impaired driving such as extending zero tolerance for under age 21 and open container laws to include marijuana use and its products. To curb impaired driving, Advocates supports the END DWI Act, (H.R. 8213, 118th Congress) and opposes H.R. 1137 (119th Congress).

The development of passive touch-based and/or breath sensor technology that detects if a driver is alcohol intoxicated has tremendous potential to reduce impaired driving crashes. In fact, IIHS research shows that impairment detection systems could save upwards of 10,000 lives each year once widely deployed.⁴⁶ Regrettably, even with strong and consistent advocacy, these technologies are not required as standard equipment, while new systems which may prevent impaired driving and ensure driver capability are increasingly available on passenger vehicles.⁴⁷

The IIJA directed NHTSA to issue a FMVSS requiring passenger motor vehicles to be equipped with impaired driving prevention technology by 2024.⁴⁸ The agency issued an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) in January 2024 but has taken no further regulatory action.⁴⁹ Until NHTSA completes this overdue rule-making, lives will continue to be needlessly lost, injuries suffered and associated costs expended.

Speeding

In 2022, nearly a third (29 percent) of traffic fatalities totaling 12,151 deaths were speeding related.⁵⁰ In addition, over 300,000 people were injured in crashes due to speeding.⁵¹ Excess speed can contribute to both the frequency and severity of motor vehicle crashes. At higher speeds, additional time is required to stop a vehicle, and more distance is traveled before corrective maneuvers can be implemented. Speeding reduces a driver's ability to react to emergencies created by driver inattention, unsafe maneuvers of other vehicles, roadway hazards, vehicle issues (such as tire blowouts) or perilous weather conditions. Increases in speed also can mean life or death for VRUs who lack the protective structure of a vehicle. While many drivers have a proclivity to exceed posted speed limits or may approve of higher speed limits, AAA has found that raising speed limits leads to a very minimal reduction in time on the road noting, "Raising speed limits is often thought of as a way to improve traffic flow and to allow drivers to get to their destinations more quickly. However, our AAA research shows that driving at higher speeds increases risk which can outweigh the potential benefits of saving a few minutes of time."⁵²

Speed assistance systems, such as intelligent speed assistance (ISA), can provide information to drivers about present speed limits, warn drivers when a vehicle speed is above the limit, prevent a vehicle from exceeding the speed limit, or maintain a set speed.⁵³ Rating this technology in new vehicles should be part of an improved U.S. New Car Assessment Program (NCAP), as is already done in Europe, and could incentivize automakers to equip more U.S. models with speed assistance

⁴⁴ 89 FR 831.

⁴⁵ Department of Transportation and Related Agencies Appropriations, 2001. Pub. L. 106–346 (Oct. 23, 2000).

⁴⁶ Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Alcohol and Drugs.

⁴⁷ Keith Barry, Driver Monitoring Systems Can Help You Be Safer on the Road, Consumer Reports (Jan. 20, 2022).

⁴⁸ Pub. L. 117–58, § 24220 (2021).

⁴⁹ 89 FR 830 (Jan. 5, 2024).

⁵⁰ Traffic Safety Facts 2022 Data: Speeding, NHTSA, Jul. 2024, DOT HS 813582, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813582>.

⁵¹ Traffic Safety Facts 2022 Data: Speeding, NHTSA, Jul. 2024, DOT HS 813582, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813582>.

⁵² AAA: Higher Speed Limits don't mean Faster Commutes, July 13, 2023, available here: <https://info.oregon.aaa.com/aaa-higher-speed-limits-dont-mean-faster-commutes/>

⁵³ European New Car Assessment Programs: Speed assistance systems, available at <https://www.euroncap.com/en/vehicle-safety/the-ratings-explained/safety-assist/speed-assistance/>

systems. ISA is required on all new vehicles sold in Europe as of July 2024.⁵⁴ Advocates supports the further installation of these systems into passenger vehicles in the U.S. as well as grant funding opportunities for localities to equip their fleet vehicles with ISA systems. In October 2024, the U.S. DOT Volpe Center released research, “New York City Intelligent Speed Assistance Pilot Evaluation,” which showed “ISA produced a 64 percent reduction in overall speeding and an 82 percent decrease on high-speed roads.”⁵⁵

Automated enforcement (AE), such as speed and red-light running safety cameras, is a verified deterrent against frequent crash contributors and has been identified by NHTSA, FHWA, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), IIHS and others as an effective means to curb dangerous driving behavior.⁵⁶ Moreover, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) has found that speed camera programs are effective in reducing speeding and/or crashes near cameras.⁵⁷ Additionally, for VRUs, such as pedestrians and bicyclists, small changes in speed can have a large impact on survivability. New crash tests performed by IIHS and the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety and Humanetics show that modest five to ten miles per hour (mph) increases in speed can have a severe impact on a driver’s risk of injury or even death.⁵⁸ Provisions in the IIJA correctly permit use of certain federal funds for AE programs in school and work zones. This allowance should be expanded, especially to high injury networks, to curb deadly driving on other roadways.

Additional improvements to roadway infrastructure, often referred to as roadway calming, can help to curb speeding as well as improve safety for VRUs. These previously identified roadway safety upgrades include speed humps which require a vehicle to slow, curb extensions which reduce crossing distances for pedestrians and bollards, and other measures consistent with road diets to narrow lanes and curb speed. Research performed by IIHS indicates that implementing such improvements along with public outreach and enforcement resulted in substantial reductions in speeding.⁵⁹

Lastly, the 85th percentile speed is the speed at or below which 85 percent of the vehicles on a road tend to travel. This speed is measured and then the limit is set or modified. This method ignores evidence from IIHS and others that people often drive faster than the speed limit, and average speeds tend to increase whenever speed limits are raised, creating a feedback loop of repeated speed limit increases.⁶⁰ The NTSB has recommended removing the guidance from the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways (MUTCD) that speed limits in speed zones be within five mph of the 85th percentile speed among other countermeasures to curb excessive speed.⁶¹ Advocates concurs with the NTSB on this issue.

Seat Belts

Seat belt use is a proven lifesaver. From 1975 to 2019, seat belts prevented over 403,000 fatalities and saved society approximately \$2.5 trillion in economic costs.⁶² Seat belts serve as the first line of defense against injury or death for vehicle occupants when crashes occur. According to NHTSA, the combination of an airbag plus a lap and shoulder belt reduces the risk of death in frontal crashes by 61 percent.⁶³ Sadly, for passenger vehicle occupant fatalities in 2022, it is estimated that half were unrestrained.⁶⁴

⁵⁴ EU Regulation 2019/2144.

⁵⁵ New York City Intelligent Speed Assistance Pilot Evaluation, October 2024. Available here: <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/dcas/downloads/pdf/fleet/nyc-intelligent-speed-assistance-pilot-evaluation-2024-oct.pdf>

⁵⁶ IIHS, Topics, Red Light Running, available at: <https://www.iihs.org/topics/red-light-running#effectiveness-of-cameras>.

⁵⁷ CRS, Safety Impact of Speed and Red Light Cameras, R46552 (Sep. 28, 2020).

⁵⁸ IIHS, New crash tests show modest speed increases can have deadly consequences (Jan. 28, 2021).

⁵⁹ IIHS, Speed.

⁶⁰ IIHS: Speed, IIHS available at <https://www.iihs.org/topics/speed>.

⁶¹ 2021–2023 National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) Most Wanted List of Transportation Safety Improvements, 2023, available at <https://www.nts.gov/Advocacy/mwl/Pages/mwl-21-22/mwl-hs-01.aspx>.

⁶² The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019 (Revised), NHTSA, Feb 2023, DOT HS 813 403, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813403>. [Economic Impact 2019].

⁶³ Lives Saved by Vehicle Safety Technologies and Associated Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, 1960 to 2012, Passenger Cars and LTVs, With Reviews of 26 FMVSS and the Effectiveness Of Their Associated Safety Technologies in Reducing Fatalities, Injuries, and Crashes; NHTSA, Jan. 2015, DOT HS 812 069, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/812069.pdf>.

⁶⁴ Overview 2022.

Seat belt reminder systems have been proven to improve seat belt use and save lives.⁶⁵ Congress as part of MAP-21 directed NHTSA to amend federal safety standards to require these systems in the rear seats of passenger vehicles (previously these systems were only required for the front driver's seat although most automakers also equipped the front passenger seat).⁶⁶ NHTSA recently issued a Final Rule,⁶⁷ and it must be implemented without delay to improve vehicle occupant safety.

Distracted Driving

Driver distraction is known to be a principal cause of motor vehicle crashes.⁶⁸ In 2022, 3,308 people were killed in crashes involving a distracted driver accounting for 8 percent of all crash fatalities. Nonoccupants (pedestrians, bicyclists, and others) accounted for 19 percent (621) of distraction-affected fatalities in 2022. An estimated 289,310 people were injured in distraction-affected crashes in 2022.⁶⁹ However, the true impact of distracted driving remains unclear due to issues with the underreporting of crashes involving distraction, including differences in police crash report coding and database limitations.⁷⁰

In 2023, over two trillion text and multimedia messages were sent or received in the U.S. Mobile wireless data traffic has risen dramatically over the last decade, from 3 trillion megabytes in 2010 to 100.1 trillion in 2023.⁷¹ Research has shown that because of the degree of cognitive distraction these devices cause, the behavior of drivers using mobile phones (whether handheld or hands-free) is equivalent to the behavior of drivers at the threshold of the legal limit for alcohol in most states (0.08 percent blood alcohol concentration).⁷² Crash risk increases dramatically—as much as four times higher—when a driver is using a mobile phone, with no significant safety difference between handheld and hands-free phones observed in many studies.⁷³ A study by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute found that text messaging increased the risk of a safety-critical driving event (i.e., crashes, near-crashes, crash-relevant conflicts and unintentional lane deviations) by 23.2 times.⁷⁴ Sending or receiving a text message causes the driver's eyes to be off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds. When driving 55 miles per hour (mph), this is the equivalent of driving the entire length of a football field with one's eyes closed.⁷⁵

A comprehensive approach including strong laws, appropriate enforcement, vehicle safety systems and effective education can deter distracted driving. The IIJA directed NHTSA to conduct research regarding the installation and use of driver support systems also known as driver monitoring systems to minimize or eliminate driver distraction.⁷⁶ The Euro NCAP is already evaluating these systems including for non-fatigue impairment detection.⁷⁷ In addition, several major automakers include some type of driver monitoring technologies in their vehicles sold in the U.S.

⁶⁵ 84 FR 51076 (Sep. 27, 2019).

⁶⁶ Pub. L. 112-141, § 31503 (MAP-21).

⁶⁷ 90 FR 390 (Jan. 3, 2025).

⁶⁸ Blincoc, L., Miller, T., Wang, J.-S., Swedler, D., Coughlin, T., Lawrence, B., Guo, F., Klauer, S., & Dingus, T. (2023, February). The economic and societal impact of motor vehicle crashes, 2019 (Revised) (Report No. DOT HS 813 403).

⁶⁹ Traffic Safety Facts Research Note: Distracted Driving 2022, April 2024, NHTSA, DOT HS 813 559, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813559>.

⁷⁰ Traffic Safety Facts Research Note: Distracted Driving 2022, April 2024, NHTSA, DOT HS 813 559, available at <https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813559>.

⁷¹ 2024 Annual Survey Highlights, CTIA, available at <https://api.ctia.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/2024-Annual-Survey-1.pdf>.

⁷² Fatal Distraction? A Comparison of the Cell-Phone Driver and the Drunk Driver, Strayer, D.L., Drews, F.A., Crouch, D.J., University of Utah, Department of Psychology, available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1518/00187200677724471>.

⁷³ McEvoy, S.P.; Stevenson, M.R.; McCartt A.T.; Woodward, M.; Haworth, C.; Palamara, P.; and Cercarelli, R. 2005. Role of mobile phones in motor vehicle crashes resulting in hospital attendance: a case-crossover study. *British Medical Journal* 331(7514):428; available at <http://www.bmj.com/content/331/7514/428>; and Redelmeier, D.A. and Tibshirani, R.J. 1997. Association between cellular-telephone call and motor vehicle collisions. *The New England Journal of Medicine* 336:453-58, available at <http://www.stat.wmich.edu/naranjo/articles/nejmcellphone.pdf>.

⁷⁴ What is Distracted Driving? Key Facts and Statistics, DOT NHTSA, citing Olson, R.L., Hanowski, R.J., Hickman, J.S., Bocanegra, J.; "Driver Distraction in Commercial Vehicle Operations", VTTI, Sep. 2009, available at <https://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/sites/fmcsa.dot.gov/files/docs/DriverDistractionStudy.pdf>.

⁷⁵ Blueprint for Ending Distracted Driving, NHTSA, June 2012, DOT HS 811 629, available at <https://www.nhtsa.gov/sites/nhtsa.dot.gov/files/811629.pdf>.

⁷⁶ Pub. L. 117-58, § 24209 (2021).

⁷⁷ European New Car Assessment Program: Assessment Protocol—Safety Assist Safe Driving, Implementation 2023, V 10.4, Euro NCAP, Feb. 2024

These systems can help to address the scourge of distracted driving and should continue to be introduced into the U.S. market.

ENSURING SAFE INTEGRATION OF AUTOMATED DRIVING SYSTEM (ADS) TECHNOLOGY

Autonomous driving technology has made advances yet remains unable to consistently operate safely with all road users, conditions and scenarios, as evidenced by fatal and serious crashes involving passenger motor vehicles equipped with ADS of varying levels.⁷⁸ Further, the interest in expanding the use of this technology must not be used as a pretext to eviscerate essential safety regulations administered by NHTSA and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), and particularly in the absence of new standards to ensure the technology performs safely and as needed. The public safety protections provided by safety standards and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations (FMCSRs) have become no less important or applicable simply because a passenger vehicle or a CMV has been equipped with an ADS. In fact, additional substantial public safety concerns are presented by automated CMVs. In addition, vehicles equipped with ADS may result in new impacts on roadway and bridge infrastructure due to considerations such as increased weight and mileage, and use of lane centering technology.

Advocates and numerous stakeholders developed the “AV Tenets,” policy positions which should be foundational to any AV legislation.⁷⁹ The AV Tenets have four main, commonsense categories including: 1) prioritizing safety of all road users; 2) guaranteeing accessibility and equity; 3) preserving consumer and worker rights; and, 4) ensuring local control and sustainable transportation. While the AV Tenets were developed for application to vehicles under 10,000 pounds, many of the principles also could apply to larger commercial vehicles. At a minimum, autonomous CMVs must meet safety standards for the ADS and related systems, including for cybersecurity, and operations must be subject to adequate oversight as a starting point for their potential deployment.

CONCLUSION

Everyone in the U.S. moves on our roadways, whether as a car or truck driver, passenger, pedestrian, bicyclist, motorcycle rider, first responder, law enforcement officer, roadway construction worker, or other road user, and everyone deserves a safe trip. Advancing data-driven solutions including improving the safety of our roadways through infrastructure improvements is a proven path to prevent fatalities and injuries and ensure efficient roads.

Mr. ROUZER. Well, thank you.

I now ask unanimous consent that the witnesses’ full statements be included in the record.

Without objection, so ordered.

I ask unanimous consent that the record of today’s hearing remain open until such time as our witnesses have provided answers to any questions that may be submitted to them in writing.

Without objection, so ordered.

And then I will also ask unanimous consent that the record remain open for 15 days for any additional comments and information submitted by Members or witnesses to be included in the record of today’s hearing.

Without objection, so ordered.

So I want to thank each of our panelists for being here today. Your testimony was very good. And we now turn to questions for the panel. So I will recognize myself for up to 5 minutes.

I am going to come at this from a little bit different angle than many of my colleagues may just because of some specific experience I had when I was in the State legislature.

⁷⁸ NHTSA, Standing General Order 2021–01 (Aug. 2021), ADS Incident Report Data available here: https://static.nhtsa.gov/odi/ffdd/sgo-2021-01/SGO-2021-01_Incident_Reports_ADS.csv

⁷⁹ <https://saferoads.org/autonomous-vehicle-tenets/>.

I got elected to the State Senate in 2008, and at that time, in my home county of Johnston County, North Carolina, and other surrounding counties, particularly in the rural areas—but in my home county in particular, for whatever reason, there was a death almost a week. If not a week, every 2 weeks. It was one of those things where every time you turn on the news, a young person was killed in a traffic fatality.

And in the more rural areas, you have narrower roads, straight—very straight roads in some places and then a quick turn. And what we found was that there were a lot of young people—young people as in teenagers, those who are in their twenties, and those who are older, too—that when they would run off the road, they didn't know how to correct. They didn't know how to get back on. They would overcorrect, then the tire would grab, and the next thing they knew, they were in—we had a traffic fatality.

And so there was a big effort in the legislature to address that issue because it had become so prolific. And what we ended up doing was basically enhancing driver's education, specifically encouraging and incentivizing parents to travel more with their children as they learn how to drive so that if you were going to get your license at age 16—at age 15 with your learner's permit, a big part of the requirement was experience behind the wheel—that your parents and guardian or whoever was with you would document as part of a log. And that translated into saving lives. It worked.

So my question is, of the fatalities that we have out there, how do the demographics break down? Is it universal, or is it—are we having in these rural areas like we had in North Carolina where it was mostly younger people that were overcorrecting? I am just curious your experience on that front and recommendations that aren't necessarily roads and bridges but driver education-related. Anybody.

Ms. CHASE. I would be glad to try to answer that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROUZER. Sure.

Ms. CHASE. I don't have the specific statistics about the breakdown that you ask, but I would be glad to get that to you. I don't want to misrepresent.

But I appreciate greatly what you said about graduated driver licensing. We work in State legislatures throughout the country to make sure that young people whose brains are not formed yet—I have two younger drivers myself, and it is terrifying as a parent when you hand those keys over. So what you mentioned about graduated driver licensing, or GDL, is essential, and we urge all State legislatures to enhance them.

We put out a report every year called the "Roadmap to Safety," and in our report, no State has an optimal GDL law. So there are improvements needed in every State legislature.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Hanson.

Mr. HANSON. Mr. Chair and Members, in the demographic question, I think some things haven't changed. Young males are still highly overrepresented, especially in those rural rollover fatalities, especially young males driving pickup trucks. And so education and outreach absolutely have to be part of that solution.

Infrastructure, especially on our unpaved roadways, is a little bit tougher challenge to overcome. So, when we address those driver behavior issues through education and through outreach and through training, that is going to be the thing that will provide the benefit and save those rural lives.

Mr. ROUZER. Thank you.

Mr. Willox.

Mr. WILLOX. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As commissioner, we don't deal a lot with the driver behavior. We are trying to deal with the road. As I mentioned, washboards. If you are on rural roads, that is one of the dangers you have when you get that—you lose traction. So we try to address that as best we can. The slopes of the gravel roads—reduce those so that if they do go off the road, we reduce the chance for overcorrection.

But here is the challenge, as many of those rural roads have an average daily traffic of 15. When you are making the financial considerations of where to spend your dollars in a rural community, how much effort can you spend on a road that has low volume but a high risk versus a road that has got a lot of volume and a less of a risk? So those are the challenges we face all the time. We try to do it as we go along, but dealing with the slopes and the washboards are things we try to deal with on the gravel roads that help if they get into a bad situation.

Mr. ROUZER. Absolutely.

Ms. Norman, real quickly—I only have about 18 seconds left—but do you have some specifics as it relates to work zones? I-95 cutting through New Carolina, for example—I think that we have been working on that since the beginning of time. It never ends, the work zones.

Ms. NORMAN. Thank you for that good question.

And I think in regards to work zones specifically, there is some new driver—teen driver training specifically for a work zone, which is not in current driver education, and that is really picking up, especially in Oklahoma. It is actually now a law that they take a course to get their driver's license that is specific to work zones. And so ATSSA is happy to share that information as well and get that into other States.

Mr. ROUZER. That would be great. I yield back.

Ms. Norton, you are recognized.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Chase, in 2023, 40,990 people were killed on public roads. That is 8,096 more deaths than in 2013, despite hundreds of billions of dollars of taxpayer investment to maintain and improve our transportation system.

Why is it important to ensure that Federal transportation safety dollars are used for their intended purpose?

Ms. CHASE. Thank you for the question, Ranking Member. It is vital that Federal dollars are spent for the precise reason that you just shared. Our country is experiencing a public health crisis on our roadways and without Federal dollars to improve the roadway environments as well as improvements to vehicles themselves.

In your opening statement, you mentioned the new automatic emergency braking rule. We have worked to get that over the finish line for over a decade because we know that it will address dis-

tracted driving, impaired driving, drowsy driving. If a driver doesn't brake, the car will slow down and brake for them. So we need to have a holistic answer, and we need Federal dollars in order to finance it.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you.

Ms. Chase, bicyclists and pedestrians suffer disproportionately from highway fatalities on our roads. To combat the vulnerable road user safety crisis, the BIL created the Vulnerable Road User Special Rule. The rule requires a State to direct 15 percent of its Highway Safety Improvement Program funding to vulnerable road user safety projects.

If bicyclists and pedestrians make up at least 15 percent of the State's traffic fatalities, why does it make sense to dedicate highway safety funding for projects that address ongoing safety challenges facing vulnerable road users?

Ms. CHASE. Thank you for the question. Vulnerable road users lack the protections that motorists have: basically, a car surrounding them. So they are at particular risk in terms of roadway safety.

I think that that program that allocates a certain percentage toward vulnerable road user safety makes sense because you are addressing a known problem. Oftentimes, we don't pay attention to the problem at hand. But everything that is decided should be based on statistics and facts, and that is why it is so important to address vulnerable road user safety, which we know has been increasing by over 50 percent over the last decade.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you.

Mr. Hanson and Ms. Chase, currently, manufacturers and operators of vehicles equipped with automatic driving systems are required to submit crash data to NHTSA. However, they are not required to report so-called close-call incidents where vehicles break traffic rules or operate unsafely but do not crash.

Recently, NHTSA published its AV STEP proposed rulemaking which would create a voluntary oversight program for self-driving cars. What are ways to increase accountability for autonomous vehicles on our roadways, Ms. Chase and Mr. Hanson?

Mr. HANSON. Mr. Chair and Members, it is a very good question. Thank you for that.

Really, what it is going to come down to is those near-misses. The technology is emerging for us to track that type of behavior using telematics and a variety of other technologies that are out there, and so the better that we can track that and the better that we can work with the manufacturers in order to harvest that data, it will identify the countermeasures that we can deploy in order to prevent the types of behaviors or the types of activity that you are describing from taking place in the first place.

So it is going to be a combined effort between, I think, the OEMs as well as NHTSA as well as the States to begin to track some of this novel data and some of the telematic data that is available out there.

Ms. NORTON. Ms. Chase.

Ms. CHASE. I agree with Mr. Hanson in that data collection is essential in order to make proper decisions.

A number of years ago, when Congress started deliberating about an autonomous vehicle bill, we came up with a document called the “AV Tenets,” and it provided a blueprint on how autonomous vehicles could be achieved safely. We are not pro or against autonomous vehicles. We just want them to be done in a deliberate and thoughtful way.

Our “AV Tenets” have a number of high-level recommendations, including prioritizing safety for all road users, which includes safety rulemakings and safety and performance data collection, guaranteeing accessibility for all, preserving consumer and worker rights, and ensuring local control and sustainable transportation. These are all promises that are being made by autonomous vehicle manufacturers; so we want to help make sure that all of the promises being offered are achieved.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Stauber.

Mr. STAUBER. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Before I begin, Mr. Willox, Britney Butler says hi. She works for me now, and she had a great time working with you. So I wanted to share that with you.

Director Hanson, NHTSA put out the results of a national survey on driver knowledge of schoolbus passing laws in November. Participants were asked for their opinions on the reason most drivers illegally pass a stopped schoolbus: 12.2 percent said they were distracted, 25 percent said they were in a hurry, 24.3 percent said they didn’t know it was illegal to pass a schoolbus, and 30.5 percent said they didn’t care. Those last two statistics are what startle me the most: 55 percent of the drivers in this survey either didn’t care or didn’t know.

Director Hanson, can you speak to the dangers of illegal schoolbus passings?

Mr. HANSON. Mr. Chair and Members, absolutely. This is a critical challenge for all of us in the traffic safety world. Our most precious cargo are those kids getting on and off of those schoolbuses, and it is something we have to face. Education and outreach are certainly going to be some of the most effective tools that we can deploy so we can reach those drivers who don’t know what the law is, but along with that, we also have to be able to have the methods and the tools to hold drivers accountable when they don’t care because, quite honestly, that is just not acceptable.

In Minnesota, over the last 2 years, we have taken about \$16 million worth of State-provided funding, and we have created a grant program for our transportation providers to equip our schoolbuses with stop-arm camera systems so that we can track those drivers, and we can take that enforcement action that they seriously need to be part of.

To date, there are about 12,000 yellow buses in Minnesota that would qualify for that. We have equipped over 8,000 of them with a camera system. And talking with my law enforcement partners across the State and with the transportation providers, it is a much, much more effective way to document those violations and hold those drivers accountable. So education, outreach, enforcement. That is the key, sir.

Mr. STAUBER. The education/outreach piece goes to my next question. Would you support a public service announcement like the Click It or Ticket campaign in the 1990s for wearing seatbelts?

Mr. HANSON. Absolutely. The more we can keep these types of topics in the forefront of the public and the more they pay attention to it, the more likely we are to obtain that voluntary compliance, which—again, that lessens the need for that enforcement and so forth, but it increases the knowledge and the ability of drivers to know what the law is and what they have to do to comply with that.

Mr. STAUBER. I can tell you, I am passionate about this, and I am going to work with you on working to get PSA announcements on the airwaves to make sure that the educational component is there. You mentioned it is our most precious cargo, and we have to protect them.

I want to change gears. Director Hanson, we have seen a decrease in traffic enforcement across the country. Has that had an impact on safety?

Mr. HANSON. Mr. Chair and Members, the data is irrefutable. The decrease in traffic law enforcement that has occurred over the last 5, 6, 7 years across the country has led to significant increases in the bad driving behavior that we are seeing out there.

And so traffic law enforcement is the one thing that we can take off the shelf as a State Highway Safety Office. We can put it to work right now, and it will have an effect on driver behavior. Now, again, it has to be implemented in the right place at the right time for the right reason in the right way in order for it to be effective.

But there are examples all over the country where traffic law enforcement has decreased. In the DC area, the number of impaired driving arrests over the last several years has decreased significantly, but yet the number of impaired driving fatalities has increased almost diametrically to that number. And there is just example after example after example—talking to my partners across the country—where that decrease in that enforcement presence has led to the increase in bad driving behavior.

In Minnesota, the number of drivers who are apprehended for driving more than 100 miles an hour has roughly tripled what it was pre-pandemic. And so we have to employ these tools in an effective way.

Mr. STAUBER. Thank you very much.

Last question. EMS and post-crash care aren't talked about as frequently as tactics to reduce crash fatalities. Can you share more about why you think it is an important element of roadway safety?

Mr. HANSON. Mr. Chair and Members—and, again, thank you for a great question—EMS services are kind of the fourth E of the Toward Zero Deaths concept, and that is post-crash care. Over 40 percent of people who are killed in a motor vehicle crash are alive when EMS arrives on the scene. We need to find better ways to provide timely care and get them to a proper facility in order to improve that survival rate. Even a small improvement there is going to pay huge dividends for the number of fatalities that are taking place across the country.

In Minnesota, we are working with advanced technology and advanced data analysis tools in order to identify ideal positioning for

our EMS responders based on crash history as well as real-time data so that we can cut down that response time, get those services to the scene quickly, and get those patients to the hospital quickly. Whole blood—

Mr. STAUBER [interrupting]. I am running out of time, Mr. Hanson. I wish we had more time. Thank you for your service.

Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Larsen, you are recognized.

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Chase, your testimony notes the crash tax—which I think is your term—which is the annual economic cost of the physical and emotional damage caused by motor vehicle crashes. Can you elaborate therefore on why Federal safety investments are critical not only to saving lives but helping communities grow and prosper?

Ms. CHASE. In terms of Federal safety grants, sir? Is that what you said? Sorry. I couldn't hear you.

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. In terms of Federal safety investments.

Ms. CHASE. Okay.

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. Yes.

Ms. CHASE. Well, in terms of Federal safety investments, as we were talking today about, roadway investments are crucial. If you don't have the safe roadway environments, then vehicles will not perform as needed and expected.

Additionally, the 402 and 405 grants—which help to enhance—excuse me—which help to address behavioral issues and which also encourage stronger State laws—are essential in order to make all of the roads in our country safer.

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. On that point, Mr. Hanson, I have a question for you with regards to whether roadway safety overall is a Federal interest or not. Is it a Federal interest that a road in my district be built safely versus one in your district, or should we rely strictly on local governments to take care of that?

Mr. HANSON. I think the answer—if I understood the question, sir—is they are both equally important. And real road safety is certainly something we need to focus on. And the infrastructure part of this and the behavior part of what is happening on our roads absolutely has to intersect in a meaningful way.

So infrastructure affects driver behavior, but driver behavior can overcome infrastructure occasionally. And so I think it is a Federal priority to ensure that we have the same level of safe design and safe implementation across the country.

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. Thanks.

Ms. Norman—sorry. I misplaced my glasses this morning.

Ms. Norman, I note that in your testimony you said you are a Muscogee Creek Nation citizen as well, and your testimony covers travel road safety. I have a district that includes eight federally recognized Tribes as well, as members in this committee as well have the honor and privilege to serve with Tribal citizens.

Can you talk a little bit more, based on your testimony, how important the Tribal Transportation Safety Program is just so they have it in the record?

Ms. NORMAN. Yes. Thank you so much for that. We are so thankful for the continued focus on Tribal road safety, and the increase

in both the Tribal Transportation Program and the safety set-aside of that program were great steps forward.

As a result, my company, as I mentioned in my statement, has worked on projects on Tribal lands to install pavement markings, guardrail, signage, and rumble strips in an effort to make those roads safer. I drive those roads myself every day with my kids, and those things are vitally important.

As mentioned earlier, a lot of those rural roads and Tribal roads can be more narrow and have other issues that we don't see in other places, and so I would ask that Congress continues to invest in safety on our Tribal roads and ensure that the safety funds can get directly into the hands of those communities that need them.

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. Yes, thanks. Thanks. Mr. Willox, I am very thankful—we put these panels together, the minority gets one witness, the majority gets the majority of the witnesses. And yet, we have a panel that largely agrees regardless of who asks them to be here, which is really great to hear. I think that has been a theme of the “America Builds” hearings that we have had as well: a broad consensus on both sides of the aisle to craft a bill in the future that we can all agree on.

Very pleased as well, as a former county elected official, to hear from you how important the counties think it is for the federal programs to provide money to counties directly and not necessarily States. It must be W States. In Washington State, we also have a very set way of the State legislature taking the Federal dollars and allocating to cities and counties as well. Not every State does that. Wyoming sounds like it does that as well. Perhaps West Virginia is in that boat, too.

But I just wanted to ask you to underscore the role the counties play again and how important it is for you to have that direct relationship with Federal funding sources.

Mr. WILLOX. Thank you, Representative. Yes, the path is it is a system. And as I said in my statement, the whole system has to work. So county roads are a vital part of that. You have both pass-through and grants. And I think the thing that we need to keep in mind is the passthrough at times for rural counties can be such a small amount of money they can't do some projects.

So we also need to have the grants available so that you can apply for the bigger projects. One hundred thousand dollars to a small county is one-fifth of a blade. Blades are half a million dollars now. Whereas they might have a million-dollar project they can apply through grants. So it is a balancing act that is tricky, but is also vital for small rural communities and that balance at the Federal level. Thank you.

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. I appreciate that. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Nehls.

Mr. NEHLS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Despite billions, billions in funding for roadway and safety programs, traffic fatalities remain above prepandemic levels. DOGE and the work Elon Musk and his team are doing to expose the waste, the fraud, and just Government fat of these agencies. Programs that merely exist because no one in Congress has objectively looked at them and asked: Is this worth Federal taxpayer moneys?

I think it is key to highlight Federal taxpayer moneys. A lot of programs that have good, good intentions. If people in their State or local municipalities want to invest in PR campaigns, I think that is great. Go for it. However, I question if it is the most effective use of taxpayer money.

Can we provide concrete evidence that NHTSA'S behavioral safety programs, like the high-visibility enforcement public awareness campaigns have directly reduced crashes and not just increased awareness? Increasing awareness is fine, but it should be temporary.

Are section 402 or 405 programs improving roadway safety, or are the relics of previous attempts to just do something? I mean, are we really reducing drunk driving with the Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over? Are we reducing it? I don't think so. NHTSA's website, look it up. I just looked it up—13,000 lives last year. Drunk driving deaths last December, the highest in 15 years.

Ms. Chase, you said it, you said a few minutes ago: Everything should be decided by statistics and facts. I believe some of NHTSA's safety programs do not improve safety, and the statistics and the facts support my conclusion.

We have a \$36 trillion debt. We need to start thinking about cutting these programs and the career bureaucrats who do this work. It needs to be either private money or at the State and local level. With that, I yield.

Mr. ROUZER. The gentleman yields. Mr. Johnson, you are recognized.

Mr. JOHNSON OF GEORGIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, for holding this hearing. It is a critical hearing when we are talking about lives lost on American highways. In fact, 400,000 lives lost on American roads in the past decade. That means 400,000 empty dinner table chairs, 400,000 missed birthdays, 400,000 futures that have been snuffed out. And these aren't just numbers, it is real lives torn apart by preventable tragedies. This is devastating. This is devastating.

And the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law recognized the need for safer roads and invested more than \$38 billion in safety projects. Thanks to these efforts, we have seen a decline in traffic fatalities. That progress is now being recklessly jeopardized. The U.S. Department of Transportation's recent memo, prioritizing funding for safety based on birth and marriage rates, represents a dangerous diversion of resources away from critical safety initiatives and proven technologies that save lives. If we lose sight of this, the tragedies of more lives lost will continue to devastate communities across the Nation.

Federal investments should never be tied to factors like birth rates and marital status. Our priority must be protecting lives, and that means investing in the safety of every person who uses our roads no matter where they come from or who they are.

Ms. Chase, you ended your testimony with a compelling message that everyone in the United States moves on our roadways, whether as a driver, passenger, pedestrian, cyclist, worker, and that everyone deserves a safe trip. Our goal in Congress should be to ensure that no one's safety is at risk simply because of where they live, how they travel, or their economic background.

However, in a recent Department of Transportation memo outlining policies with DOT grants, loans, contracts, and Federally supported or assisted State contracts, the Department stated it would, quote, “give preference to communities with marriage and birth rates higher than the national average.” End quote.

Ms. Chase, can Federal investment based on birth rates and marital status truly meet the safety needs of everyone? And how does Federal investment based on birth rates and marital status inherently prioritize some over others?

Ms. CHASE. Thank you for the question, Congressman Johnson. Safety has been and always will be a nonpartisan, nonpolitical issue. We have always strived to work on both sides of the aisle to advance safety improvements, starting with airbags and seatbelts, electronic stability control, and most recently, as was mentioned, automatic emergency braking. These systems protect all road users and should not be in a political tangle—

Mr. JOHNSON OF GEORGIA [interrupting]. I mean, so when we start creating prerequisites like birth rates and marriage rates and giving preference to communities with above average, higher birth and marriage rates, how does that disfavor other communities? And should that prerequisite trump health and safety for all?

Ms. CHASE. Advocates has always proceeded in a way that we base our recommendations on safety on facts and figures, as I stated. So that is irrelevant to—

Mr. JOHNSON OF GEORGIA. Are those birth?

Ms. CHASE. No.

Mr. JOHNSON OF GEORGIA. Those are not legitimate factors?

Ms. CHASE. Those are not what we have based our policies on.

Mr. JOHNSON OF GEORGIA. All right. Thank you. I particularly appreciated the conclusion of your testimony where you highlighted the importance of data-driven solutions for improving roadway safety through infrastructure improvements. This approach has proven effective in preventing fatalities and injuries while ensuring more efficient roads.

Is there any data or evidence that shows that prioritizing funding based on birth and marriage rates will actually reduce traffic fatalities and injuries?

Ms. CHASE. Not that I am aware of.

Mr. JOHNSON OF GEORGIA. So why would we apply such a prerequisite to a future funding? Is it just simply political?

Ms. CHASE. Sir, it is not a question that I can answer since I didn’t make the determination.

Mr. JOHNSON OF GEORGIA. Well, I think it is clear what the motivation would be. Now, we know that traffic fatalities disproportionately affect certain communities, and investing Federal dollars into infrastructure that protects vulnerable road users has clear benefits, especially for disadvantaged communities. These disparities are a matter of life and death.

How can a funding model that fails to prioritize safety outcomes exacerbate the risks faced by already vulnerable communities potentially leading to a rise in traffic-related fatalities and injuries?

Ms. CHASE. Is that addressed to me again, sir?

Mr. JOHNSON OF GEORGIA. Yes.

Ms. CHASE. Okay. Well, we should always base our determinations on how to improve safety based on what is happening on the roadways. So if there are communities that are suffering disproportionately, then solutions, effective solutions with transparency and accountability, should be employed.

Mr. JOHNSON OF GEORGIA. All right. Thank you. My time has expired. I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Massie.

Mr. MASSIE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Hanson, I once had a mentor who told me that hope is not a business plan. I would also say it is not a good technology development plan.

In your testimony, you noted that the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act requires NHTSA to complete rulemaking for advanced impaired driving technology, a.k.a., automotive kill switch, by November of last year, a deadline that the agency has not met.

I made a prediction in front of this committee, and I am going to make it again today, that this won't be ready by 2026. Congress has asked the impossible. It is a wish, it is not a plan.

Are you aware that Ann Carlson, the former Acting Administrator of NHTSA, sat in front of this subcommittee and said: "I think it is safe to say that we do not think they are available yet in a way that actually will achieve the goals both of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Vehicle Safety Act." Did you hear her make that comment?

Mr. HANSON. Mr. Chair and Members, I don't remember that specific comment, sir.

Mr. MASSIE. So, are you aware that the technology that you are advocating for in your testimony does not exist?

Mr. HANSON. NHTSA released their early rulemaking process in March of 2024. There was a deadline in late 2024 for them to have a proposal ready to go, and that has gone by or expired. NHTSA has also been working with the DADSS program since about 2008, which was the early precursor for the HALT Act, or that the technology in car that would prevent an impaired driver from operating that vehicle.

My understanding is that that DADSS project is now ready to go and could be implemented in 2025. And the OEMs have been involved in the development of that.

Mr. MASSIE. Well, before airbags were mandated and before seatbelts were mandated, they both existed in commercial vehicles for over a decade.

Does this technology exist in any commercial vehicle presently?

Mr. HANSON. I am not aware of it being—Mr. Chair and Members, I am not aware of it being available or mandated in any vehicle type now. But I would compare it to ignition interlock. That type of technology is there in one shape, form, or another.

Mr. MASSIE. Well, the difference between the ignition interlock and this technology you are advocating for, is the one you are advocating for is science fiction presently. It doesn't exist in any vehicle, it has never been implemented, and there is a mandate by the Government to have it in every new vehicle within 2 years. It is just not practical.

And what's more is if you did try to implement it, there would be false positives. So what we are talking about here is a kill

switch in an automobile that would monitor the driving of a vehicle and then stop the vehicle from operating if the car itself decides that the operator is not driving safely.

Let's say a mother is driving a vehicle, taking her kids to work. How does she appeal her conviction of a disabled minivan from the side of a road? How would you reenable a car that has been disabled with this technology you are advocating for?

Mr. HANSON. It is a good question, sir, Mr. Chair and Members, a good question. And I am not quite sure that I am qualified to provide the tactical answer that you are looking for there. I do understand that the technology is very near to being developed that would allow for a passive type of system that would detect when a driver has an alcohol concentration above a predetermined level, and that would not allow the vehicle to be operated.

Mr. MASSIE. Well, the problem with the technology is it is not looking for alcohol levels. You can monitor blood alcohol levels, at least if somebody is breathing into something. That is not what this technology promises to do. In fact, it says it is going to passively monitor driver performance. What does that mean?

Mr. HANSON. Mr. Chair and Members, my understanding is that it doesn't require any active participation by the driver, like an ignition interlock system would. It simply is a system that exists within the vehicle platform that would detect when a driver has a predetermined alcohol concentration, or is above that predetermined alcohol concentration. So this is primarily focusing on preventing an impaired driving incident from happening before it does.

Mr. MASSIE. The specification hopes to do that, but the technology does not exist. It simply doesn't exist. And what's more, is if it did exist, there is some cost associated with developing it.

Maybe an autonomous vehicle could perform this. But what does an autonomous vehicle cost? And whenever we are looking at safety, you know as an engineer, what you need to look at is where is your bang for the buck? If this system—assuming it could exist—cost \$5,000, you can't simply mandate it and say you are going to improve safety. Because the price of the vehicle can't go up \$5,000, you are going to compromise somewhere else. Maybe less metal in the frame or something.

So I think it foolhardy for you to sit here and testify that we need to have this technology available on this timeline because it simply does not exist. We don't know the cost. We don't know how it works. And there would be false positives that could put the public at danger. And with that, I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. García.

Mr. GARCÍA OF ILLINOIS. Thank you, Chairman, Ranking Member, and to all of our panelists this morning.

Commissioner Willox, in a region as large and complex as Chicago, addressing transportation safety can't be done one town at a time. It takes a coordinated regional strategy. That is why the Safe Travel for All Roadmap prepared by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning is so important. This regionwide initiative is bringing together six counties to identify high-risk roads, upgrade infrastructure, and make streets safer for everyone. By creating safety action plans in each county, our region is laying the ground-

work for critical investments that will make our roads safer for all users.

My question to you, sir, is as we work on the next reauthorization, how should Congress help regional governments more directly access safety funding so that they can implement these plans and move projects forward more quickly?

Mr. WILLOX. Thank you, Representative. I think the key is not to make the box too small. What works in Chicago does not work the same in a regional authority in Wyoming. So make sure there is flexibility built in so that what works in that local area can be best implemented and provide those opportunities—some of the regional transportation in our part of the world, it is a little larger area. I mentioned my county's larger than Rhode Island. So there are some geographic challenges that happen there as well. But when you create that—continue to work with that, make sure that the restrictions aren't so tight that what works for Chicago doesn't necessarily work in a rural area.

Mr. GARCÍA OF ILLINOIS. Thank you, Mr. Willox.

Switching gears a little bit, it is clear to me that grants play an important role in making communities safer. Programs like Safe Streets and Roads for All help implement projects to prevent deaths and serious injuries on our roadways.

In Chicago, we know the corridors with the highest incidents of crashes thanks to the State's Vulnerable Road User Safety Assessment. Many of these corridors are, of course, in my district.

Ms. Chase, I am going to ask you to comment and to answer a question. We know that Indigenous, Black, and Hispanic populations all experience pedestrian and bicycle fatalities at higher rates, up to three times more frequently than the general population. We cannot effectively address the issue of traffic safety without accounting for these inequities. That is another reason why the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law programs, like Safe Streets for All and Transportation Alternatives, are so important. The benefits of investing Federal dollars into infrastructure that protects vulnerable road users are reaped, especially by disadvantaged communities.

As this committee considers new investments in traffic safety, how can we ensure that those dollars reach communities most impacted by this crisis? And that is a question for Ms. Chase.

Ms. CHASE. Thank you for the question. I think it is essential that when we are looking at the next reauthorization bill, that we take a good look at what is happening on our roadways and make determinations to address the problems. We know that some of the leading crash contributors are drunk driving, speeding, not wearing your seatbelt, and distracted driving.

And yet, we have proven solutions to address all of those that aren't being used effectively. And that is what needs to happen. And I am looking forward to working with the members of this committee as we did at the last reauthorization to try to advance these safety improvements.

Mr. GARCÍA OF ILLINOIS. And will you be advancing proposals to the committee for our consideration as we look at reauthorization?

Ms. CHASE. Absolutely, sir.

Mr. GARCÍA OF ILLINOIS. Great. Looking forward to it. Thank you, and I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Wied.

Mr. WIED. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As always, I would like to extend my thanks to our witnesses for appearing before us today to discuss the safety on our Nation's roadways. Whether it is motorists, pedestrians, or cyclists, the safety of everyone who uses our roads must be a top priority.

Every person deserves to travel safely, whether they are driving to work, walking to school, or biking through their neighborhood, and I look forward to working with my colleagues to make this a reality.

In my home State, teens are required—and it is free for them—to complete a 30-minute work zone safety instruction as a requirement to obtain their license. After completing the course, they will know what causes most work zone crashes and the basic driving safety habits that can prevent injuries and fatalities.

The course also introduces teens to powerful real-life stories of the faces behind the flags, cones, and flashing lights which are too often overlooked by many drivers.

Ms. Norman, I would like to direct my first question to you. What can this committee do to support State efforts like this on work zone safety?

Ms. NORMAN. Thank you so much for that great question. It is a wonderful program that is happening in several States. And this committee can continue to invest in the roads, in safety. At ATSSA, we are very confident that there is a lot that can be done as far as behavior goes, but that we also need to remain focused on what happens when we can't control behavior. And so I am thankful for that program.

And I think that one thing that can be done federally is awareness and communication between States on best practices. I believe that we will see that that type of program is effective and should be shared across States. So thank you for mentioning that.

Mr. WIED. So that program is currently only offered. And, again, it is free. It is privately funded in Oklahoma and Wisconsin. Do we know—I mean, are there stats that show that it is effective?

Ms. NORMAN. I do not have that information at this time. And I do know that it is a newer program, so it may take some time for that to come out. But we would be glad to follow up on that afterwards.

Mr. WIED. Okay. Great. Obviously, having programs like that that are privately funded are definitely things that we need to look into and, of course, raise that awareness, like you said, to other States and perhaps—I mean, you can't—I can't imagine it is not effective.

Ms. NORMAN. Yes, sir, absolutely. In Oklahoma, we have seen a lot of our contractors and our road builders come together and be the ones that support that. And it is very important. We want to keep our workers safe.

Mr. WIED. It is great to see private industry getting involved. And, certainly, that is very important for our safety and for our children and for the workers.

So, Mr. Willox, you mentioned that Converse County is a commodity-based economy that is reliant on oil and gas, and making heavy trucks, I am sure, a common sight on your roads.

What investment is needed, in your opinion, for rural roadways to ensure trucks hauling essential goods can continue to operate safely in rural environments? And I say this because we are a very large logging forestry district in northeast Wisconsin, the Green Bay area, and, of course, agriculture, but would really like your input on that.

Mr. WILLOX. Well, thank you, Representative. Oil and gas is a big part of our county. And those heavy trucks, what I want to—it is legal, heavy trucks. They are hard on our roads. I talked a little bit about dust suppression, and they kick up a lot of dust. So one of the things I am advocating for is allowing dust suppression to actually be a safety control. Right now, it is an environmental control. But if you have a big truck that goes past and creates dust, that is a challenge. They are harder on our roads, so we have to do maintenance. They are providing revenue, so it is a tradeoff.

But you want to make sure that the education—many times when you have that industry, particularly, they are nonresidents of our State and our county, so they are learning the roads as they drive. So education and signage is a big thing. So we are using signage and temporary speed limit trailers, if you will. Safe Street for All, that was mentioned. Because we are actually going to use some of those portable signs that slow the trucks down.

So we have a maintenance issue, and then we don't want them to get heavier than legal limits because then that is a real challenge for our bridges and regular maintenance.

Mr. WIED. All right. Thank you, again, witnesses. I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. Mrs. Sykes.

Mrs. SYKES. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and Ranking Member, for holding this hearing today. This is a great conversation and certainly very timely. As you know, we will working on the surface transportation authorization and safety is always—it is always a good day to talk about safety.

Thanks to the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in 2021, communities from coast to coast will continue to see over \$1.2 trillion in local investments to improve the reliability, resilience, and efficiency of America's infrastructure over next 10 years.

Americans are already seeing tangible differences, including improved roads, bridges, transit systems, airports, waterways, and environmental infrastructure.

One of the programs that many Midwestern States and localities have taken advantage of is the Railroad Crossing Elimination Program, which provides funds to improve the mobility and safety of highway-rail and pathway-rail grade crossings.

Anyone who has lived near a rail crossing, as I do, understands the inconvenience and dangers that railroad crossings pose to local drivers, bikers, and pedestrians, as well as for the rail workers and those who staff trains.

But these crossings don't just pose threats to people passing through, they are also cumbersome for the communities around them, as they are very costly to improve or remove. This means that the Federal dollars coming in to address these issues with rail

crossings are a valuable resource for communities like mine in Akron and throughout the district.

Since last month, the Federal Railroad Administration has invested \$48 billion of funding for more than 445 rail projects creating safer communities for the millions of Americans living around them.

In Ohio, these funds are desperately needed. While the number of train-vehicle crashes at public highway-rail grade crossings isn't as high as it was in 2001 when there were 123 crashes, the recent jump from 62 to 77 is certainly a cause for concern. And I know we are not talking about rail, but I cannot help but talk about rail. There was a train derailment today in Ohio. So it is always timely.

But I am going to turn our attention to Ohio's 13th District. I was thrilled to see that the Ohio Rail Development Commission awarded \$13 million Railroad Crossing Elimination Program funding, from Federal Government with passthrough funds to remove existing rail crossings and build a grade separation in the city of Hudson, which has consistently had issues.

And while this project will likely bring more orange barrels to the streets of Hudson, it is certainly important to remember that these orange barrels mean jobs and opportunities for folks in Ohio.

Mr. Chase, I want to ask you a question, we know that safety alone is a reason enough—Ms. Chase, excuse me—to invest in our communities. But could you also speak to the economic benefits of safe roadways?

Ms. CHASE. The economic investment of safe roadways, you said?

Mrs. SYKES. Yes, ma'am, thank you.

Ms. CHASE. I am sorry. I am having a hard time hearing today. My apologies.

Yes, we know that crashes cost our economy \$340 billion every year. And any investment in both the roadways and vehicles and in safe road users will pay off.

As was stated in my written testimony, this amounts to a crash tax, if you will, of about \$1,000 on each American. So clearly, with that combination and the mounting death and injury toll, we can and must do better to make our roadways safer for all road users.

And as I mentioned earlier, we have proven solutions. So it's not like we are curing cancer. We know how to make our roadways safer. We need our leaders and our safety stakeholders to implement proven answers.

Mrs. SYKES. Thank you so much for your response there. In December of last year, the Akron Metropolitan Area Transportation Study, also known as AMATS, released its latest analysis identifying the region's most dangerous intersections for both pedestrians and motorists: 222 bicycle-related crashes occurred in 2021 and 2022 and 2023, 204 of them resulted in injury, and 2 of them in a fatality. There are 428 pedestrian-related crashes in the same time period with 89 percent of them resulting in injury and 31 of them in a fatality.

Cars are heavier and larger, and much of the infrastructure does not consider pedestrians or people walking or biking. And to address this issue, I worked with Congressman Carey to introduce Save Our Pedestrians Act, which requires States to set aside Fed-

eral funds to make our roads safer for everyone, from pedestrians to motorists.

Unfortunately, we continue to see a freeze to Federal funds particularly for transportation projects that are particularly important. And I see I am running out of time, and I am not going to get to my next question.

But, Mr. Chair, and to the members of the committee, thank you so much for your consistent approach to safety and the work that you do. We look forward to working with you in this Congress.

Mr. ROUZER. I thank the gentlelady. Mr. Bresnahan.

Mr. BRESNAHAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate this conversation because before I became a Member of Congress last month, I was a heavy highway electrical contractor and was a certified PennDOT flagger. So I have seen the risk, inherent dangers of being a contractor. I have been on the road with our crews. We specifically focused on traffic signals and smart electrical infrastructure, CCTV, cashless tolling systems.

And every single day that we would do job safety analysis, the first thing every day would be the uncontrollability of traffic on a roadway. And my first question would be for Ms. Norman. This is what you do through crash trucks, attenuator trucks.

How have you seen the technology of the attenuator truck? And have you seen or have had any firsthand experience where an attenuator truck did exactly what it was supposed to do?

Ms. NORMAN. Yes, thank you for that question. I have multiple stories. I would not be able to count the number exactly where every single time the attenuator truck has done what it was supposed to do. Both the driver that impacted the vehicle and our driver who was driving that impact attenuator walked away from accidents with no injuries.

Mr. BRESNAHAN. Well, I think it is very interesting is an attenuator truck in the slang term is a crash truck. And something that PennDOT requires is somebody to occupy the actual crash truck. We were part of the autonomous vehicle coalition many moons ago. And actually our company installed the first connected autonomous vehicle system in the city of Harrisburg.

Something that we were working on with the committee was utilizing autonomous vehicles relevant to the attenuator truck, where there would be a chase car and the truck would move through the work zone. So you do not have literally a sitting duck inside of one of these attenuator trucks.

Is there anything that we can do in Congress to cauterize or solidify interpretations relating to autonomous vehicles specifically inside of work zones?

Ms. NORMAN. Thank you for that great question as well. I don't have the technical experience, I believe, to answer that question. But I do know that ATSSA is very actively engaged with that AV conversation, and we would be glad to connect on that as we have been working on the autonomous vehicles, specifically, with the crash attenuators.

Mr. BRESNAHAN. I think we are going to be moving in a world where there is going to be more and more autonomous vehicles, connected vehicles, and specifically inside of work zones. I mean, whether it is a GM technology or a Tesla technology, we have to

remember that they're still computers, and they still take away the fact of the human decision situational awareness.

Ms. Chase, you had testified earlier relevant to the autonomous vehicles and where the industry is heading. Is there any potential downside of having more autonomous vehicles on the road that you see?

Ms. CHASE. Well, I think the potential downside—and, again, I just want to reiterate that Advocates is not pro or against autonomous vehicles. We just want to see that it is done safely. And we believe that the downsides are that if they are put on the roads before there are proper safeguards, that it could endanger the unknowing public.

People don't necessarily know if they are next to an autonomous car if it is not obvious from the outside. And I think that as technology progresses, that will probably be even more likely.

So I think now is the perfect time for our Nation to consider what our policy should be so that it is deliberate and safe.

Mr. BRESNAHAN. I appreciate it. My last question is for Mr. Hanson and Ms. Chase relevant to safety-sensitive positions and marijuana specifically relating to these. I think at a prior hearing we talked about the fact that alcohol has the ability to detect instantaneous impairment, obviously, when you are driving an 80,000-pound vehicle over the road.

Do you have any recommendations for Congress and also with States getting out in front of Federal legislation relating to marijuana specifically? Do you have any recommendations or ideas or technologies that we can start to implement that would detect a more instantaneous level of impairment?

Mr. HANSON. Thank you, sir. Mr. Chair and Members, I think the first and foremost thing that is going to assist us in preventing those tragedies from taking place is oral fluid roadside testing. We can deploy instruments and technology in the field that allows a law enforcement officer to detect recent use of a cannabis product that is a strong indicator that that person may be impaired.

So putting those tools in the hands of law enforcement to prevent that from happening or allow them to process somebody who may be impaired is going to be important.

Mr. BRESNAHAN. Thank you. I think we are out of time. I yield back, and happy belated birthday.

Ms. CHASE. I look forward to working with you on the issues, sir.

Mr. ROUZER. All you have to do is sit on the 14th Street Bridge and you can smell all of that.

Mr. Nadler.

Mr. NADLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Willox, the condition of our roads and bridges is a critical component of roadway safety. However, according to the Federal Highway Administration, over 42,000 bridges are rated as poor, including over 1,600 in my home State of New York.

Furthermore, the 2016 U.S. DOT truck size and weight study found that thousands of interstate bridges are unable to accommodate 91,000-pound trucks, which is 11,000 pounds above the current gross vehicle weight limit. Even more troubling is the damage these heavier trucks cause to our local bridges.

No truck loads and unloads on an interstate. They all eventually rely on local infrastructure.

A recent study by the Coalition Against Bigger Trucks showed over 70,000 local bridges would be put at risk by 91,000-pound trucks, and the cost to replace and repair these bridges would be over \$60 billion.

In New York, there are 945 bridges put at risk by 91,000-pound trucks with an estimated cost of more than \$1.3 billion to bolster them for heavier truck configurations. This cost burden is an unfunded Federal mandate that in the end, local taxpayers will have to foot the bill for.

Commissioner Willox, does the National Association of Counties have a position on the current debate on heavier and longer trucks? And would these bigger trucks cause more damage to our Nation's bridges, creating an unfunded mandate on counties and ultimately on taxpayers?

Mr. WILLOX. Thank you, Representative. Yes, sir, the National Association of Counties is very consistently against the heavier trucks for exactly the points you have made. Bridges and roads are not set up for that weight currently. Without a corresponding allocation of those billions of dollars from the Federal Government, we would not support raising limits for those very reasons.

As you say, nothing gets from point A to point B without leaving the Federal system and crossing a county or city street and bridge. And bridges are a big issue as you pointed out and continue to be, both for heavier trucks or for regular traffic.

Mr. NADLER. Thank you. Mr. Hanson, in your testimony, you expressed support for the HALT Act and requires all new motor vehicles to be equipped with advanced drunk driving detection technology.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety estimates that when fully implemented, this law will save over 10,000 lives a year. Clearly, this is a game-changer for public safety.

NHTSA has already missed the statutory deadline in promulgating a final rule implementing the HALT Act. Per the law, the agency now has a maximum of 3 additional years to finalize the regulation.

Can you elaborate on GHSA's support for the HALT Act and why it is important for NHTSA to fulfill its statutory mandate? And what can Congress and stakeholders do to hold NHTSA accountable to complete its rulemaking?

Mr. HANSON. Mr. Chair and Members, thank you for that question. Anything that we can deploy to prevent an impaired driving incident from happening is something that is worth looking at.

As you correctly mentioned, over 10,000 people a year lose their lives in completely preventable and predictable events when an impaired driving crash occurs.

And so the technology, as I testified several minutes ago, in the DADSS program is mature. And we are hearing from manufacturers that they could have this ready to go by the end of 2025.

And so it is something that needs to be looked at from a safety perspective. I think you correctly characterized this as a game-changer. Anything that we can do to keep an impaired driver off the road is going to be something that is important.

I think as far as our ask from Congress is, it's quite simple. NHTSA has existed for about 8 years without a senatorial-confirmed Administrator. And without an Administrator, there is a lack of leadership. And I think by getting a confirmed Administrator in there who is safety-driven and who is willing to push these initiatives forward and embrace these new technologies and the innovation that goes with them, that we can get these things over the finish line. And this is just one example of the technology that can exist out there that will make a significant difference on our roads, sir.

Mr. NADLER. Have you spoken to the Senators as to why they haven't?

Mr. HANSON. I don't have a good answer for you there, sir.

Mr. NADLER. Okay. Thank you very much. I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Taylor.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you, Chairman, Ranking Member, for holding this hearing today, and thank you to our witnesses for their testimony and insight.

Mr. ROUZER. Bring that microphone a little closer to you.

Mr. TAYLOR. Any better?

Mr. ROUZER. Yes.

Mr. TAYLOR. Okay. Sorry about that. As a third-generation business owner in the concrete industry, I know firsthand how important it is that our highways, roads, and bridges across the United States are safe for commuters, citizens, and businesses.

Drivers and workers on our Nation's roads deserve to be safe, and I look forward to working with members of this committee to implement meaningful legislation and policies that make our roads safer for all.

As Chairman Rouzer mentioned, according to NHTSA, a disproportionate amount of traffic fatalities occur in rural areas when compared to the percentage of the populations who live there.

I appreciate your dedication to the challenges that rural communities face.

Mr. Willox, do you believe that the current Federal safety programs adequately address rural safety needs, or do they tend to favor priorities more aligned with urban challenges?

Mr. WILLOX. Thank you, Representative. We are making progress, sir. But again, it is what works in Wyoming doesn't work in Texas doesn't work in Florida. So more flexibility in those dollars so that we can be more creative at the local level and accountable—and I think accountability is important. So strides have been made, but again, I think the more flexibility that we have at the local level. I mentioned dust control. It's uneligible right now. There are other things. We don't have a ton of pedestrian interactions in a rural State. But it was mentioned in the inner city, that is a bigger deal. So more flexibility in the reauthorization would be beneficial.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you. You talked a little bit about streamlining the permitting issues. And we talked a little bit about maybe getting better funding for rural projects. But are there other specific steps that we can take in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization that would help rural communities?

Mr. WILLOX. I am a broken record a little bit in the flexibility, but Mr. Hanson even mentioned that the reporting requirements—they are doing the reporting requirements on grants. If you are going to have a grant system, which I think is incredibly valuable in these programs—sometimes in a rural community, the commissioner is the person writing the grant and trying to implement the grant. And I have been told it is just a checklist. Well, the checklist was 15 pages long.

If we can simplify and still have that accountability so that more rural communities and, quite frankly, any county can apply without having to staff up, that would be beneficial. You talked about hundreds of pages of reporting for some of the safety. Anything we can do to reduce those while providing accountability would be valuable.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you. Both sides of the aisle can agree that the United States is facing an infrastructure challenge. Across the United States, citizens drive on unsafe roads and bridges that are awaiting Federal dollars to repair.

While Congress can fund infrastructure projects for decades, problems in our supply chain will cause delays in addressing safety concerns.

Ms. Norman, in your testimony, you raised concerns with a rule issued in the final days of the Biden administration to rescind the Federal Highway Administration's longstanding general waiver of Buy America. While we all support the need for domestic manufacturing, can you expand on what rescinding this waiver means for safety projects specifically?

Ms. NORMAN. Yes. Thank you. Can you repeat the last part of your question? I missed it with the door closing.

Mr. TAYLOR. I am sorry. While we all support the need for domestic manufacturing, can you expand on what rescinding this waiver means for safety projects, specifically, the Buy America?

Ms. NORMAN. Yes, absolutely. And we also desire to have as much manufacturing and production here in America as well. But for me and my small business, the implementation of that, if it is not done very thoughtfully, we do not have the capacity or the manufacturing abilities in America to meet the needs of the projects that we have on the ground right now. And so it would halt projects.

We would not be able to provide the materials needed in order to provide the projects that each step funds.

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you, ma'am. And thank you all for being here today very much. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. Ms. Friedman.

Ms. FRIEDMAN. Thank you, Chair Rouzer and Ranking Member Norton, and I want to thank the witnesses for being here today. We have all heard the terrible statistics of almost 41,000 people killed on our roads every year, 4,000 of those being in California. And just early this morning, we had a terrible fatal crash in Los Angeles on the streets. This is a public health crisis.

And while many of those deaths are to people in the vehicle, unfortunately, about 18 percent of all traffic deaths are pedestrians, and almost 3 percent are cyclists, other users of the road.

I have worked for years on traffic safety issues in California, passing bills around things like automated speed enforcement, on a task force for zero fatalities, and on better laws for cyclists.

And while there are certainly conditions that lead to accidents like drivers misbehaving, like bad road conditions, we also know that for—the majority of our roads were designed to move cars efficiently and quickly and not designed with safety in mind for drivers or for pedestrians and cyclists. So many times when drivers speed, it is because the road invites them to speed.

And I am also very concerned that the way that we design vehicles has been focused on making the inside of the vehicle safer for those occupants, which is, of course, important. When I was a kid, people didn't always have seatbelts in the back of old cars, right? I mean, y'all are nodding. But we have put a lot less focus on the safety of people outside the vehicles.

In fact, we see some of our trucks right now being so elevated that you can't even see a vehicle in front of them much less a pedestrian or a child. And we certainly have the technology with AI, and we understand enough about engineering to know when the front of a car is conducive on a low-level strike to saving that pedestrian's life, or created with complete disregard to that.

So, Mr. Chase, I want to thank you for being here today. And I wanted to know if you could talk about NHTSA and their role in encouraging or mandating vehicle designs that are as safe as they can possibly be to pedestrians and to cyclists. And I am sorry, that is that Ms. Chase.

Ms. CHASE. That is okay. Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety has been working for years to improve roadway safety for all road users. In fact, one of our top priorities was automatic emergency braking with pedestrian and cyclist detection. NHTSA issued a final rule on this last year which we supported. We wanted to see it implemented more quickly than it was. New cars are required to have AEB with pedestrian detection in 2029, which will be a tremendous step forward for safety.

We have also been working to improve hood and bumper design to be more forgiving if there is a collision with a vehicle and a pedestrian or a bicyclist. So as you mentioned, there are proven solutions known. We need to get them into cars instead of a focus, as you mentioned, on bigger, heavier cars.

Ms. FRIEDMAN. I hope that is something that moves quickly because we certainly have the technology, we know what to do. And I understand that this is a climate of sort of deregulation, but I think that every pedestrian, every child has the right to walk to school knowing that the vehicles that are passing them are designed with their safety and their lives in mind.

And we also know that just because a driver wants a certain type of vehicle, that doesn't mean that it is safe to kind of be out in the world.

I am also wondering how DOT can work to protect pedestrians and cyclists?

Ms. CHASE. How DOT is working?

Ms. FRIEDMAN. Yes.

Ms. CHASE. Well, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, there were certain directives to have NHTSA issue rules on, in ad-

dition to automatic emergency braking, lane departure warnings, and other technologies that are part of the advanced driver assistance systems. So NHTSA is tasked via this congressional directive to move forward to require these with safety standards and new vehicles.

Ms. FRIEDMAN. Thank you very much. And that act is certainly important. The funding that is in that act is something that I believe will save lives as it starts to be implemented.

Mr. Hanson, thank you so much for being here today. And I am wondering if you can talk about what the Minnesota Department of Public Safety has been doing to reduce speeding and change driver behavior.

Mr. HANSON. Thank you, Mr. Chair and Members, it is really a holistic approach. We worked very closely with our Department of Transportation on the infrastructure issues. Obviously, our office works on the behavioral issues. We work with our Department of Health on the injury issues that occur when these crashes occur. The better care that the patients get, the better the outcome is going to be.

So it is really kind of taking an all-hands-on-deck approach. Speeding continues to be our number one challenge, though.

Ms. FRIEDMAN. Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Shreve.

Mr. SHREVE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Folks, I am Jefferson Shreve. I represent the Sixth District of Indiana. We describe it as the crossroads of America. The district includes the I-465 ring road around Indianapolis. Four U.S. interstates crisscross the district. As with so many of my colleagues here, road fatalities are disproportionately higher on our rural roads.

And as with my freshman colleagues, I am new at this, and as we jump in and out of these hearings, it is an extraordinary kind of adjustment to figure out who has asked what as you come back in from another meeting.

But I was here at the start, and there were a couple of things that piqued my interest, and so if they are not redundant, I wanted to hop around a little bit.

Mr. Willox, Wyoming, I spent a little time there at the University of Wyoming doing a range management program. I was, as Mr. Hanson said, one of those young males who were prone to going fast. And I loved that at the time in Wyoming on some rural roads, I don't think there were posted speed limits. Certainly, that would play into issues of highway fatalities.

Is that the case still today? Are there any States in our union where in certain rural areas you can go about as fast as you want?

Mr. WILLOX. Thank you, and Go Pokes. So Representative, in Wyoming, the statute is if it is an unposted road, there is a speed limit that applies. So it is 55 or 45. So there is a statutory limit. But a lot of roads are unposted partly because of the daily traffic. We haven't posted them because [inaudible]. But you bring up a point that the reflectivity standards of signs went up about 12 years ago. That increased the cost of signs 20 percent. So now with the same budget, we can put up less signs, and everything has got more expansive over time. So signage is valuable, but sometimes

the standards that are implemented mean we buy less signs for the same dollars.

And so, yes, there are still unposted roads, most of the time they are low volume, but that doesn't mean that there isn't traffic that can be unsafe on it.

Mr. SHREVE. On the subject of the design of our rural roads, just north of my district, Hamilton County, Indiana, Carmel, places like that, we have more roundabouts per capita than any other part of the country. The incidence of serious injury accidents, let alone fatalities, are way down with those roundabouts, but they are so darn expensive. They are extraordinarily expensive.

Are we making any headway toward the design, the lower cost design of roundabout intersections, right-sized—if that is fair to characterize it as such—for rural county intersections? Can we bring those in from a design standpoint at a level that might make it possible to bring those enhancements to secondary tertiary stretches of roadway?

Mr. WILLOX. Thank you for that. I believe those are eligible now. It is really they cost more to do the roundabouts in a traditional intersection. We heard some testimony earlier that they can be safer when used right. So I think that is okay to do. Most of our rural roads are so low volume that that is not necessarily the best. In some counties, they have high-volume roads, it just depends on the State. So that is an option that definitely could be available.

I honestly don't know if they qualify as a safety enhancement. And so that would be something we would have to follow up. If you want to implement the safety enhancement, that would have to be a change to the bill, I believe, and we will follow up with that to confirm. Because I am not sure it is eligible other than as normal construction that the current way the law is written.

Mr. SHREVE. I appreciate that.

Mr. Hanson, thanks again for celebrating your birthday with us this morning. Young males in pickup trucks. It's not the case that pickup trucks—a late model pickup truck isn't inherently less safe than a late model passenger vehicle, is it?

Mr. HANSON. Mr. Chair and Members, no, I don't believe so. It is just some of the behaviors that go with those young males in the pickup trucks.

Mr. SHREVE. I once resembled that. Incidents of road fatalities on motorcycles. We have seen terrific improvements in the safety of vehicles. As Chairman Rouzer noted, those fatalities for passengers in vehicles are down dramatically. Are we seeing similar improvements on motorcycles, lane departure, emergency braking? Has the industry been able to incorporate some of that technology into motorcycles that have made such a terrific difference in passenger vehicles like trucks?

Mr. HANSON. Mr. Chair and Members, I am aware that some of the manufacturers are adopting that. I am not a rider myself, so I don't have a lot of firsthand knowledge there. But I do know that some of the manufacturers are looking at bringing some of those same features to the motorcycle riders, like the anti-lock braking, the automatic emergency braking, and things like that. So I think that the technology is ripening.

Mr. SHREVE. And the last statement is simply more of a statement. In my district, driver's ed isn't offered in the schools. It is just kind of part of turning 16. And I think that investment in that mainstreaming of driver education or the absence of it has been a loss that—

Mr. ROUZER [interrupting]. I am going to have to cut you off there. Sorry about that. But we can answer that question as we move forward.

Mr. SHREVE. Thank you. I yield back then.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Figures.

Mr. FIGURES. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you guys for holding this hearing. And thank you all for bearing with us here. I know it is tough to grind it out with us more junior members on the committee sitting here. So thank you, guys. And happy birthday to you, Mr. Hanson.

And before I go any further, Ms. Chase, my T&I staffer is a proud, proud graduate of Rutgers. So shout out to you and Iyanla—here she is. What I see as some of the more avoidable safety issues on our highways have to do with construction zone crashes and crashes involving semi-trailers.

So can we just kind of go down the line and you let me know in roughly, I guess, 30, 45 seconds each what you guys are seeing in terms of trends with fatalities in construction zones in your respective areas.

Starting with you, Mr. Willox.

Mr. WILLOX. Thank you, Representative. So in our county road environment, a lot of times we are dealing with the gravel roads and blades, so we have increased our pilot cars and our flagging because of the volume of traffic that we have there. Sorry, I am getting feedback.

So we have—earlier I mentioned in our area we have a lot of drivers that are not native to our area. They have come from out of State, some from out of country. So we really had to increase our awareness on the roads to reduce that. On our gravel road, you are dealing with a blade that is taking up most of the road. So we are stopping traffic, trying to be aware of that. We have more incidents, not in work zones, to be honest, because we have tried to do a good job of labeling those, but they are definitely an issue around the county and more expertise down the line.

Mr. HANSON. Mr. Chair and Members, if we look at the national stats, work zone crashes are trending down slightly. However, what I can tell you on my personal experience is when they do happen, they are horrific. Because there are a lot of things, especially when they involve a commercial vehicle. And we have had some challenges with that.

I think one of the biggest things that we can look at to continue to improve that is some of the in-vehicle technology we have talked about. That automatic emergency braking. Things like that. But I think we can also look at better ways to inform drivers about what they are about to encounter, using digital alerting systems, and different avenues like that to actually get that warning into the cab and not just make that a stationary sign on the side of the road. So I think there are ways we can continue to improve those.

Ms. NORMAN. Thank you so much for that question. Very personal to me with 127 team members across Oklahoma that work in those work zones every day. I would say that what we see personally is an increase in distracted driving and the lack of awareness of slower work zone speed limits. We have had recent incidents where despite the number of devices that are placed to the Federal and State standards, drivers are still for whatever reason distracted or otherwise coming into and intruding into our work zone where our workers are standing and working and performing their job every day.

And so a continued investment into HSIP is so vitally important because we need to continue to lean into the new technologies that are there in cab, as had been mentioned, alerting drivers that there are workers on the roadway as well as new technologies roadside that we can use to protect our workers in forms of barriers and items such as that.

Mr. FIGURES. Ms. Chase, you can just take the balance of the time.

Ms. CHASE. Thank you. I think that, in addition to what was said by everyone else—which I agree with because a construction zone basically is a person's workplace in the road, and they are exposed, and they need to be protected.

So, as I mentioned earlier, automatic emergency braking with pedestrian detection will help that. If a car is careening toward a construction zone, as has happened, the car will stop itself if the driver doesn't do that. So we need to be improving AEB to address different types of scenarios like that. So we need to improve construction zone safety as well as vehicle safety in order to make those areas safer for the workers.

Mr. FIGURES. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Collins.

Mr. COLLINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Norman, I want to give you a little bit of who I am first. I am in the trucking business, and I like to tell people that especially when we are having meetings like this, because my office and my employees' office is not inside a building. We make our living out there on the highway and on the interstates. And I can assure you that 99.99 percent of the trucking companies out there want to be the safest and be the best on the road. We want to get home to our families as well as everybody else.

And, last summer, I had the opportunity to tour Sunbelt's asphalt plant in my district, and then we went out to a work zone. And I actually did a safety video that we released out there to help people understand how important it is, because we want those people to get home safely, too. And if you just take a look at, say, 2023, there were over 42,000 workplace accidents that happened in work zones. There were over 1,000 people that were out there trying to improve our roads and build them that died in 2023. So we need to take a hard look at what we can do.

And I guess my question is, what can we do as a committee with the next highway reauthorization bill to support State efforts on work zone safety? I mean, are there certain educational or enforcement efforts that we might can get behind and support?

Ms. NORMAN. Well, thank you so much for that question. I would echo that the States are doing a wonderful job of raising awareness. They each have work zone awareness programs that are making a difference. And I think this committee can continue to support that and support the States in doing that, and it does make a difference. Our workers do need to be—they are a vulnerable road user that is often overlooked.

Mr. COLLINS. Yes, ma'am.

I can't read it. Is it Mr. Wilcox?

Mr. WILLOX. Willox. Yes.

Mr. COLLINS. Willox. I was listening to your testimony talking about rural roads there, and it is something that has bothered me. I live in a very rural section. But, unfortunately, Google Maps found our road, and we have a lot of traffic that comes down that road now. And the first time they will come down through there, they will be nice about it, but then as recently as over the weekend, I saw a vehicle pass a vehicle. Now, we have got kids that play on the road, even though we are only one of three houses on there.

What are some suggestions that can be done? I have even asked for speed bumps to be put on our road, but you can't do that because, from what I understand, 911 may need to come down through there.

But I don't know if you offer any or, Mr. Hanson, if you all have any suggestions on how you might can look at these rural roads and the way Google or the maps—you don't want to just say Google—the maps that have put you on the map.

Mr. WILLOX. Thank you for that. And I laugh a little bit because we love the mapping service, but it now has opened up areas. When roads are closed, we have had to pull trucks out of places they never should have been because the map says they are open.

It is about driver's education and appropriate—not through traffic—you can only do so much to educate a driver. If a driver is not going to be smart, nothing we do is going to change that. We try to do it at the front end.

But I think it is the working with—our State DOT is actually trying to work with some of the mapping companies so when roads are closed, we also close the county roads so that people don't get in unsafe situations in bad weather.

Mr. COLLINS. Right.

Mr. WILLOX. For your situation in the normal weather, it is education and signage is the most we can do.

Mr. COLLINS. And law enforcement.

Mr. HANSON. And I would just add to that. Going back to that toolbox that we can draw from, the first tool that is effective is traffic law enforcement.

Along with that, education and outreach as well as things like dynamic speed signs that draw people's attention to how fast they are going. And it is not just on their dash. It is on that flashing speed sign that they are going by on the road. They have proven to be effective. How long that effect lasts—you have got to move those things around so they don't become noise. But the enforcement component can't be forgotten.

Mr. COLLINS. Thank you. I just want to make one last comment as someone who runs a little over 100 trucks out there. I have tried those automatic braking systems, and we pulled them. They are not fail-proof. If you are ever in a truck doing 65 miles an hour down the interstate, loaded 80,000 gross, and all of a sudden your truck just slams on brakes and you don't know anything about it and there is no reason except for the bridge ahead or the construction flashing sign, then you will understand that these things are not foolproof, and we don't need these mandated until they are because the car behind you—they don't know what you just slammed on brakes for either, regardless of the fact you may be hitting the windshield or the steering wheel. So they are not foolproof, and people don't understand that these things actually are hurting more than they are helping right now.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Stanton.

Mr. STANTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for all the witnesses for testifying today.

I am heartened that the last two Congress Members, both Democratic and Republican, have focused in on roadway safety for those who work in the roads—construction workers, first responders, towers, et cetera—and I want to harp—talk about that as well as part of my questions here today. I think you are going to hear that is a bipartisan priority for this committee.

So I do want to talk about three things today. A tragic issue in my State of Arizona is wrong-way turns. I want to talk a little bit about Native American communities and the disproportionate increase in crashes on the roads in our Native American communities and highway safety for our first responders.

The rate of highway fatalities has declined in recent years, but we are still above prepandemic levels. In fact, Arizona's highways often come up in rankings as some of the most dangerous in the country. A persistent problem that we have in our State is wrong-way crashes, especially on our freeway system. There were more than 51 wrong-way crashes last year, 9 of which were fatal.

To address this, the Arizona Department of Transportation and the Maricopa Association of Governments—which I was fortunate to chair when I was mayor of Phoenix—invested more than \$4 million in thermal cameras along Interstate 17, an interstate that crosses both urban and rural areas in Arizona. These cameras catch wrong-way turns when they occur and they prompt “wrong-way vehicle ahead” alerts on message boards above the freeways.

This is not going to stop the behavior that causes the wrong-way turns—driving under the influence, distracted driving, et cetera—but it does give other drivers on the road the opportunity to get out of harm's way, shift to the right lane, or exit the freeway. These safety improvements, they are an ounce of prevention for a pound of cure.

Mr. Hanson, as part of the Governors Highway Safety Association, you discussed in your testimony how section 402 funds, State Highway Safety Grants, should be given more flexibility to allow for State and local innovation. I couldn't agree more. Could you talk a little bit about how you could see these funds helping places like Arizona with its wrong-way driver issues?

Mr. HANSON. Mr. Chair and Members, thank you. A great question. And Arizona is not alone. I talk to my partners across the country. Wrong-way drivers on our freeway system is a growing and, quite honestly, a very scary problem because those are high-speed collisions when they do occur.

The technology that you mentioned in Arizona—certainly, I think this is where the behavior part and the infrastructure part come together, and anything we can do to help support our infrastructure partners on this is going to be a step in the positive direction. So I am familiar with the thermal imaging cameras, but there is also emerging technology in the telematics arena that we can leverage as well for real-time reporting and tracking of that wrong-way driver.

And so, as technology continues to develop, I think there is some hope on the horizon to prevent these things, but I also—as a trooper, some of the scariest calls that you got were those wrong ways because you just never know where you were going to find them and how they were going to react to that. So the more information we can get out there early, the better.

Mr. STANTON. Thank you for that.

Ms. Norman, in your testimony on behalf of the American Traffic Safety Services Association, you cite some shocking statistics. Native American children face a traffic crash death rate eight times higher than others. Native American adults face crash death rates seven times higher. This is completely unacceptable.

What can we do about this situation? There are provisions in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law focused on highway safety for Tribes and Tribal communities. What do you think has been most helpful, and what can we do to focus more attention and resources on Tribal road safety?

Ms. NORMAN. Thank you so much for that question. We want to first thank you for your continued focus on Tribal road safety and the increase in the Tribal Transportation Program and the safety set-aside within that program. They were great steps forward.

My business had the opportunity to install lifesaving devices such as improved pavement markings, guardrails, and rumble strips in an effort to eliminate roadway departures and the crashes that come from that.

And so, as we have seen with HSIP, those corresponding fatality numbers come down. That investment in safety works. And so we just want to ask that Congress continues to place a focus on Tribal roads and ensure that those safety funds get to the communities that need it.

Mr. STANTON. All right. In my State, that is critical. We are so blessed to have over 20 federally recognized Tribes.

Finally, a similar issue that was mentioned by my colleagues on both the Democratic and Republican side about road safety for our first responders; 1,600 emergency responders have been struck and killed while outside of a disabled vehicle since 2015.

Mr. Hanson, can you discuss opportunities before DOT to make meaningful improvements to roadway safety by embracing safety innovation? You may be seemingly asked the same question over and over, but that is because it is a priority for all of us on this committee.

Mr. HANSON. Traffic incident management and training and adherence to best practices in traffic incident management is how we mitigate that risk. If it is properly implemented, it is a risk reduction tool. The less time our first responders spend on the side of the road, the less risk of them getting hit.

Mr. STANTON. Thank you very much. I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Johnson.

Mr. JOHNSON OF SOUTH DAKOTA. Mr. Hanson, I think I heard you say earlier that 10,000 people a year die on the roads because of impaired driving. Is that right? Did I hear that right?

Mr. HANSON. Mr. Chair and Members, at least 10,000.

Mr. JOHNSON OF SOUTH DAKOTA. Yes. At least 10,000. It is remarkably sad.

My State, South Dakota, in 2005, pioneered the 24/7 program. Rather than put people who have a problem with addiction—alcohol addiction—rather than put them in prison, they try to hold them accountable and get them healthy in their community.

For those who don't know, this is—you wake up in the morning, you go down to the sheriff's office, you blow a PBT, you go about your day. At the end of the day, you come again. It is remarkably effective because it is an accountability mechanism. People know they cannot drink. And this goes on for a series of months. It changes their behavior. It has a 99-percent success rate. And even after they are off the program, the recidivism rate for those on the program is much lower than it is for those who do not participate in the 24/7 program.

My act, the SOBER Act, would expand the reach of that kind of program by incentivizing other States to set up something similar. So any reaction to that program? Are you aware of literature that does indicate it is successful either in South Dakota or in other States?

Mr. HANSON. Mr. Chair and Members, this is a great topic because I think it is the emerging thought line when it comes to dealing with impaired drivers and reducing that recidivism. In Minnesota, we face a 40-percent recidivism rate. Four out of ten will reoffend.

Programs like 24/7 Sober that I am familiar with in South Dakota—I believe North Dakota, also—very successful. It is also very closely linked and related to our DWI court program and to intensive supervision and screening for those who find themselves arrested after making that fateful first choice. And so it is a solid program with a proven track record, and it does bear looking at from any perspective, really.

Mr. JOHNSON OF SOUTH DAKOTA. And one of the things that I like about it—again, it works. That matters. If it didn't work, everything else—I am not sure anything else matters.

But when you put people in prison, all too often, of course, they are going to lose their job. All too often, they are going to lose their family. They are going to lose a lot of these really important connections that are going to help them stay clean once they get clean. 24/7 allows that treatment to take place in the community, allows them to be held accountable, to have those accountability mechanisms in the community.

What about other programs? What else has worked to reduce impaired driving?

Mr. HANSON. Well, certainly, high-visibility enforcement. I couldn't ignore that. When I started in law enforcement—I will date myself in the early to mid-1980s—over 50 percent of the fatalities that we attended were alcohol-related. In Minnesota now, we are riding at about 30 percent. So the enforcement and high-visibility events have certainly contributed to that.

But I think, beyond that, addressing the underlying issues that lead to either substance abuse disorder or addiction or these repeat offender problems that we have. The 24/7 program, the DWI courts, the quick intervention program where somebody is screened for not only chemical issues but mental health issues when they come in for that first court appearance so that the proper and customized recovery program can be built for them. These are the keys.

A one-size-fits-all doesn't work for impaired driving, and as we stare down at an increasing drug-impaired driving issue across the country, this is going to become more critical.

Mr. JOHNSON OF SOUTH DAKOTA. And I would say to my colleagues, part of the reason so many of us on both sides of the aisle like federalism is that it gives us 50 laboratories of democracy to try to figure out how do you keep those roads safer. How do you save lives? How do you get people clean?

And, in South Dakota, we have a laboratory of democracy that has developed an evidence-based mechanism that really works, and I would call my colleagues' attention to the SOBER Act. This is an opportunity to add rocket fuel to those State-based efforts. Let's get people clean. Let's save lives.

With that, I would yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. The gentleman yields back.

Mr. Carbajal.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you. I will just say to my colleague who spoke earlier: And then there are some of those labs that are way underperforming.

Having said that, Mr. Willox, more than half of the States have established a State Infrastructure Bank. My understanding is that Wyoming is one of those States. From your perspective, how have infrastructure banks helped cities meet their infrastructure needs, and if there was a Federal infrastructure bank, how can we model this to anticipate some of the future needs in transportation?

Mr. WILLOX. Thank you. Grants are an important part of how you can do the big projects. And so, through Wyoming, it works through what we call our SLIB, which is a grant program, and the five statewide electeds help manage that. What we need is that combination of grants for big projects and direct funding for regular projects. If we don't have the eligibility and the ability to go after grants that can help us with the large projects, many small, underpopulated, or underfunded counties won't have the opportunity to do those projects that are larger in scale that can be funded through that grant method.

So it can work. Again, flexibility is the key. We can't have the box too small. The box needs to be flexible enough to work for New York and Wyoming and Florida and California.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you. Mr. Willox, counties and local governments are major owners of our Nation's transportation system, owning about 45 percent of all public roads. While the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law created additional funding opportunities, it caused an issue that I hear from my local stakeholders, is that they would like more certainty in Federal dollars that they are eligible for.

Can you talk about the advantages and disadvantages of creating a dedicated funding source to directly allocate resources to local governments for the improvement and maintenance of local roads and bridge infrastructure?

Mr. WILLOX. Well, thank you. Again, and it goes back to we need both. Direct funding is wonderful, but if you are a small county with a small population, the formulaic number is going to be smaller. A blade costs a half a million dollars now. If the formula gives you \$100,000, that is still 5 years to gather it up.

So direct funding is always valuable. Consistent funding is valuable. But between continuing resolutions and priority changes between the five administrations that I have been around and nine Congresses, there is some uncertainty there. But I think the blend is what is important. We want grants for the larger projects and direct funding for that regular maintenance and ongoing activities.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you.

This question is for the whole panel. My office just met with one of our local MPOs for my district, and we discussed the uncertainty of this administration's repeated directives instructing the Transportation Department to freeze critical Federal dollars. From talking to other stakeholders in my district, I know that these actions have created chaos throughout the Federal Government and uncertainty for the communities and industries that rely on Federal programs.

Today, I am interested in hearing from you. Can you each talk about how uncertainty in Federal funding and project delays caused by funding freezes impacts the organizations you represent?

Mr. WILLOX. Thank you, Representative. I think it goes back to my last question. Uncertainty is built into the system. It is a political system. In my time, we have seen uncertainty from administrations. We have seen uncertainty from Congress. CRs create as much uncertainty as anything.

So we are used to it. We would love to have certainty all the time, but it seems like every 2 or 4 years, there is some uncertainty built into the system, and we will deal with it.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you.

Mr. Hanson.

Mr. HANSON. Any pause in the funding that we depend on in the State Highway Safety Offices potentially could have a negative impact on traffic safety. We would just simply ask that, in the event that there is some type of a pause, that the issues or concerns are quickly identified and that the funding stream is restored.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you.

Ms. Norman.

Ms. NORMAN. Thank you. That is a wonderful question.

In my experience as a small business owner, I can tell you that it affects us very directly. When there is uncertainty with funding,

projects are often halted. If you can imagine, as someone who has orange devices out on the roadway, anytime that that funding is halted, those devices have to remain in order to keep the traveling public safe.

And so when we have those uncertainties, that is a very small example, but a more large example would be we have to make million-dollar investments into equipment to be able to provide these lifesaving infrastructure projects, and we cannot confidently do that when we have funding freezes and things like that. And so ATSSA is looking forward to working together to everyone come together to make sure that we have long-term, stable funding for these lifesaving projects.

Ms. CHASE. Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety does not receive any Federal grant funding. However, I agree with what Ms. Norman just said, that the stability to safety grant programs is essential, especially at a time when our roadways are experiencing historic highs in fatalities and injuries.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you very much. I am out of time.

Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Knott.

Mr. KNOTT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Members of the panel, thank you for being here. I wish I had more than 5 minutes. This has been very interesting and stimulating.

Mr. Willox, I want to start with you. Coming from North Carolina, there is a lot of need in my district where we are the proverbial smalltown America that is receiving dozens and dozens every day of people moving out of the bigger cities into these local communities. And I want to touch on a point that you raised earlier, the need to streamline the delivery of dollars and real results to the taxpayers to these programs.

And if you could just, I would say, identify what the main issue is with the delays, with the inefficiencies in the system, and how we could address that so that the taxpayers get a more immediate return on the investment that we send out for transportation.

Mr. WILLOX. Yes. Thank you. In my 19 years, permitting has always been an issue.

In the West, a lot of—a huge Federal presence is going to be different than in your—but if you are dealing with an existing right-of-way—so a lot of what we do is nonvirgin territory—the ability in permitting should be relatively easy so that you can improve an existing road, whether it is safety or widening, and that isn't uniformly accepted. Under NEPA categorical exclusions, broadening that would be helpful. BLM enforced different administrations have different focuses on different things.

And then if you are doing grants—and Mr. Hanson wrote to it—if you are going to apply for a grant, let's make it simpler and easy to comply with. Application is easy. It is actually when you get the grant that is harder. So anything we can do to simplify that and make it easier to do would be valuable.

Mr. KNOTT. Would you say that the issues arise from overlaying or overlapping regulations, or is it inefficiencies within the delivery system? How would you pinpoint the root problem?

Mr. WILLOX. Yes. It is a little bit of everything. Sometimes it is overlapping jurisdictions. Sometimes it is just the boxes you have got to check to get through. I wish there was a simple answer, and that is why it is not easy to simplify.

But we have to trust our local government partners. And if we don't trust them, then say that, but don't say we trust you and then make you jump through 15 hoops. Trust local governments. We are elected to represent our people and be good stewards of taxpayer dollars.

Mr. KNOTT. Right. It seems like the perverse incentive is it consolidates all of the approvals in Washington, and then there are all types of justifications for the delay at the cost of local needs and certainly towns like North Carolina.

I also want to talk to you just briefly about disaster-related needs to rebuild. If you could pinpoint any kind of solution to—if there is a disaster that wipes out a road, how can we better deliver a federally funded recovery project in those instances?

Mr. WILLOX. Fortunately, I haven't had to deal with one directly, but all the recent instances have made us think more about it.

I think the key is to make sure we don't have to jump through too many hoops so we can be quick. Speed is what is important. Accountability is important. But you can't do it without Federal dollars. We need those Federal dollars when a disaster hits a county.

So we need the flexibility to implement it without jumping through too many hoops. Waivers of some of the requirements so you can sole-source when necessary without doing the bidding. And some of that exists, but it is a challenge to blend that. You generally get the State involved. But continue to make those funds available and allow the flexibility and speed to be able to respond.

Mr. KNOTT. Great.

Mr. Hanson, just briefly, in regards to the last, I would say, 5 years, there has been a fairly unprecedented assault on law enforcement, on local law enforcement especially. What effect has that had on road safety and the ability to protect the roadways?

Mr. HANSON. Thank you for the question.

And, Mr. Chair and Members, it has had a negative effect. Law enforcement is taxed in ways that I could never imagine when I worked in the field. Agencies are critically understaffed, and when they are critically understaffed, oftentimes, the first thing that gets cut is that traffic unit. 911 calls have to be answered. I get that. But traffic enforcement and traffic safety activity is as much a part of any public safety strategy as policing is.

And so we need to continue to rebuild the ability for agencies and the ability for communities to understand why traffic safety is important.

Mr. KNOTT. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, unfortunately, I am out of time. I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Kiley.

Mr. KILEY OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you for holding today's hearing on a vitally important topic that probably doesn't get the amount of attention that it deserves when you consider the fact that we still have 40,000 fatalities on our roads every year.

This is one of the leading, if not the leading, cause of preventable deaths in this country. These are tragedies that strike folks of all backgrounds, of all ages, and happen suddenly and cause cascading amounts of grief for those who are close to them. So it should be an absolutely leading priority of this committee and of our Government at all levels to do everything possible to reduce these tragedies.

And I was reading through all of the testimony for today's hearing, and there is a lot of great work being done by your various associations. I was a little surprised that autonomous vehicles were barely discussed at all, maybe a couple times in passing.

I believe a couple of the witnesses mentioned that there will continue for the foreseeable future to be a mix of levels of autonomous vehicles or levels of autonomy within vehicles that are on the road, which is undoubtedly true, but I would think that for a hearing that is focusing on safety, this would be a little more of a focus given the clear evidence that we see right now that those autonomous vehicles that are on the road are indeed improving safety.

For example, Waymo—which has been operating in San Francisco and Phoenix for some time—recently started operating in Los Angeles and is expanding, I think, to three other areas in this coming year. Data shows that in over 33 million miles driven in Phoenix and San Francisco, the Waymo vehicles have had 81 percent fewer airbag deployment crashes, 78 percent fewer injury-causing crashes, and 62 percent fewer police-reported crashes. There was a study done by an insurance company that found that, with Waymo autonomous vehicles, there were 88 percent fewer property damage claims and 92 percent fewer bodily injury claims.

Likewise, Tesla is probably the other leader in this space and has what it calls its full self-driving capability that is available for a fee to millions of Tesla owners and has been improving quite rapidly recently. Their data shows that there is one crash per 7.08 million miles driven. Actually, that is just with autopilot engaged, which is about 10 times more miles driven per accident as folks who are driving unassisted.

And keep in mind that this is the worst the technology is ever going to be. It is iterating rapidly. It is going to get better. It is going to get safer, and it holds the vast potential to reduce the number of fatalities on our road to really minimal levels.

So I guess my question then—and I will just throw this out to any witness who would like to answer it—is, shouldn't encouraging the adoption of autonomous vehicle technology for more drivers—especially as the technology improves—not just be one facet of our transportation planning but really be a major imperative of U.S. transportation policy?

Ms. CHASE. Thank you for the question. I will take the first shot at it.

Advocates supports proven technology, such as automatic emergency braking and other advanced driver assistance systems, that we know—based on research from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, the National Transportation Safety Board, and others—will, in fact, save lives. While I agree with you that autonomous vehicles are improving, based on the research that we have

seen, it is still a small comparison compared to the larger driving set of how much people are driving on the roads.

So, while we see promise, we want to make sure that the promises offered are delivered, and we believe the way to do that is through transparency, accountability, and regulation.

Mr. KILEY OF CALIFORNIA. Mr. Hanson.

Mr. HANSON. Thank you for the question.

As my friend, retired Colonel Matt Langer, would put it, technology will eventually save us from ourselves. And we are getting there. Autonomous vehicles will eventually make an incredible difference on our roads.

I would agree that we are not quite there yet, and I think the thing that is lacking is that overall Federal guideline that everybody follows, much like the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards as applied to connected and automated vehicles. That is the missing link that we really need to look at right now.

Mr. KILEY OF CALIFORNIA. Can you just expound a little bit—I know you are short on time—on what that should look like?

Mr. HANSON. I am sorry?

Mr. KILEY OF CALIFORNIA. Could you just expound a little bit on what that should look like?

Mr. HANSON. Much like if you look at the transportation system and the regulations that surround it, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Federal Government, they cover the vehicle part of it. The States then have their traffic safety laws. If you look at how traffic safety laws developed in the early part of the 19th century, every State had their own code. Many of them conflicted with each other.

Well, the Federal Government had to step in and develop a more uniform code that all of the States would abide by, and then the feds took over through NHTSA or whatever the body was at that time the design parameters and the safety parameters for the vehicles that use that infrastructure.

Mr. KILEY OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. Ms. Gillen.

Ms. GILLEN. Thank you.

Mr. Hanson, in New York, more than 30 percent of fatal crashes are alcohol-related, which is unacceptable. In 2023, on Long Island, more than 220 people were tragically killed in car crashes, and Nassau County has been the second deadliest county for car crashes in 6 of the last 10 years. Long Islanders should not have to take their lives into their hands every time they get behind the wheel.

As a law enforcement officer, what do you need to be able to increase safety and crack down on drunk and reckless drivers?

Mr. HANSON. I am sorry. I couldn't quite hear the last part of your question, ma'am.

Ms. GILLEN. So what do you need from us to help us improve safety and crack down on drunk and reckless drivers on the road?

Mr. HANSON. The thing that will make the biggest difference for us is more flexibility, as Mr. Willox has commented on. More flexibility in the Federal 402 and 405 funds for us to be creative, to be innovative, and to be proactive.

The way I would describe it, for years, we relied on historic crash data. That is data that is collected after something bad has hap-

pened. Well, we are entering an age now where we have technology and we have data that we can harvest in real time that allows us to be much more proactive in preventing events from occurring in the first place.

So having that freedom and that flexibility to be innovative, to be creative, to color outside the lines, so to speak, is going to be critical for State Highway Safety Offices moving forward as we develop the next generation of countermeasures to make our roads safer.

Ms. GILLEN. Thank you, sir.

Ms. Chase, in your written testimony, you spoke a bit about using roundabouts to improve the flow of traffic and also to enhance safety, and I was wondering if you could share—this is something my husband talks about roundabouts all the time.

Have you seen how—we have aging infrastructure in Long Island, but I would imagine it would be difficult to implement the use of roundabouts. Have you seen it successfully implemented in places where there was aging infrastructure but it was employed successfully?

Ms. CHASE. Thank you for the question.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, which is an organization we rely upon to do research, has found that crashes—injury crashes have been reduced up to 80 percent, and all crashes at intersections—and this is when you go from a stop sign or a red light to a roundabout—reduced by about 50 percent. So that is pretty remarkable.

But, with regards to aging infrastructure that you mentioned specifically, I don't have that data, but we would be glad to look into it. We strongly support roundabouts for that reason. It is a proven solution, and in addition to making the roads safer, it improves the efficiency of motorists.

Ms. GILLEN. Thank you. I would love to get some information about successful implementation.

Ms. CHASE. Glad to try to provide that.

Ms. GILLEN. Thank you.

And, lastly, this could be for anyone. I was with folks just two nights ago who were talking about the shocking number of roadside workers who are killed each year. And what are some of the best ways that we, as Congress, can help reduce the number of fatalities and improve roadside conditions?

Ms. NORMAN. I would be glad to take that. Thank you for the question.

Again, one of the things that I think can be most important is that we can bring stakeholders together to talk about best practices, about what is working.

There are new technologies. One that we utilize is a telematics-based technology that we have on our vehicles when they are in an active work zone that is communicating to drivers and cab that there are workers on-site. There is a work zone ahead. It is audible. It is getting that attention. And that is something that we have implemented over the last couple of years, and it has given a great sense of security to our workers that we are taking another step to let people know that they are in their office on the side of the road.

Ms. CHASE. If I could add to what Ms. Norman just said, we were pleased that, in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the use of Federal grants were expanded for automated enforcement in work zone and construction zones because they had been widely effective in reducing crashes in those areas, and we hope that in the next reauthorization, it is expanded even further.

Ms. GILLEN. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. The gentlelady yields back.

Mr. DeSaulnier.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank all the witnesses.

Ms. Chase, I wanted to follow up and invite some of the other witnesses to comment on an earlier comment and exchange with one of my Republican colleagues.

So I am from the San Francisco Bay area. When I was in the legislature, I was very involved in being one of the first States to prohibit holding your phones, and I was always amazed that the compliance rate was as good as it was.

But with new technology, it always adds so much benefit. And a lot of my businesses in the area I represent are always very aggressive about their product, understandably, but getting it right so that you are not inhibiting innovation but you are making sure you are doing the right thing. We got it right in California, I think, with hands-free driving, but on the other hand, we were too lax, I think, on self-driving vehicles. So now we are trying to come back.

So my question to you and maybe Ms. Norman—if you have any insights, Mr. Hanson or Mr. Willox—what does the research show about peer-reviewed—looking at these kind of new technologies to make sure they are safe before we deploy them without overregulating the community? There is a sweet spot there that I think we are still struggling with.

Ms. CHASE. Thank you for the question.

We have been watching San Francisco very carefully in terms of autonomous vehicles and have been really struck by the dangers that have been employed. The San Francisco fire chief has spoken about firetrucks being prohibited from getting to scenes. The police chief has spoken about the police officers not being able to get to a live shooting scene. This is what is being reported in the news by and large. So we are concerned that even more incidents are happening that we are not aware of.

We have always contended that autonomous vehicles need to have Federal safety regulations just like other cars. And I will just give one quick example. Right now, when a person goes to get a driver's license, they have a vision test, but right now, an autonomous vehicle—which will be doing the seeing and responding because there is no person—there is no minimum standard to make sure that the car can see, if you will. So that is just one quick example of regulation that we have been supporting.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Thanks.

Ms. Norman, do you have any comments?

Ms. NORMAN. Yes. Thank you.

I think one of the things that we would like to highlight of importance when we have the conversation about AVs and CAVs is that there is so much changing in work zones regularly. You have

got lane changes throughout the day as contractors are doing their job building the road. And so we have to make sure that all the stakeholders are working together, and we look forward to being a big part of that with a work zone focus to ensure that those CAVs and AVs see our devices and our people and do not cause more harm.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Mr. Hanson, I want to throw in another question, if you could address briefly. I have a district that has very long commutes. A lot of our big employers in San Francisco like Salesforce have said they want to go to 3-day weeks.

So, with this push to get everybody back in the office, if you have any comments about that and safety because I have got people who drive an hour and a half, 2 hours both ways, and that affects safety. So any comments you might have, Mr. Hanson, because you represent a similar area.

Mr. HANSON. Certainly, as traffic volume—thank you—traffic volume increases, the problem on our road does increase.

What we saw in 2020 when COVID arrived and the roads emptied out—we fully expected to see a significant drop in the fatality rate. Well, in fact, contrary to historical data, we saw an exponential increase in the number of fatal and serious crashes that were taking place. And this was across the country, and it was really led by speed. And the way I have kind of put it out there before is there was a lot more lane space for folks to use and, quite honestly, to abuse.

And so the problem is some of those bad behaviors that manifested themselves at that time period have continued now, and even though our VMT or the number of vehicles on the road now is higher than it was prepandemic, we are still seeing people drive in extremely reckless ways.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Mr. Willox, any observations from NACo on either of the questions?

Mr. WILLOX. Well, in rural areas, we have always returned to work because you couldn't not. But I do think it is about the traffic and human behavior, and I do think Mr. Hanson was correct. There are times that people got lazy because there was less traffic on the road. So I think that is important.

I wanted to go back to autonomous vehicles. There is a big difference between rural autonomous vehicles. Our gravel road and autonomous vehicles are not—the standard has not been created for that and urban requirement is.

But let me give you another point that is interesting on autonomous vehicles. There has been discussion about going from 4-inch paint to 6-inch paint for autonomous vehicles and for visibility. That is 50 percent more paint that local government has to put on the road. There is a cost associated with the safety improvements needed not just for autonomous vehicles but that visibility, and we can't lose sight of that as we look at that technology enhancing and moving forward.

Mr. DESAULNIER. Thank you all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. Mr. Moulton.

Mr. MOULTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and I am going to start by saying how much I share your concern for road

safety and improving road safety. It is an extraordinary number of Americans who die every year on our roads, many of them driving, many of them just simply trying to cross the street.

It sadly happened to a 5-year-old, an amazing girl in my district, who died in a crosswalk crossing right in front of her family, doing absolutely nothing wrong—in fact, doing everything right—but she was run over by a truck. So I want to talk about what we can do to improve road safety.

Ms. CHASE, I know you have done a lot of work on this. The chairman mentioned the importance of police enforcement. I agree. We need to enforce the rules. We need to enforce the law. People should follow the law. The laws aren't just there to look good. They are meant to do something.

What about traffic cameras? Are they effective at enforcement?

Ms. CHASE. Yes, they are. We support automated enforcement safety cameras both for red-light running and for speed because they have been proven by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety to reduce crashes. So we strongly support them, and we urge Congress in the next reauthorization bill to expand the use of Federal funds so that localities can afford to use them.

Mr. MOULTON. And how do traffic cameras compare to police enforcement in effectiveness?

Ms. CHASE. Well, we consider automated enforcement as a supplement to law enforcement, not a replacement, because I think both are very important. As has been discussed earlier in this hearing, law enforcement efforts in terms of traffic safety have reduced. So we would like to see the effective use of law enforcement to enforce traffic safety laws back on the rise, and we would also like to see the use of automated enforcement.

Mr. MOULTON. I agree with that. I have spoken to my local police chief about the importance of traffic enforcement, and he has shared with me some of the challenges that he has in just doing this duty.

But I also understand that, statistically, cameras are even more effective because everyone knows there is a camera there all the time. You don't have to see a police car. Is that not correct?

Ms. CHASE. That is correct. It is very important that the automated enforcement systems are done properly because, if not, then there could be a backlash, and that has happened in certain areas. So we want to make sure that they are done effectively.

Our organization, together with GHSA and other organizations, put together a safety checklist for localities on how to implement automated enforcement systems safely, and that can be—I think that is widely available on the website.

Mr. MOULTON. And I see a lot of nodding heads there. Is there anything that Mr. Hanson or Mr. Willox—you would like to add to this?

Mr. WILLOX. Thank you. NACo and counties are very diverse. We like that option of having those traffic cameras. That is a policy choice that sometimes gets a lot of pushback in local areas, but having that option available—we would absolutely love that chance so various counties can take advantage of it if available.

Mr. MOULTON. Yes. I get that there is pushback because some people like to break the law, right? But the problem is when it re-

sults in deaths. It is one thing if you are speeding out in the middle of the desert and you might run over a jackrabbit, but if you might run over a 5-year-old kid crossing a street, it is a different story.

There is some new data that has come out on the effectiveness of no right on red. Now, I like turning right on red just as much as the rest of us. Sometimes it can get you home faster. But it is pretty easy to understand how, when you are looking left to see the cars coming, you might not be looking right in the crosswalk for someone crossing the street.

So the data is pretty clear, and yet the champions of federalism—the people who say that local communities should make their own decisions—the Republican Party is the one banning the enforcement of traffic cameras, banning no-right-on-red signs in Washington, DC, even though the data clearly supports the fact that when you ban these enforcement systems, you say to locals that you can't make your own decisions because a bunch of politicians from out of State are going to come and make them for you. For the 3½ days a week that we are here, more pedestrians are going to die.

I don't know about you, but that doesn't seem right to me. That doesn't seem like selfless service to the country. That doesn't seem like living up to your own principles and values, and it doesn't seem like making our roads safer.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. ROUZER. The gentleman yields back.

The chairman recognizes Mr. Cohen for 5 minutes.

Mr. COHEN. I apologize for not hearing your remarks. I kind of tried to read them. I had Judiciary today, and that is a committee I have not paid as much attention to as I should have the last two terms because we had the aeronautics aviation—

Mr. ROUZER [interrupting]. I am not sure your microphone is on. Well, it is on. Bring it to you. There you go.

Mr. COHEN. There we go, I guess. Let me get my remarks, and we will get going.

Thank you, Chairman Rouzer and Ranking Member Norton.

Roadway safety is a national crisis. It is, and we have talked about it. Congress must act decisively in the next surface transportation reauthorization bill to implement lifesaving policies.

One of the things I have worked on has been Complete Streets. I am sure you all know Complete Streets reduces fatalities, makes people who are pedestrians and bicyclists or whatever they do—the little green things that look like Vespas or something, without motors—more safety when they are on the streets, and that is important, too.

Memphis has got a whole lot of pedestrian deaths, and it is so sad. We could fix that with planning, some better designed streets and walkways, et cetera, and pedestrian walkways. So we need to do things about that and help people. And we have had some declines in deaths, but 40,000 people died in motor vehicle crashes in 2023. That is motor vehicle. So that doesn't include all the pedestrian deaths of which there are thousands and thousands.

Proven solutions exist to help us try to reach the goal of zero roadway deaths. Well, that is not going to happen. If we can get

it down to about one-half or one-third or whatever. We strive for that as a goal. Realistically, we will do what we can do.

We have got certain bills that I have introduced. The DOT Victim and Survivor Advocate Act to ensure crash victims and their families have a dedicated voice to transportation policy, and they should. This is a devastating thing to their families. They lose family members and never get over it, and they should have the right, and you can learn from them, and they can be the force that drives legislation that can save people's lives.

The Complete Streets Act—which I just discussed a little bit—designs roads to prioritize safety for all road users.

The School Bus Safety Act implements essential protections for our children such as seatbelts on schoolbuses. I have seen so many kids killed in crashes on schoolbuses, and seatbelts, I think, would save lives. I know there are problems with chairs that are 90 degrees and go back and all that, but the seatbelts work, and I think they would be helpful. I know there are battles between local governments that don't want to spend the money and the seatbelt people, et cetera, but the kids' lives are at stake.

The Stop Underrides Act—which came to me from a constituent whose child was killed when the car went underneath a truck—would prevent horrific underride crashes that claim the lives of too many Americans. So many cars can go under trucks. And I think my staffer is going to go crazy when I say this—she is not going to go crazy because she is a very stable and good woman—but Jayne Mansfield. As a child, I remember that. Underrides can be devastating and can kill people.

Additionally, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law created critical programs, including the Safe Streets and Roads for All program, which has demonstrated local communities can reduce traffic fatalities when given the necessary resources.

I look forward to our discussion—which we have already had—on how Congress can further advance these critical safety initiatives in the upcoming transportation safety bill.

Thank you, and I yield back the balance of my time. Thank you.

Mr. ROUZER. The gentleman yields back.

Seeing no other Members that have not already spoken or wish to speak, the hearing for today—well, let me back up and let me just thank our witnesses for your great testimony. A very informative subcommittee hearing, and it wouldn't have been so without you and your contributions. So, thank you very much.

Seeing no one else, this concludes our hearing for today. The subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:49 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

SUBMISSIONS FOR THE RECORD

Statement of the American Society of Civil Engineers, Submitted for the Record by Hon. David Rouzer

INTRODUCTION

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) appreciates the opportunity to submit a statement to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's Subcommittee on Highways and Transit regarding the hearing "America Builds: A Review of Programs to Address Roadway Safety."

ASCE recognizes the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's prompt and thorough attention to the needs of the transportation system this year. This hearing is the committee's seventh of the 119th Congress and follows sessions focused on highways, rail, and maritime infrastructure. We appreciate this committee's early focus on infrastructure issues and the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization bill. Passing comprehensive surface transportation legislation before the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) expires next September is a top priority for ASCE.

Founded in 1852, ASCE is the nation's oldest civil engineering society. ASCE represents more than 160,000 members of the civil engineering profession in 177 countries. As the professionals who design, construct, and maintain critical aspects of the transportation system, including roadways, ASCE welcomes the opportunity to offer perspective on the important subject of roadway safety.

ASCE'S REPORT CARD FOR AMERICA'S INFRASTRUCTURE

Every four years, ASCE publishes its *Report Card for America's Infrastructure*, which grades the nation's major infrastructure categories using an "A" to "F" school report card format. The most recent Report Card¹, released in March 2021, evaluated 17 categories of infrastructure and reflected an overall "C-" grade. Roads received a "D" on the Report Card, while bridges received a "C", transit a "D-", and rail a "B". The next Report Card will assess 18 categories and will be released on March 25, 2025.

SAFETY ON AMERICA'S ROADS

Safety is the guiding principle of the civil engineering profession and ASCE understands that transportation safety needs to extend to all modes of travel, including roads. Transportation safety is critical, and safer roadway systems can reduce loss of life, personal injuries, and loss of economic resources. ASCE supports a sustained effort to reduce crashes, fatalities, injuries, and property damage through improvements to highway system planning and operation as well as the implementation of safety improvement programs and technology.

Safety remains a significant issue on our nation's roadways. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates 40,990 people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2023. Pedestrian injuries and fatalities are also high. Preliminary data indicates 7,318 people were struck and killed while walking in 2023². This figure marks a decrease from the 7,737 pedestrians that were killed in 2022, but it is still 14.1% higher than the number of pedestrian deaths reported in 2019.

SUPPORT FOR FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY PROGRAMS

In any surface transportation reauthorization bill, ASCE asks Congress to support federal programs designed to improve the safety of the traveling public. As roadway

¹ <https://infrastructurereportcard.org/>

² <https://www.ghsa.org/resources/Pedestrians24>

use continues to grow, industry, federal, state, and local cooperation and funding are needed to preserve mobility while reducing the frequency and severity of traffic crashes. Moreover, ASCE believes safety efforts should include increased flexibility in federal-aid funding programs for high-priority highway safety improvement programs.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) oversees many programs focused on safety, and ASCE requests dependable, robust funding for those programs in the years to come. A few of those programs include:

1. The Rural Surface Transportation Grant Program, which supports projects that improve surface transportation infrastructure in rural areas by increasing connectivity, improving safety, and generating regional economic growth. Traffic safety is a particular concern in rural areas. Challenges with rural roads include a lack of safety features, such as rumble strips, ample shoulders, recoverable slopes, and lighting, and a lack of quick access to emergency medical care.
2. The Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) program, which funds projects with local or regional impacts across various modes, including roads, rail, transit, and ports. Since 2009, Congress has provided DOT with 15 rounds of competitive grants totaling nearly \$14.4 billion³. These grants have helped 1,096 projects in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Virgin Islands.
3. The Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) program, which funds regional, local, and Tribal initiatives to prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries. Since Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, the SS4A program has provided \$2.9 billion in funding to over 1,600 communities in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. These awards are expected to improve roadway safety planning for about 75% of the nation's population, including communities in rural areas.
4. The Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program, which funds highway-rail grade crossing improvement projects. Just as people use various modes of travel to reach their destinations, roadway safety involves other sectors of transportation infrastructure. Highway-rail grade crossings—the intersections where roads cross railroad tracks at grade—can be particularly hazardous. The Federal Railroad Administration reports that, nationally, more than 2,000 incidents and 200 fatalities occur at grade crossings each year. This program funds life-saving efforts to separate grades and relocate tracks.

ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A SURFACE TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION BILL

1. *Funding for infrastructure investment*

Besides support for key safety programs, such as the initiatives highlighted above, ASCE urges Congress to provide adequate funding for infrastructure investment in the next surface transportation reauthorization bill. Recent federal legislation, such as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, set a new standard for investment in surface transportation. However, a funding gap to fully address our nation's transportation needs remains, and ASCE requests that Congress at least maintain investment levels set by the IIJA.

The IIJA has resulted in many tangible benefits to the transportation system. Since the law's enactment in November 2021, the IIJA has directed \$591 billion to over 72,000 projects⁴. These are projects to improve safety on roads and at railroad crossings, accelerate the movement of goods at ports, and increase connectivity in rural and under-resourced communities. In short, the IIJA has funded projects that not only protect human lives, but also spur economic activity.

Transportation funding should involve a continuation of traditional user fees, such as federal and state motor fuel taxes, while transitioning to more sustainable innovative user fees, such as alternative energy vehicle fees and road usage charges. Funding for roads and bridges relies on the Highway Trust Fund (HTF), which is supported by motor fuel tax revenue. The federal motor fuel tax rate of 18.4 cents per gallon for gasoline and 24.4 cents per gallon for diesel has not been raised since 1993. Due to the growth in construction costs and the increasing fuel efficiency of vehicles, the purchasing power of the HTF has declined precipitously over the years.

Vehicles, navigation systems, safety mechanisms, and roadway design techniques have all made their way into the 21st century. Funding for infrastructure should

³ <https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/freight/infrastructure/tiger/>

⁴ <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/big-deal-biden-harris-administration-nears-close-history-making-progress-continues>

transition to reflect the current transportation system. ASCE recommends innovative user fees that align with the “user pay” principle, which is based on the idea that people who use roadways should bear the costs associated with them. Innovative financing techniques can benefit infrastructure development by better leveraging available resources to deliver more capital. They can also play a major role in delivering projects and public benefits sooner than conventional methods. However, financing by any technique does not supplant the need for adequate user fees or other sources of revenue to pay for projects.

2. Operations and maintenance

Congress should support state- and local-level transportation asset management plans that link asset management efforts to long-term transportation planning and incorporate the use of life-cycle cost analysis. Life-cycle cost analysis, which helps raise awareness of the full cost of infrastructure, can help transportation professionals make well-informed operations and maintenance decisions. Using life-cycle cost analysis to evaluate operations, maintenance, repair, and energy costs can help with the overall cost-effectiveness of the project.

One key component of judicious infrastructure decisions is accurate, updated data. Thoroughly collected and promptly reported data guides infrastructure owners on when and how to distribute valuable resources to maintain their roads and bridges. ASCE would like to suggest the incorporation of a provision included in the Rail Bridge Safety and Transparency Act (H.R. 9998/S. 4954) that proposes a bridge inspection report database. This bill, which was introduced last year, calls on the Department of Transportation to develop a database of bridge inspection reports received from railroad carriers. ASCE believes this provision would promote transparency and increase the safety of these critical structures.

ASCE also recommends Congress consider the Bureau of Transportation Statistics’ (BTS) work to provide local government agencies with data tools to support infrastructure decisions. The IIJA directed BTS to conduct outreach and identify the data needs of local government officials to make informed decisions about infrastructure investments. It also called on BTS to create a work plan to develop relevant data analysis tools for infrastructure investments in rural and urban communities. In the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization bill, ASCE suggests requiring an update from BTS on the progress of the work plan. Additionally, ASCE would recommend preserving an IIJA provision authorizing \$10 million per fiscal year for BTS besides the amounts provided through the HTF.

3. Building for the future

Across the U.S., disasters of greater intensity, duration, and frequency have wreaked havoc on communities of every size and location. In 2023, a total of 28 extreme weather events caused nearly 500 deaths and over \$95 billion in damages; since 1980, the U.S. has experienced 400 events amounting to at least \$1 billion with a total cost of \$2.7 trillion.

Therefore, in any reauthorization bill, ASCE urges Congress to include requirements to design and construct infrastructure that can withstand increasingly extreme weather events, such as incentivizing the use of the latest codes and standards for projects receiving federal dollars. Designing and maintaining with resilience in mind can result in longer-term project viability, cost savings over time for infrastructure owners, reduced negative impacts on communities and the environment, and increased public involvement in decision-making. The widespread adoption of frameworks and standards can help deliver resilient, fiscally responsible projects and make the nation’s infrastructure fit for the future. The past year alone, during which tornadoes caused damage across the central and southeastern U.S. and hurricanes devastated communities, has demonstrated the need for resilient infrastructure. One recent standard ASCE recommends would be ASCE/COS 73–23: Standard Practice for Sustainable Infrastructure, which provides guidance for infrastructure owners to develop and implement solutions throughout a project’s entire life cycle.

Relatedly, ASCE recommends Congress continue to fund research into the use of innovative technologies, materials, and construction techniques, which can help ensure our infrastructure systems withstand extreme weather events. Innovation in the transportation sector can result not only in longer-lasting infrastructure, but also safer systems for the traveling public.

ASCE also recognizes that reducing delays in the permitting process for infrastructure projects can help our nation achieve a transportation system appropriate for the 21st century. ASCE supports a balanced approach to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process characterized by quality science, objective determinations of potential project impacts on the environment, and streamlining the permitting and approval process for infrastructure projects. Project delays associ-

ated with the current NEPA process often result in significant additional expenses to taxpayers stemming from issues such as increases in labor and materials costs. Time is another challenge, as environmental impact statements (EIS) can take years to complete. These delays in projects across every infrastructure sector are impacting public safety and our economy, and ASCE encourages Congress to look at ways for the permitting process to be streamlined in a safe and responsible way.

THE ECONOMIC VALUE OF INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

In 2024, ASCE released *Bridging the Gap*, a report that analyzes the impacts of recent infrastructure investments on American households and businesses. As Congress considers reauthorizing surface transportation programs over the upcoming year, it will be critical to have a strong understanding of the country's needs. The report found that, to bring the nation's surface transportation infrastructure into a state of good repair, \$3.5 trillion would need to be invested from 2024–2033⁵. If Congress continues to invest in surface transportation programs at the same funding levels represented by the IIJA, the overall funding gap for surface transportation programs will decrease slightly to \$1.2 trillion. However, if funding reverts to 2019 levels, the gap will grow to \$1.8 trillion. While recent federal legislation has halted the infrastructure investment gap's rapid growth, continued robust investment is needed to keep up with increasing demands and ensure our system is fit for the future.

Furthermore, continuing to invest in infrastructure at IIJA levels will have significant economic benefits for American families and businesses over the next two decades. *Bridging the Gap* finds that, if IIJA spending becomes the new baseline for infrastructure investment, American families will save \$700 more per year from 2024–2043. These savings will allow Americans to have more disposable income to invest in the goods and services they want, rather than the expenses related to failing infrastructure, such as car repair, bottled water, or losses from spoiled food when the power goes out. Continued investment in our transportation system will also result in safer and more dependable trips for individuals heading to work, children on their way to school, and truck drivers delivering goods to businesses.

PROMOTION OF INDUSTRY-DRIVEN STANDARDS

ASCE engages in setting standards on a large scale and can serve as a useful source of technical information for Congress and agency partners. ASCE Standards provide technical guidelines for promoting safety, reliability, productivity, and efficiency in the civil engineering profession. Accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), ASCE has a rigorous and formal process overseen by the Codes and Standards Committee (CSC). Standards are created or updated by a balanced volunteer standards committee, followed by a public review period. These standards are adopted by state and local jurisdictions and used in the designing of projects around the world. One particular standard that can offer sound guidance for transportation engineering and roadway safety is ASCE 58, Structural Design of Interlocking Concrete Pavement for Municipal Streets and Roadways (ASCE/T&D/ICPI 58–16)⁶, which establishes guidelines for developing appropriate pavement structures for various traffic and subgrade conditions. This standard provides preparatory information for design, key design elements, design tables for pavement equivalent structural design, construction considerations, applicable standards, definitions, and best practices.

Another area in which ASCE may lend expertise and perspective is the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways (MUTCD). The IIJA requires the DOT to update the MUTCD every four years. The required update is meant to provide for the protection of vulnerable road users, support the safe testing of automated vehicle technology and any preparation necessary for the safe integration of automated vehicles onto public streets, and guide appropriate use of variable message signs. It also incorporates recommendations issued by the National Committee on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (NCUTCD) that have not yet been incorporated. As a sponsoring organization of the NCUTCD, ASCE is in a position to provide comments and information to Congress on this manual. ASCE believes a regular cycle of updates can be effective in keeping the manual current. Traffic control device standards and practices included in the MUTCD should be based on sound

⁵ <https://bridgingthegap.infrastructurereportcard.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2024-Bridging-the-Gap-Economic-Study.pdf>

⁶ <https://ascelibrary.org/doi/book/10.1061/978078441450>

engineering practices and judgment supported through adequate peer-reviewed research and experimentation.

CONCLUSION

ASCE thanks the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit for holding a hearing on the important subject of roadway safety. Safety is fundamental to the work of civil engineers and ASCE would like to see safety-focused programs supported in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization bill. We appreciate the opportunity to offer perspective and we stand ready to answer any questions.

Statement of the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance, Submitted for the Record by Hon. David Rouzer

The Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance (CVSA) respectfully submits the following comments for the record in response to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's Subcommittee on Highways and Transit's hearing on "America Builds: A Review of Programs to Address Roadway Safety."

CVSA is a nonprofit organization comprised of local, state, provincial, territorial and federal commercial motor vehicle safety officials and industry representatives. The Alliance aims to prevent commercial motor vehicle crashes, injuries and fatalities and believes that collaboration between government and industry improves road safety and saves lives. Our mission is to improve commercial motor vehicle safety and enforcement by providing guidance, education and advocacy for enforcement and industry across North America.

CVSA commends the subcommittee for holding a hearing to review roadway safety programs. The hearing offered a timely opportunity for members to engage with industry stakeholders to better understand current roadway safety programs and improvements that can be made in the upcoming surface transportation reauthorization.

CVSA and its members are committed to reducing crashes, injuries and fatalities on our nation's roadways, and have long supported solutions to improve commercial vehicle safety by preventing and/or mitigating the severity of crashes. Discussion in the February 12 hearing covered a variety of solutions to address highway safety. CVSA generally agrees with what was shared regarding driver behavior, safety technologies, and challenges with funding and grant administration. Focusing on these areas can contribute to solutions that improve roadway safety.

DRIVER BEHAVIOR AND FATIGUED DRIVING

In his opening statement, Chairman Rouzer connected change in driver behavior to the rise in crashes and fatalities. The hearing witnesses echoed this concern, and the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) referenced a study conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), which cited unsafe driver behavior as the critical reason for a majority of crashes. CVSA agrees that driver behavior, such as distracted and impaired driving, is a concern and negatively impacts safety on our roadways. CVSA supports programs and resources devoted to rigorous enforcement of distracted and impaired driving behaviors, as well as education and outreach programs that help reduce the occurrence of distraction and impairment.

In addition to distracted and impaired driving, fatigued driving needs to be included in the discussion on driver behavior. Driver fatigue is a significant contributor to commercial motor vehicle (CMV) crashes and poses a substantial risk to road safety. A National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigations study found that 31% of heavy truck crashes with fatalities to the driver involved fatigue.¹ Additionally, fatigued drivers perform more inappropriate lane deviations and have slower steering responses, experience reductions in responses to speed changes of a lead vehicle, have increased speed variations, exhibit slower reaction times, experience impaired visual scanning or "tunnel vision" and are at risk of falling asleep at the wheel. All of these factors increase the likelihood of crashes and near-crashes result-

¹Factors that Affect Fatigue in Heavy Truck Accidents Volume 2: Case Summaries. National Transportation Safety Board. NTSB Report Number SS-95-02. <https://www.nts.gov/safety/safety-studies/Documents/SS9502.pdf>.

ing from driver error.² In the trucking industry, the federal hours-of-service (HOS) requirements exist to help prevent and manage driver fatigue. While sleep cannot be regulated, the HOS rules set forth a framework that, if followed, allow drivers to get the rest necessary to operate their vehicles safely. It is important that the HOS requirements continue to focus on fatigue management and safety, factoring in the best available fatigue data.

In their written testimony, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety recognized the issue of driver fatigue and offered support for increased truck parking. CVSA supports investments that address the nation's truck parking shortage, which would allow drivers to better comply with HOS requirements.

Another solution to mitigate fatigue that CVSA supports is clarifying the definition of personal conveyance by adding a maximum time and/or distance on its use. Under personal conveyance, a driver is able to use a loaded or unloaded CMV for personal use and count that driving time as off-duty time. With the current definition of personal conveyance, a driver can drive hundreds of miles over the course of several hours all under the designation of personal conveyance before, during or after their work day, putting them at risk for increased levels of fatigue.

CVSA members are seeing countless examples of this occurring, with drivers claiming they are operating their vehicle for personal use, when in reality they are extending their driving time. Some common examples of personal conveyance abuse include using personal conveyance for up to ten hours between dropping off loads and going to the next pick up, driving over two hours claiming they are looking for a place to park when there are open spaces along the two-hour drive, using personal conveyance to make up for time lost at loading docks and switching to personal conveyance time just before violating the 11- or 14-hour rules. Allowing significant extension of driving time with the use of personal conveyance undermines the goals of the HOS regulations, which exist to mitigate the impacts of fatigue on highway safety.

In recent years, CVSA inspectors have observed a rise in personal conveyance abuse and misuse. For example, as part of a data collection conducted by CVSA in 2023, CVSA found that when personal conveyance was being used by a driver, it was being used improperly nearly 40% of the time. Additionally, CVSA has seen an increase in false log violations, which is where personal conveyance violations are documented. False log violations have jumped from the seventh most frequently cited driver violation in 2019 to the third most cited in 2021, 2022 and 2023. In 2024, false log violations were the twelfth most frequently cited driver violation. When looking at "false logs—personal conveyance" violations, the number of violations rose from the 60th most frequently cited driver violation in 2021 (when the specific violation code was created) to the 27th most frequently cited in 2024.

Allowing drivers to use personal conveyance as a way to extend their driving time increases the possibility of fatigued driving and can endanger other road users. Placing a limit on the time and/or distance that a driver can use personal conveyance is a strategy for mitigating fatigued driving.

SAFETY TECHNOLOGY

In her opening statement, Ranking Member Norton identified "equipping vehicles with the latest safety technologies" as part of a comprehensive approach to increase roadway safety and reduce fatalities. In general, CVSA supports policies that encourage the deployment of safety technologies proven to improve CMV safety, either through preventing or mitigating the severity of crashes. As budgets continue to tighten and technology continues to advance, it is imperative that those in the safety and enforcement communities take full advantage of technological advancements that improve safety and demonstrate a net benefit to society. As federal agencies develop performance standards and specifications for safety technologies, it is imperative that they work with industry and the enforcement community to ensure that the devices are effective and that any regulations put into place are enforceable.

Automated Vehicles

One specific form of safety technology referenced during the hearing was automated vehicles. GHSA highlighted the need to have a national regulatory framework for automated vehicle technology and shared how it is preparing its members for a future with automated vehicles. CVSA is also preparing for the presence of automated CMVs on our roadways.

²Guidelines and Materials to Enable Motor Carriers to Implement a Fatigue Management Program. North American Fatigue Management Program. https://nafmp.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/implementation_manual_en.pdf

CVSA strongly supports policies that encourage the deployment of safety technologies proven to improve CMV safety by preventing and/or mitigating the severity of crashes. CMVs equipped with automated driving systems (ADS) have the potential to significantly improve roadway safety. As ADS technology continues to advance and be tested on public roadways, it is imperative that federal agencies, lawmakers, law enforcement and motor carriers keep pace with the ADS industry. While ADS-equipped CMVs have the potential to improve roadway safety, that potential is based on the vehicles and technology being well maintained and fully functional. Oversight by the enforcement community is necessary to ensure ADS-equipped CMVs are properly maintained. Unfortunately, there are challenges with applying the traditional roadside inspection program to ADS-equipped vehicles because the current roadside inspection program is not compatible with ADS-equipped commercial motor vehicles. The current inspection process relies heavily on the driver to complete an inspection, for example. In addition, incorporating all possible roadside inspection locations into an ADS-equipped CMV's operational design domain is not practical.

When policies are considered regarding automated trucks, it is important that they look beyond the ADS technology itself and address how overall safety and compliance with the safety regulations will be established and maintained. CVSA recommends implementing the Enhanced Commercial Motor Vehicle Inspection Program, an inspection standard and procedure designed to govern the inspection of ADS-equipped commercial motor vehicles operating without a driver/operator on duty. The program establishes a no-defect, dispatch (point-of-origin) inspection program and includes an enhanced inspection standard and procedure for motor carriers operating ADS-equipped vehicles, as well as a 40-hour CVSA training course and exam (written and practical) for motor carrier personnel who will be conducting the inspections. Under this program, rather than the driver conducting a pre-trip inspection (as is currently done), for ADS-equipped commercial motor vehicles, CVSA-trained and -certified motor carrier personnel will conduct the Enhanced CMV Inspection Procedure at the point of origin before dispatch.

Universal Electronic Vehicle Identifier

Another safety technology and tool that would help increase roadway safety is the Universal Electronic Vehicle Identifier. CVSA supports a requirement that all new commercial motor vehicles be equipped with a universal electronic vehicle identifier which allows them to be identified at a short range electronically by enforcement. Given the size of the motor carrier industry, jurisdictions do not have the resources necessary to inspect every vehicle, driver and motor carrier operating on our roadways on a regular basis. To maximize resources, jurisdictions must prioritize enforcement activities and utilize technology to continue to increase enforcement program efficiency. Currently, inspectors use screening technology programs and tools, as well as inspection selection procedures and inspector observation, to determine which trucks to select for a roadside inspection. Requiring a universal electronic vehicle identifier would revolutionize commercial motor vehicle enforcement and improve safety. Electronic identification of commercial motor vehicles will expand the footprint of commercial motor vehicle enforcement and allow inspectors to better identify and prioritize vehicles with safety concerns, removing unsafe vehicles and drivers from the nation's roadways. For example, requiring that all CMVs be equipped with a universal electronic vehicle identifier would significantly improve enforcement's ability to identify drivers operating under a federal out-of-service order, helping to remove unsafe operators from the roadways more effectively.

Panelists from the February 12 hearing cited traffic enforcement as a key tool for addressing unsafe driver behavior, and the universal electronic vehicle identifier would enhance a CMV inspector's ability to identify CMVs most in need of an inspection or intervention, creating better targeted enforcement of the regulations. Deployment of this technology would revolutionize the way CMV roadside vehicle selection, inspection and enforcement are conducted, exponentially growing the program and improving roadway safety.

IMPROVING THE ADMINISTRATION OF FEDERAL FUNDING AND GRANTS

In its testimony, GHSA highlighted the increase in administrative burden associated with funding that the states receive from NHTSA that includes compliance with separate program rules and qualifications and duplicative record-keeping and reporting requirements. These issues are not limited to funding administered by NHTSA. CVSA acknowledges that these challenges are also present at the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) and the Federal Motor

Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) and recommends the following improvements to the administration of federal funding and grants.

Hazardous Materials Safety Grant Improvements

PHMSA administers multiple safety grants as part of its Pipeline and Hazardous Materials safety programs. Related to hazardous materials safety, there are multiple grant programs that provide funding for recipients to train and conduct outreach to first responders and communities. Specifically, the Hazardous Materials Instructor Training (HMIT), Assistance for Local Emergency Response Training (ALERT) and Community Safety grants are separate grant programs that target different stakeholder groups, despite sharing a common mission of training stakeholders on the safe handling of hazardous materials. These existing hazardous materials safety training grants should be consolidated into a single training grant. Combining these related grant programs into one training grant improves efficiency of the grant process, allowing PHMSA to better fund quality grant applications and provides grantees with flexibility to meet the most pressing training needs, while reducing the administrative burden for both PHMSA and the grantees.

In addition, due to the shared goals of the grants, many grant recipients receive funding from multiple grants to fund various training programs. For example, five non-profit organizations received funding from multiple grants as part of the fiscal year 2024 awards across the various programs.³ Currently, if a recipient receives funding from two different grant programs, they have to submit separate funding proposals, track expenses for each grant separately and submit separate reports to the agency. This also doubles the amount of administrative work for the agency, as they have to oversee these steps of the grant process. By consolidating the grant programs, grant recipients can redirect the resources dedicated to the administrative tasks of multiple grants to the mission of hazardous materials safety and PHMSA can more efficiently manage and administer their grant programs.

Finally, consolidation allows more flexibility for grant recipients. By combining the funding into one grant, funding can be dedicated to projects that comprehensively address current needs. Under the current structure, grant applicants must create projects that fit the narrow requirements of each grant and funding levels are tied to the specific grant criteria.

Motor Carrier Safety Program Improvements

There are also improvements that can be made to funding provided by FMCSA, especially with regards to FMCSA's Motor Carrier Safety Programs. The federal government entrusts the states with the responsibility of enforcing the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations and the Hazardous Materials Regulations. To meet that responsibility, Congress provides funding to the states, through the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP) and High Priority Grant. States and local agencies use these funds to conduct enforcement activities, train enforcement personnel, purchase necessary equipment, update software and other technology, and conduct outreach and education campaigns to raise awareness related to CMV safety issues. The goal of these programs, which are administered by FMCSA, is to reduce CMV-involved crashes, fatalities and injuries through consistent, uniform and effective CMV safety programs. The programs seek to identify safety defects, driver deficiencies and unsafe motor carrier practices and remove them from the nation's roadways.

To improve MCSAP, CVSA supports requiring FMCSA to allow states to make adjustments to their maintenance of effort (MOE) and enforcement activity minimums. As a condition of MCSAP, states are required to meet minimum financial requirements, known as maintenance of effort (MOE), by investing state funds in their CMV safety enforcement programs. States must also meet certain CMV inspection and enforcement minimums in order to have traffic safety activities reimbursed under MCSAP. However, the MOE and minimum activities benchmarks are outdated and often no longer relevant to the jurisdiction's program due to changes in program structure, responsibilities and priorities.

The motor carrier industry has evolved significantly since the MOE and inspection benchmarks were last updated. State CMV safety programs have evolved alongside industry to address the most prevalent safety issues, making the 20-year-old MOE and inspection benchmarks outdated for many programs. Giving states the option to request an adjustment to their MOE and inspection benchmarks ensures that their minimum state contributions meet the needs of their program and the

³Hazardous Materials Grants FY2024. Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration. <https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/sites/phmsa.dot.gov/files/2024-08/PHMSA%20HAZMAT%20Safety%20Grants%202024.pdf>.

current motor carrier safety trends. Permanent changes to the MOE should be made upon request by the jurisdictions. Also, adjustments to the MOE and enforcement activity minimums would create additional flexibility for the jurisdictions.

Another recommendation to improve these safety grant programs is to provide greater spending flexibility for jurisdictions within MCSAP. Activities that are primarily eligible for MCSAP funding are the national program elements, which include driver and vehicle inspections; traffic enforcement; compliance reviews, carrier interventions, investigations and new entrant safety audits; public education and awareness; and data collection and quality. There are some activities and expenses not currently covered under MCSAP, which limits how jurisdictions are able to spend MCSAP funds. Creating additional spending flexibility by expanding MCSAP eligibility would allow jurisdictions to spend MCSAP funds in ways that meet their needs, maximizing the benefits of MCSAP funds.

Additionally, FMCSA administers the Commercial Motor Vehicle Enforcement Training and Support Grant, which Congress created to provide for the development and delivery of certification training to state and local commercial motor vehicle inspectors. In order to improve the training of inspectors, CVSA recommends a series of improvements to the structure and administration of the Enforcement Training and Support Grant.

First, CVSA seeks language clarifying that the program that trains and qualifies existing inspectors to qualify as instructors to deliver the certification training to state personnel under this grant are included as part of the program. The current Enforcement Training and Support Grant is only applied to the development and of certification training to state and local enforcement personnel seeking to become certified as a CMV inspector, excluding the inspectors who serve as instructors for the courses. These instructors, who are also state personnel and inspectors, are a critical part of the training process and their training should be part of the same program. In addition to the overall improvement to the quality of training instructors are receiving and the administrative benefits of consolidating all state and local roadside inspector and instructor training into one program, this clarification would match the intentions of the creation of the program in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.

Another recommendation to improve the Enforcement Training and Support Grant is to implement a multi-year cycle. The Enforcement Training and Support Grant currently operates on an annual award cycle, which contains multiple downsides for training delivery. First, a single year of funding impacts the grant recipient's ability to implement a comprehensive training program reliably and consistently. Additionally, the administrative burden of annually applying for a single year of funding is cumbersome on grantees, as well as the agency. Further, a multi-year grant cycle would provide the agencies and inspectors receiving the critical certification training with much needed stability and continuity. In addition, a multi-year grant cycle would ensure consistency with the delivery of the enforcement training program, as well as give the grant recipient the opportunity to deliver on longer terms goals and objectives. Finally, transitioning to a multi-year grant cycle would reduce the administrative burden of soliciting and awarding the grant program for FMCSA. CVSA supports a multi-year grant cycle for the Enforcement Training and Support Grant.

A final improvement for the Enforcement Training and Support Grant is to ensure that the organization comprised of state government agencies responsible for the oversight and implementation of commercial motor vehicle enforcement activities is the single grant recipient. The Commercial Motor Vehicle Enforcement Training and Support Grant program provides critical training to prepare state commercial motor vehicle inspectors with the training they need to conduct roadside safety inspections, compliance reviews and safety audits on the motor carrier community, ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations. It is critical that this training be comprehensive, effective and consistent. In order to ensure the quality of the training, the state agencies responsible for motor carrier enforcement programs strongly support limiting the Commercial Motor Vehicle Enforcement Training and Support Grant program to one recipient and that the program be delivered only by the organization comprised of state government agencies responsible for the oversight and implementation of commercial motor vehicle enforcement activities. Identifying a single entity would lessen administrative burdens for FMCSA as the agency would only need to oversee a single entity that is offering the training.

CONCLUSION

As Congress begins to work on surface transportation reauthorization legislation, it is important that highway safety be a key focus of the investments made by Con-

gress. In addition to addressing the topics discussed in the February 12 hearing, CVSA encourages the subcommittee to include fatigued driving among driver behavior that impacts roadway safety and to consider solutions to mitigate fatigue, such as capping a commercial motor vehicle driver's use of personal conveyance. Additionally, safety technologies should be utilized to improve roadway safety, which includes the universal electronic vehicle identifier. CVSA also encourages the committee to identify solutions, such as the Enhanced Commercial Motor Vehicle Inspection Program, to demonstrate that ADS-equipped CMVs are properly maintained and safe. Lastly, to improve the administration of various safety grants, CVSA supports multiple improvements to reduce administrative hurdles and improve efficiency within the grant process. These improvements would allow grant recipients the greatest amount of resources to deliver results benefiting roadway safety. The Alliance's recommendations align with the subcommittee's task of identifying solutions to improve highway safety as part of its work on future surface transportation reauthorization legislation.

Letter of February 14, 2025, to Hon. David Rouzer, Chairman, and Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, from Michael Gallant, Director, Industry Relations and Government Affairs, HaulHub Technologies, Submitted for the Record by Hon. David Rouzer

FEBRUARY 14, 2025.

The Honorable DAVID ROUZER,
Chairman,
Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. House of Representatives, 2165 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515.

The Honorable ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON,
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. House of Representatives, 2163 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515.

Subject: Subcommittee on Highways and Transit (Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure) Hearing "America Builds: A Review of Programs to Address Roadway Safety"

DEAR CHAIRMAN ROUZER, RANKING MEMBER HOLMES NORTON, AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE:

HaulHub Technologies appreciates the opportunity to offer this statement for the record as the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure reviews programs to address roadway safety. We are a premier research and development organization, headquartered in Waltham, Massachusetts, dedicated to pioneering data collection, automation, and advanced technology solutions for state departments of transportation, tollways, and turnpikes nationwide. With a core focus on public infrastructure, HaulHub specializes in addressing complex challenges through rigorous data management and the deployment of secure, scalable technologies that improve operational efficiency while enhancing safety for both workers and the traveling public.

Since the passage of the last highway reauthorization bill, significant federal investment has revitalized our nation's road and highway networks, driving both infrastructure growth and technological advancement. This funding has been pivotal in enhancing the resilience of America's infrastructure and preparing it to meet future demands. As Congress debates and considers the successor to the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), this hearing comes at a pivotal moment—highlighting the urgent need to build on this progress by prioritizing the safety of our workforce, improving the efficiency of infrastructure projects, and safeguarding the well-being of the traveling public.

Work zones remain among the most hazardous areas on our roadways. In 2022 alone, 891 people were killed and 37,701 were injured in work zone crashes, occurring not only within active construction zones but also on approaches and exits where complex traffic patterns and unpredictable driver behavior increase risks. While these numbers reflect a decline from the 2002 peak of 1,186 fatalities, the long-term trend is alarming: work zone fatalities have risen 52% since 2010. Despite

a modest decrease since 2021, we remain far from achieving the Vision Zero goal of eliminating traffic-related deaths and serious injuries.

Behind every statistic is a story of loss—a worker or motorist who didn’t return home, a family forever changed. These numbers highlight the urgent need to rethink our approach to work zone safety. Traditional measures—such as signage, barriers, law enforcement, and flaggers—remain essential, but they are no longer sufficient for the complexities of modern infrastructure projects. With technology now integral to daily life, it is critical that drivers receive real-time, accurate information to help them navigate safely. At HaulHub, we believe technology holds the key to reversing these trends and creating safer environments for both workers and the traveling public.

Our journey into work zone safety innovation began in 2022 following the tragic death of a motorist at a construction site in Delaware. This tragic event prompted the Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT) to reevaluate work zone communication, asking a critical question: How can real-time construction data, such as e-Ticketing, help us better inform the traveling public about active construction zones and improve safety?

e-Ticketing, a core focus of the 6th iteration of the Federal Highway Administration’s Every Day Counts (EDC) program, was initially designed to streamline material tracking and reduce risks for workers handling paper tickets on job sites. However, we soon realized its potential extended far beyond project management. The real-time data captured through e-Ticketing, combined with telematics from connected construction equipment, provides a powerful, resilient work zone activity source. This information can feed into consumer mapping platforms like Waze or systems like the Work Zone Data Exchange (WZDx), alerting drivers in real time when job sites are active and workers are present—enhancing situational awareness, reducing driver uncertainty, and lowering the risk of collisions.

Building on this realization, DelDOT submitted a grant application for the Advanced Digital Construction Management Systems (ADCMS) Grants, funded through the IIJA. This led to the launch of the “*Accelerating Digital Inspection Practices with Connected Machinery*” project—an initiative designed to transform how work zones are managed, monitored, and protected.

DelDOT partnered with innovative transportation agencies, including Iowa DOT, Nebraska DOT, and Louisiana DOTD, with HaulHub serving as the technology partner. Together, we are deploying technologies that fundamentally change work zone operations. This initiative isn’t just about adding new tools—it’s about rethinking the entire framework of work zone safety in dynamic, high-risk environments.

Through the grant project, we have integrated connected equipment with real-time data analytics to create smarter, safer work environments. In the first year of the program, *over 1,100 pieces of construction equipment* have been connected to the HaulHub platform by contractor partners, actively supporting daily operations across participating agencies. This connectivity enables continuous, real-time data transmission from active work zones, providing transportation agencies with unprecedented situational awareness. With these insights, project managers and safety personnel can proactively identify and address emerging risks, reducing incidents and enhancing work zone safety.

In addition to equipment connectivity, the project has transformed how work zones are created and managed. Since April 2024, *over 479 digital work zones* have been established through the ADCMS system, enabling dynamic, real-time updates that enhance both worker safety and public awareness. Unlike static signs that indicate planned construction without confirming active work, digital work zones provide *real-time construction alerts* that inform drivers when workers are present. Integrated with navigation systems, these alerts reach drivers before their trips and while on the road, allowing them to slow down, adjust their driving, or choose alternate routes. This proactive, accurate information helps maintain driver attentiveness, reduces crash risks, and creates safer conditions for workers and the traveling public.

Another key advancement has been the deployment of *automated worker presence detection*. The ADCMS platform has logged *over 748,000 automated worker presence events*, providing real-time alerts about active construction job sites. These automated events are crucial for providing accurate safety feeds that are resilient to human error found in other reporting methods. Moreover, by integrating this information with driver-facing systems—such as navigation apps—we can warn motorists of active work zones and worker presence ahead, giving them time to slow down and drive cautiously.

Public safety communication has also been significantly improved through the automatic generation of *Work Zone Data Exchange (WZDx)* safety feeds. These feeds deliver timely, accurate information to navigation applications and traffic manage-

ment systems, enhancing driver awareness and reducing the risk of sudden maneuvers or last-minute decisions that can lead to crashes. This real-time connection between work zones and the traveling public represents a major step forward in proactive safety management.

None of this progress would be possible without the dedicated training and support provided to state agencies and their teams. To date, hundreds of construction inspectors have been trained on ADCMS technologies through in-person workshops, on-demand modules, and webinars. This comprehensive approach ensures frontline personnel are fully equipped to utilize these tools effectively, fostering a culture of safety from project planning through execution.

While the *“Accelerating Digital Inspection Practices with Connected Machinery”* project has demonstrated the transformative power of technology in improving work zone safety, the work is far from over. Scaling these solutions nationwide requires sustained federal support. To accelerate adoption and maximize impact, we respectfully urge the Committee to consider the following recommendations:

1. *Focus Funding for the ADCMS Grant Program on Technology:* While the \$100 million program, made possible through the IIJA, has been instrumental in jumpstarting innovation, it represents just the beginning of what’s needed. To achieve meaningful, nationwide reductions in work zone fatalities and injuries, federal support must be expanded to help states scale these solutions, integrate them into long-term safety strategies, and keep pace with evolving technology.
2. *Request FHWA to Provide a Comprehensive Update on Work Zone Safety Contingency Funds:* Authorized three years ago, the Work Zone Safety Contingency Funds program holds significant potential to enhance work zone safety. However, clearer guidance and additional support from FHWA could help maximize its impact. We urge FHWA to update Congress on fund usage, availability, progress with state DOTs, and barriers to broader deployment. Leveraging these funds can help state DOTs adapt to evolving safety priorities, including the procurement of technologies that support the long-term success of programs like DelDOT’s grant-funded initiatives.
3. *Promote Data Standardization:* Encourage the development of national standards for work zone data sharing to improve interoperability across agencies, contractors, and technology platforms.
4. *Foster Public-Private Partnerships:* Strengthen collaboration between state DOTs, technology innovators, and industry stakeholders to accelerate the modernization of infrastructure construction and ensure that safety technologies are both effective and scalable.

Work zone safety is not just a policy issue—it’s a matter of life and death for the men and women who build and maintain our nation’s infrastructure. The data from 2022 serves as a sobering reminder of the work that remains, but the results from the *“Accelerating Digital Inspection Practices with Connected Machinery”* project offer hope and a clear path forward. By embracing technology and fostering collaboration, we can create safer work zones, protect lives, and ensure every worker and traveler returns home safely.

HaulHub Technologies is committed to this mission, and we stand ready to support the Committee’s efforts to advance solutions that save lives. In addition, I have attached a recent update from the DelDOT ADCMS Team, which provides a more detailed overview of their findings from the grant program. Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. Should you or your staff require any additional information, I am available to provide further details or answer any questions the Committee may have.

Respectfully submitted,

MICHAEL GALLANT,
Director, Industry Relations and Government Affairs, HaulHub Technologies.

cc: The Honorable Sam Graves, Chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
The Honorable Rick Larsen, Ranking Member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

**Statement of the National Safety Council, Submitted for the Record by
Hon. David Rouzer**

Dear Chair Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, Chair Rouzer, and Ranking Member Norton:

Thank you for allowing the National Safety Council (NSC) to submit this Statement for the Record for today's House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Highways and Transit hearing titled: "America Builds: A Review of Programs to Address Roadway Safety." Given the continued public health crisis unfolding on our nation's roadways, NSC believes this hearing could not come at a more opportune time. The federal government's robust support of programs to improve behavioral safety, build stakeholder coalitions, and improve roadway infrastructure will be critical to ensuring the United States meets its mission of zero roadway fatalities and serious injuries in our lifetime. NSC implores the members of this subcommittee to examine federal road safety programs with an eye towards expanding opportunities and eligibility for proven countermeasures that will lead to a sizable reduction in roadway crashes. NSC looks forward to working with the committee and members of the 119th Congress to advance these efforts.

THE NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL

NSC is America's leading nonprofit safety advocate and has been for over 110 years. As a mission-based organization, we work to eliminate the leading causes of preventable death and injury, focusing our efforts on the workplace and roadways. We create a culture of safety to keep people safer at work and beyond so they can live their fullest lives. Our more than 13,000 member companies represent nearly 41,000 U.S. worksites.

THE STATE OF THE ROADWAY SAFETY CRISIS

Our current road safety metrics are deeply troubling. According to Injury Facts, 46,027 people died in fatal motor vehicle crashes in 2022.¹ Medically consulted injuries in motor vehicle crashes totaled 5.2 million in 2022, and total motor vehicle injuries cost the United States economy an estimated \$481.2 billion that year.² Risky driving behaviors such as speeding, alcohol-impaired driving, drugged and distracted driving continue to be the leading causal factors behind crashes. 2023 fatality estimates for vulnerable road users (VRUs) suggest a slight decline, but these estimates are still above 2019 levels.³ This issue affects workplaces too: the leading cause of death at work is involvement in a transportation incident with a motorized land vehicle.⁴ It's time we do better.

The United States desperately needs a long-term vision, required by statute, that engages United States Department of Transportation leadership with transportation stakeholders that are committing to reaching zero fatalities and serious injuries by 2050. This vision allows technology providers, construction firms, motor vehicle manufacturers and safety advocates the ability to think collaboratively about safety measures that will make long term impacts and save lives.

To enable change in our roadway safety culture, a major shift is needed at our regulatory agencies. Agencies, such as the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), have become risk averse—thus keeping our technological innovation at a standstill. The in-vehicle technology to eliminate alcohol-impaired driving exists. The in-vehicle technology to prevent pediatric vehicular heatstroke exists. The in-vehicle technology to prevent motor vehicle crashes exists. Congress must work together with NHTSA to ensure motor vehicles are the safest they can be on our roads, while supporting behavioral programs to ensure drivers make good decisions behind the wheel.

USING FORMULA FUNDING TO ENGAGE WORKPLACE AUDIENCES

NSC collaborates with federal partners to deliver programs that seek to address our nation's unique roadway safety crisis. Funded in part by the NHTSA Section 402 State and Community Highway Safety Grant program, NSC delivers *Our Driv-*

¹ <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/motor-vehicle/overview/introduction/>

² Ibid.

³ <https://www.ghsa.org/sites/default/files/2024-06/2023%20Pedestrian%20Traffic%20Fatalities%20by%20State.pdf>

⁴ <https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/work/safety-topics/roadway-incidents/>

ing Concern to four states: Texas, Nebraska, Louisiana and Ohio.⁵ *Our Driving Concern* is an employer traffic safety program that provides employers with resources and tools to reduce traffic crashes that involve their employees. Texas employers have access to a myriad of trainings on topics ranging from workplace impairment to managing vehicle fleet recalls. In Louisiana, the *Our Driving Concern* program addresses additional topics such as young drivers in the workplace, speeding, occupant protection, and eliminating distracting driving. This program is successful with employers touting a reduction in on-the-job crashes and lower insurance claims.⁶ With the support of our federal partners, organizations dedicated to roadway safety can make these programs even stronger through targeted improvements.

THE SAFE SYSTEM APPROACH IS A PROVEN FRAMEWORK TO ELIMINATE TRAFFIC CRASHES

NSC encourages the Committee to continue prioritizing the Safe System Approach framework to eliminate fatal roadway crashes and serious injuries. The Safe System Approach is an internationally vetted policy approach to eliminating motor-vehicle crashes. A safe transportation system is dependent upon the shared responsibility of both users and operators to use the system as intended and improve the system when flaws are discovered. By committing to factors such as occupant protection, speed reduction, redundant infrastructure, advanced vehicle safety technology and timely post-crash care, the network of protections increase the likelihood of someone's life being saved if a crash does occur.

NSC continues to believe NHTSA is in a unique position to further the visibility of the Safe System Approach through administration of State Highway Safety Grants. These grants cover differing roadway safety topics and invite a multitude of stakeholders to engage in the necessary task at hand: making generational progress on our road safety goals. However, for this visibility to be impactful, performance measures related to the Safe System Approach must influence final project selection by states. Additionally, NHTSA must help states create uniform crash reporting processes that analyze all contributing factors, ensuring grant programs adequately address the specific roadway safety crises affecting each individual state.

OPPORTUNITIES TO STRENGTHEN FORMULA-FUNDED ROADWAY SAFETY GRANTS

In August 2024, NSC submitted public comments to NHTSA on its Minimum Performance Measures for the State Highway Safety Grant Program Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM). These comments offered sound advice for NHTSA to consider as it implements changes in its required performance measures for highway safety grants. These considerations are still relevant and offer the Committee guidance as it seeks to oversee the effectiveness of highway safety grants.

While the goals of the existing traffic safety performance measures are laudable, in reality they are not effectively meeting the needs of traffic safety professionals to truly eliminate roadway fatalities and serious injuries. Currently, the top three performance measures that must be coordinated do not properly address crash and person-level data needs. For example, many state crash reports can list only one contributing factor to a crash. This prevents a comprehensive approach to understanding the interlinked causal factors of a traffic crash. If both impairment and speeding were contributing factors to a crash, that data must be properly noted so that grant recipients can create programs for states that address both factors. NSC urges you to require NHTSA update its reporting requirements so state-level safety practitioners can assess relevant roadway safety topics for trainings, whitepapers and educational programs.

In October of 2019, the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a study highlighting how “improved reporting could clarify States’ achievement of fatality and injury targets.”⁷ The survey found that a discrepancy existed between how [State Highway Safety Office] SHSO officials viewed NHTSA performance measures and how project selection was informed, i.e., whether there was an explicit link between performance measures and funded projects.⁸ This discrepancy moves grantees away from adopting a comprehensive approach to create and assess impactful programming due to focuses on alternative data-driven analysis—such as state data and cost-benefit analysis to determine project proposals.

⁵ <https://ourdrivingconcern.org/#overview>

⁶ <https://tx.ourdrivingconcern.org/>

⁷ <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-20-53.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-20-53-highlights.pdf>

The GAO survey also called into question legacy formulas and their lack of a direct positive relationship to positive “outcomes or grantees’ performance.”⁹ Current funding percentages do not follow the problem analysis process as described in the Uniform Procedures for Highway Safety Grant Programs and limit States’ ability to invest in programs that have potential to drive adoption of the Safe System Approach to reduce roadway serious injuries and fatalities. For example, Section 405(d) or Impaired Driving Countermeasures grant funds, is funded at 53% of the National Priority Safety Program.¹⁰ However, in a state, alcohol-impaired driving fatalities may only account for 29% of the overall traffic fatalities. Misaligned percentage formulas limit a state’s ability to implement comprehensive programs in the areas of greatest need. NSC supports congressional efforts in the forthcoming surface transportation reauthorization bill to reform behavioral formulas so programs can be aligned equally to the percentage of risky driving behaviors a state is experiencing.

DISCRETIONARY SPENDING GRANT PROGRAMS HELP SMALLER COMMUNITIES

While rightsizing formula funding for priority roadway safety topics is a righteous undertaking, NSC would be remiss to not acknowledge the robust discretionary funding allocated towards roadway safety projects in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Program has allocated to date over \$2.9 billion dollars in federal funding to all 50 states and Puerto Rico to address roadway safety challenges in local communities.¹¹ This funding has been awarded to rural and urban communities alike—with 44% of award recipients having populations below 50,000 residents.¹²

NSC encourages the Committee to reauthorize the SS4A program in the upcoming Surface Transportation bill. The program has already begun to improve transportation safety planning, redesign infrastructure at the municipal and county level, enhance the transportation system for people with disabilities and support rapid post-crash care. Because of the small nature of these communities, these projects often get overlooked due to the fact that decision-makers may feel projects are cost prohibitive. However, there is no appropriate cost to put on a safety enhancement that will save lives and reduce serious injuries. Discretionary spending is essential for communities who may not ever need a massive infrastructure project such as a highway or a bridge but may need a sidewalk or protected bike lane for micro-mobility users. SS4A closes the gap by making sure small communities have access to substantive federal monetary resources and technical assistance. It is imperative that this program continue.

While NSC believes there are always opportunities to find efficiencies within federal spending and regulations, we must not slow down on the progress we are making to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries. Robust federal funding for proven safety countermeasures and improved safety performance measures are needed to continue to advance a multitude of solutions to better safety on our nation’s roadways. NSC looks forward to continued engagement with members of this subcommittee and staff to brainstorm solutions which improve the impact of formula and discretionary spending programs so lives continue to be saved.

CONCLUSION

We are at a critical juncture where the decisions made today will impact future generations to come. Our roadway fatality and serious injury metrics are not subsiding in impactful ways. Only through a multi-faceted approach that combines good driver behavior, advanced vehicle technology, redundant infrastructure and accessible public transit will the United States begin to see significant changes in roadway safety culture. We will solve this problem if we work together to invest in proven safety countermeasures.

⁹ <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-20-53.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://www.ghsa.org/about/federal-grant-programs/405>

¹¹ <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/SS4A>

¹² https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2024-11/SS4A-Fact-Sheet_FY-2024.pdf

Letter of February 12, 2025, to Hon. Sam Graves, Chairman, and Hon. Rick Larsen, Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, from the National Work Zone Safety Coalition, Submitted for the Record by Hon. David Rouzer

FEBRUARY 12, 2025.

The Honorable SAM GRAVES,
Chairman,
Transportation and Infrastructure, 1135 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC 20510.

The Honorable RICK LARSEN,
Ranking Member,
Transportation and Infrastructure, 2163 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20510.

DEAR CHAIRMAN GRAVES AND RANKING MEMBER LARSEN,

On behalf of the National Work Zone Safety Coalition (the coalition), thank you for making roadway safety a top, bipartisan priority for the committee. The coalition appreciates the valuable opportunity provided for stakeholder engagement during the hearing “*America Builds: A Review of Programs to Address Roadway Safety*”. Our coalition represents wide-ranging and diverse stakeholders in the road construction industry, including equipment manufacturers, project planning and design engineers, traffic safety experts, and road/bridge construction contractors. We all have a shared priority: get workers safely home to their families.

Sadly, over the past several years, fatalities and injuries in highway work zones have continued to increase. In 2022, 891 people lost their lives in work zones and an additional 37,000 were injured. Many of these injuries and fatalities can be attributed to, or exacerbated by, driver behavior, including driving under the influence, speeding, and aggressive or distracted driving. Congress has an opportunity during the next highway reauthorization to advance and support state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) and the road construction industry on this critical topic—enhancing work zone safety (WZS). For example, numerous states have initiated and adopted best practices and laws, such as “move over” legislation, which requires drivers to slow down and/or move over when they approach emergency and road construction vehicles. States have also seen better (work zone) safety outcomes by increasing enforcement of speeding and distracted / drunk driving. In addition to increased enforcement, education for new and young drivers can also help change driver behavior, long term. For example, last year Oklahoma became the first state to require specific work zone training for student drivers—and by the end of this calendar year, they will have trained over 100,000 students.

While different states work to implement many of the safety initiatives above, it is imperative that Congress supports those state efforts that help keep road construction workers and the motoring public safe. Below are several opportunities that the coalition believes will make work zones safer and ultimately save lives. We look toward Congress to support the initiatives below.

- 1). Create a federal work zone safety task group between state DOTs, Federal Highway Administration, law enforcement, road construction industry leaders, and traffic safety experts to provide recommendations to Congress and states on effective strategies, initiatives, and best practices to keep road workers safe.
- 2). Implement the federally allocated Work Zone Safety Contingency Funds (WZSCFs) in all 50 states. Currently, these funds have been adopted and used only in a handful of states, such as Texas, Michigan, and Washington. WZSCFs were established by a bipartisan provision in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and were designed to cover cost escalation on road construction projects where unforeseen safety concerns were not identified prior to project award. These funds can be used for any additional safety measures, including police presence, traffic barriers, and signage, among others.
- 3). Prioritize educating the next generation of drivers by requiring or incentivizing all 50 states to implement work zone safety education in their driver education programs.
- 4). Incentivize states, when possible, to close roads during active construction. This provides the clearest and best working environment for highway workers and the motoring public, while also decreasing mobilization costs and speeding up project delivery.

Thank you for considering the above initiatives and we welcome further dialogue. Please feel free to utilize the National Work Zone Safety Coalition as a resource,

as you draft the next highway reauthorization. If you have any questions or would like more information about any of the content above, please reach out to Mitch Baldwin <mbaldwin@asphaltpavement.org>, Director of Government Affairs at the National Asphalt Pavement Association (443-440-2044).

Sincerely,

NATIONAL ASPHALT PAVEMENT
ASSOCIATION.
AMERICAN TRAFFIC SAFETY SERVICES
ASSOCIATION.
ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS.
PORTLAND CEMENT ASSOCIATION.
NATIONAL SAND, STONE AND GRAVEL
ASSOCIATION.

NATIONAL READY MIXED CONCRETE
ASSOCIATION.
AMERICAN CONCRETE PAVEMENT
ASSOCIATION.
ASSOCIATED EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTORS.
ASSOCIATION OF EQUIPMENT
MANUFACTURERS.
AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CIVIL ENGINEERS.

cc: The Honorable David Rouzer, Chairman, Highways and Transit Subcommittee
The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton, Ranking Member, Highways and Transit Subcommittee

Letter of February 11, 2025, to Hon. David Rouzer, Chairman, and Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, from Leslie Kimball, Executive Director, Responsibility.org, Submitted for the Record by Hon. David Rouzer

FEBRUARY 11, 2025.

The Honorable DAVID ROUZER,
Chair,
Highways and Transit Subcommittee, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure,
2165 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515-6256.

The Honorable ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON,
Ranking Member,
Highways and Transit Subcommittee, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure,
2165 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC 20515-6256.

DEAR CHAIRMAN ROUZER AND RANKING MEMBER NORTON,

On behalf of the Foundation for Advancing Alcohol Responsibility (Responsibility.org), thank you for your leadership in holding this hearing titled “*America Builds: A Review of Programs to Address Roadway Safety*”. As the Subcommittee prepares for this important hearing, Responsibility.org would like to draw your attention to several of the critical programs that aim to prevent impaired driving on our nation’s roads.

For over 30 years, Responsibility.org has led the fight to eliminate drunk and all forms of impaired driving and underage drinking. We are a national not-for-profit organization funded by the following leading distillers: Bacardi U.S.A., Inc.; Beam Suntory; Brown-Forman; Campari Group; Constellation Brands, Inc; DIAGEO; Edrington; Hotaling, Mast-Jägermeister US; Moët Hennessy USA; Ole Smoky; Pernod Ricard USA; and William and Grant & Sons. Responsibility.org has transformed countless lives through programs that bring individuals, families, and communities together to guide a lifetime of conversations around alcohol responsibility and to offer proven solutions to stop impaired driving. You can find more information about our policy positions and resources on our website under “Resources for Policy-makers.”

ADVANCING THE HALT ACT

Years of steadfast advocacy work has yielded tremendous results towards our goal of eliminating drunk driving. Alongside Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA), and other partners, Responsibility.org worked to secure passage of the Honoring Abbas Family Legacy to Terminate (HALT) Drunk Driving Act as Section 24220 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Since enactment, Responsibility.org and our partners have supported implementation of this lifesaving law, including through the Advanced Impaired Driving Prevention Technology Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) issued by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) at the end of 2023.

While Responsibility.org is disappointed that the November 2024 deadline for NHTSA to issue a final rule has passed, our advocacy focus will continue to concentrate on advancing this lifesaving rulemaking. Additionally, Responsibility.org

will continue to combat misinformation about the HALT Act and looks forward to serving as a resource to the committee on this issue during the 119th Congress.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION REAUTHORIZATION

Responsibility.org looks forward to engaging with the Committee as it works to develop its next surface transportation reauthorization legislation. Areas of interest include revisiting two of the National Priority Safety Program impaired driving prevention grants included in the IIJA (Section 24105) that are in need of technical corrections:

- The ignition interlock incentive grant language was updated to allow more states to qualify for incentives; however, the current language requires an offender to install devices on all vehicles registered to them, owned by them, or leased to them, which is onerous and can be ineffective. Responsibility.org and our traffic safety partners have supported revisions to this grant program to require individuals to only operate vehicles equipped with an ignition interlock device. Not only would this revision be consistent with best practices, but it would also allow as many states as possible to qualify for the ignition interlock incentive grant.
- Responsibility.org was thrilled that provisions of the Multiple Substance Impaired Driving Prevention Act were included in the IIJA, including allowing utilization of backfill officers during drug recognition expert (DRE) training; however, the final language incorporated into the IIJA is overly prescriptive and challenging in practice.

In addition to revisiting existing authorizations included in the IIJA, Responsibility.org looks forward to working with the Committee and our partners in the traffic safety stakeholder community to explore new federal initiatives as part of the next surface transportation bill. While we anticipate a variety of impaired driving policies to be debated, Responsibility.org is especially interested in:

- Exploring policies surrounding testing for cannabis impairment and related data collection needs. Multiple-substance impaired drivers are high-risk impaired drivers who need specific interventions and countermeasures, and this must be an important area of focus for the Committee.
- Building upon the findings of a Responsibility.org-supported U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) study related to the reporting and interstate sharing of data on impaired-driving offenses that found states face challenges collecting complete impaired driving data due to staff and training issues as well as a lack of equipment and technology.

Responsibility.org appreciates the Subcommittee's focus on roadway safety early in the 119th Congress and looks forward to working closely with the House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee on important measures to prevent drunk and impaired driving. If we can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact Responsibility.org SVP of Government Relations Kelly Poulsen at kelly.poulsen@responsibility.org.

Sincerely,

LESLIE KIMBALL,
Executive Director, Responsibility.org.



Letter of February 26, 2025, to Hon. David Rouzer, Chairman, and Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, from Stephanie Manning, Chief Government Affairs Officer, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Submitted for the Record by Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton

FEBRUARY 26, 2025.

The Honorable DAVID ROUZER,
Chair,
Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515.

The Honorable ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON,
Ranking Member,
Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, U.S. House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515.

DEAR CHAIRMAN ROUZER AND RANKING MEMBER HOLMES NORTON:

Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) requests a submission to the hearing record in response to Representative Thomas Massie's misinformed statements regarding advanced impaired driving prevention technology during the Transportation and Infrastructure Highways and Transit Subcommittee hearing on February 12, 2025, entitled "America Builds: A Review of Programs to Address Roadway Safety." MADD is a non-profit organization with one goal: a permanent end to drunk and drugged driving. MADD represents families devastated by the impacts of drunk and drugged driving across the U.S., advocating for solutions which harness technology, data, and best practices across prevention efforts.

As part of its crucial mission, MADD victims and survivors successfully advocated for the passage of the bipartisan Honoring the Abbas Family Legacy to Terminate (HALT) Drunk Driving Act, in 2021, which directs the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to develop a federal motor vehicle safety standard (FMVSS) for advanced impaired driving prevention technology that passively and seamlessly detects and stops drunk driving in all new cars.

In January 2024, DOT's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) published an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) related to equipping cars with life-saving technology to end drunk driving in new vehicle models. In March 2024, the comment period closed for the Notice, collecting over 18,000 comments in two months. In the Notice, NHTSA recognized the concerning stall in progress related to deterring drunk driving in recent years. In accordance with the bipartisan HALT Act, NHTSA has two more years to complete the rule-making mandate that all new vehicles come equipped with anti-drunk driving technology to stop this deadly and illegal driving behavior.

MADD thanks the House Transportation and Infrastructure Highways and Transit Subcommittee for holding the hearing, "America Builds: A Review of Programs to Address Roadway Safety." Representative Thomas Massie spoke against the feasibility of implementing these technological safeguards in a timely manner. Rep. Massie falsely suggested HALT's objective is "not looking for blood alcohol levels," and the technology is a "kill switch" that will deploy and stop the vehicle if it feels the "driver is not performing well," and insisted the technology is not ready for vehicles, citing a potential for false positives.

Rep. Massie's assertion that the technology outlined in Section 24220 of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) "Advanced Impaired Driving Technology," is not looking for blood alcohol levels is false. Section 1B of the law states, "to fulfill the HALT Act requirement, technology must passively and accurately detect whether the blood alcohol concentration of a driver is equal to or greater" than .08 BAC. MADD contends that the entire purpose of Section 24220 is to end a driver's ability to operate a vehicle while intoxicated, saving more than 10,000 lives ever year, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS).

Rep. Massie continues to falsely assert that the law intends to install a "kill switch" in every vehicle that will deploy and stop the vehicle from operating if it feels the "driver is not performing well." Section 24220 is more specific and defined than "not performing well." The law states under the section for "Advanced Drunk and Impaired Driving Prevention Technology" definition that the technology must accurately identify whether a driver is impaired. The technology will determine if a driver's "poor performance" is due to substance intoxication and prevent or limit vehicle operation.

With regard to Rep. Massie's statement that advanced impaired driving technology does not exist, has the potential for false positives, and will not be ready for deployment in all vehicles by 2026 is false. The Federal Government and Original

Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) have invested millions of dollars through a public private partnership for the Driver Alcohol Detection System for Safety (DADSS). DADSS has stated that their developed technology will be fleet ready in 2025. Additionally, Section 24220 does not state that technology must be deployed in every vehicle by 2026. Rather, the law states OEMs have two to three years following the issuance of a Final Rule to implement the technology into new vehicles. Advanced impaired driving prevention technology currently exists, and General Motors CEO Mary Barra has confirmed that the auto industry is working to implement the technology stating, “We’ve been working with regulators on that . . . We have technology to do that . . . I think that’s technology that’s coming that I think is going to be good for everyone.”

With regard to Rep. Massie’s statement that the technology presents a potential prevalence of false positives that will strand drivers, MADD is fully aware that a vehicle technology system that is not accurate and falsely prevents vehicles from lawfully operating would undermine public confidence—and thus the efficacy—of the law and such detection technology. Rep. Massie’s concerns are being actively addressed in NHTSA’s rulemaking deliberations as required by statute. NHTSA’s statutory rulemaking authority under the bipartisan HALT Act is directly tied to the agency’s organic rulemaking authority under section 30111 of the Motor Vehicle Safety Act (MVSA). The statute states that all safety standards must be “practicable,” and NHTSA must consider whether the standard is “reasonable, practicable, and appropriate.” As a result of these statutory guardrails, NHTSA acknowledged in its ANPRM that whatever technology or suite of technologies that are eventually adopted to fulfill HALT’s mandate, vehicles must have an exceptionally high accuracy rate without false positives.

Lastly and most importantly, MADD would like to highlight the urgency of permanently ending drunk driving. Every 79 seconds, someone is killed or injured in a drunk-driving crash. Additionally, nearly one in three traffic crash fatalities in the U.S. involve drunk drivers. It is crucial to remember that the bipartisan HALT Act is addressing *illegal* behavior that puts the public at risk. Every statistic is a person. Recognizing the weight of this issue, MADD believes that Members of Congress and those in the Administration should not impede progress on promulgating a safety standard that will save more than 10,000 lives every year. MADD, bolstered by its own membership and stakeholders across the traffic safety community, urges NHTSA to prioritize implementation of the bipartisan HALT Act and dedicate all necessary resources towards completing its legal obligation under the law. Eradicating drunk driving and the countless deaths and injuries that result therefrom can be a reality. It will take the political will of federal public policy makers—both at the Department of Transportation and in Congress—to fulfill the promise of the bipartisan HALT Act.

Sincerely,

STEPHANIE MANNING,

Chief Government Affairs Officer, Mothers Against Drunk Driving.

cc: Rep. Sam Graves
Rep. Rick Larsen

APPENDIX

QUESTIONS FROM HON. TOM BARRETT TO HON. JAMES H. WILLOX, COMMISSIONER, CONVERSE COUNTY, WYOMING, ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES

Question 1.a. One year ago, in January of 2024, the Detroit News published an article reporting that assaults on Michigan police officers are at their highest rates since the mid-1990s. Additionally, statewide arrests are at their lowest levels in 50 years. Do you think that the threat of violence keeps police from enforcing the law, which in turn has an effect on the number of traffic accidents today?

Question 1.b. What steps can the committee take to ensure that police are safer while doing their jobs, which in turn will allow them to enforce the law more fully and help bring down the number of traffic accidents and fatalities?

ANSWER to 1.a. & 1.b. Law enforcement officers, by their very nature, are always under some level of threat, and the dynamics surrounding that threat are highly local. In my area, there has not been an increase in attacks on law enforcement, but the pressures from social media are noticeable. Even when officers do everything correctly, critics will still make themselves known.

I personally do not see a direct connection between the number of accidents and the threat of violence to law enforcement. Unfortunately, I can't think of a policy that could be included in the surface transportation bill on the federal level that would make the job of law enforcement any easier.

QUESTION FROM HON. DAVID ROUZER TO MICHAEL HANSON, DIRECTOR, MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, OFFICE OF TRAFFIC SAFETY, ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNORS HIGHWAY SAFETY ASSOCIATION

Question 1. Your testimony mentioned the increased reporting requirements for National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) grant programs. Can you elaborate on this and how it may impact safety?

ANSWER. Over the past several years there has been an increase in the administrative burden associated with the funding that states receive from NHTSA. In order to participate in NHTSA's grant programs, states are required to comply with an excessive number of program rules and qualifications. States face onerous, duplicative record-keeping and reporting requirements. This administrative red tape is taking up a significant amount of the resources that should be used for the implementation of safety programs.

An example of this is the amount of detail that NHTSA is requiring for approval of the AGAs, which was intended to be a brief annual update on planned grant activities to supplement the triennial highway safety plan. Congress intended for the restructuring of the planning and grant application process in IIJA to reduce the administrative requirements, but instead the AGA's have ballooned to several hundred pages long in order to meet all of the NHTSA requirements. The required detail has resulted in several AGAs reaching between 300–500 pages.

We have also seen other requirements in IIJA expand beyond the bill's intention like the public participation and engagement requirements which focus on reaching impacted communities in the traffic safety planning process. While GHSA supports the goal of this program, NHTSA's implementation has been heavy handed and focused on oversight of the process for implementing it not on SHSO's achieving the desired outcomes.

Across the entire Highway Safety Grant program, NHTSA's oversight activities have increased significantly, creating an increased burden on states to demonstrate

compliance. GHSA supports appropriate oversight and recognizes the importance of transparency when using federal funding, but the increased focus on oversight of the planning process for grants instead of the outcomes of the grant activities is creating a significant regulatory burden on states which in turn reduces the resources available for implementing safety programs.

The NHTSA behavioral safety programs are a critical element of tackling the roadway safety challenges that we see and SHSOs across the country are doing their best to implement meaningful programs to improve driver behavior but are bogged down by the amount of administrative red tape and limitations on how they can spend funding. These programs need to be more efficiently administered by NHTSA so that more of the federal funding can work towards improving safety instead of expending resources on meeting federal requirements to receive the funding.

QUESTION FROM HON. TOM BARRETT TO MICHAEL HANSON, DIRECTOR, MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY, OFFICE OF TRAFFIC SAFETY, ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNORS HIGHWAY SAFETY ASSOCIATION

Question 1. The disparity between the speed limits allowed for tractor trailer trucks as opposed to regular vehicles contributes each year to the number of traffic accidents and fatalities. Do you feel it might be time to raise the speed limit for tractor trailers on America's interstate highway system?

ANSWER. A significant percentage of all crashes are speeding-related. Speed plays a critical role in motor vehicle crashes, as higher speeds increase both the likelihood and severity of crashes increases. When vehicles travel at high speeds, drivers have less time to react to hazards and stopping distances become significantly longer. Higher speeds increase the force of impact in a crash, leading to more severe injuries and fatalities. Overall, maintaining safe and appropriate speed limits is essential for reducing crashes and enhancing road safety. Increases to the speed limit for commercial motor vehicles would increase the likelihood and severity of their crashes. If speed disparity poses a safety risk, it would be safer to reduce the speed for non-commercial motor vehicles so that all vehicles match the current limit for commercial vehicles.

QUESTION FROM HON. JERROLD NADLER TO CATHERINE CHASE, PRESIDENT, ADVOCATES FOR HIGHWAY AND AUTO SAFETY

Question 1. Across our nation, large truck crashes impact the lives of the truck drivers, the motoring public, and first responders alike. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) Fatal Analysis Reporting System, in 2022, 5,936 people lost their lives in such crashes, the culmination of a decade-long trend between 2012 and 2022 that saw an increase in these crashes by 50.8%. Despite this shocking statistic, and study after study that demonstrates a heavier truck is a more dangerous truck, attempts persist to allow heavier truck configurations over the 80,000-pound gross vehicle onto federal highways, which also gain access to local roads through reasonable access. The best-known study on truck size and weight was requested by Congress in 2016 from the United States Department of Transportation. This *Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study* demonstrated that a 91,000-pound semi-truck on six axles—a popular configuration touted by bigger truck supporters—is 47% more likely to be involved in a crash. Given this troubling trend, what is the position of Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety on proposed heavier truck configurations and other exemptions to current federal truck size and weight limits?

ANSWER. Since 2009, the number of fatalities in large truck crashes has increased by 76 percent.¹ In that same timespan, the number of people injured in crashes in-

¹Traffic Safety Facts 2022: A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crash Data, NHTSA, Dec. 2024, DOT HS 813 656 (Annual Report 2022). Note, the 76 percent figure represents the overall change in the number of fatalities in large truck involved crashes from 2009 to 2022. However, between 2015 and 2016 there was a change in data collection at U.S. DOT that could affect this calculation. From 2009 to 2015 the number of fatalities in truck-involved crashes increased by 21 percent, and between 2016 to 2022, it increased by 27 percent, and between 2015 and 2016, it increased by 14 percent.

volving large trucks rose by 117 percent.² In fatal two-vehicle crashes between a large truck and a passenger motor vehicle, 96 percent of the fatalities were occupants of the passenger vehicle.³ In 2022, 5,936 people were killed and over 160,000 people were injured in crashes involving large trucks.⁴

According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), traffic incidents, which include crashes, are one of the seven main causes of traffic congestion which erodes the reliability of travel time.⁵ The report notes that for truck operators, “[t]he cost of unexpected delay can add another 20 percent to 250 percent” to their hourly costs.⁶ The cost to society from crashes involving large trucks and buses was estimated to be \$128 billion in 2021, the latest year for which data is available.⁷ When adjusted solely for inflation, this figure amounts to over \$151 billion.⁸

This safety epidemic should be a clear indicator that essential protections, including federal truck size and weight limits (TSW), should not be weakened or repealed. Retaining current TSW also impacts roadway infrastructure as larger, heavier trucks could result in an increased prevalence and severity of crashes and cause increased wear and damage to our roadway infrastructure and bridges.

The American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) finds “these vital lifelines are frequently underfunded, and over 40% of the system is now in poor or mediocre condition.”⁹ In their 2021 Report Card, roads received a grade of “D,” with 43 percent in poor or mediocre condition.¹⁰ Bridges received a “C,” with 42 percent being at least 50 years old and more than 46,000 considered structurally deficient.¹¹ Moreover, our deteriorating roads are forcing the Nation’s motorists to spend nearly \$130 billion each year in extra vehicle repairs and operating costs.¹²

Federal limits on the weight and size of commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) are intended to protect truck drivers, the traveling public, and our Nation’s roads, bridges and other infrastructure components. Yet, provisions allowing larger and heavier trucks that violate or circumvent these federal laws to operate in certain states or for specific industries have often been tucked into must-pass bills to avoid public scrutiny.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study found that introducing double 33-foot trailer trucks, known as “Double 33s,” would be projected to result in 2,478 bridges requiring strengthening or replacement at an estimated one-time cost of \$1.1 billion.¹³ This figure does not account for the additional, subsequent maintenance costs which will result from longer, heavier trucks. In fact, increasing the weight of a heavy truck by only 10 percent increases bridge damage by 33 percent.¹⁴

Longer trucks come with operational difficulties such as requiring more time to pass, having larger blind zones, crossing into adjacent lanes, swinging into opposing lanes on curves and turns, and taking a longer distance to adequately brake. In fact, double trailer trucks have an 11 percent higher fatal crash rate than single trailer trucks.¹⁵ Overweight trucks also pose serious safety risk. Brake violations are a

²*Id.* Note, the 117 percent figure represents the overall change in the number of people injured in large truck involved crashes from 2009 to 2022. However, between 2015 and 2016 there was a change in data collection at U.S. DOT that could affect this calculation. From 2009 to 2015 the number of people injured in truck-involved crashes increased by 59 percent, and between 2016 to 2022, it increased by 19 percent, and between 2015 and 2015, it increased by 14 percent.

³Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), Large Trucks. <https://www.iihs.org/topics/fatalistatistics/detail/large-trucks>.

⁴Annual Report 2022.

⁵Traffic Congestion and Reliability: Trends and Advanced Strategies for Congestion Mitigation, March 2020, FHWA. Available here: https://ops.fhwa.dot.gov/congestion_report/chapter2.htm,

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷2023 Pocket Guide to Large Truck and Bus Statistics, FMCSA, Dec. 2023, RRA-23-003.

⁸CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, available at https://www.bls.gov/data/inflation_calculator.htm, calculated from Jan. 2021–Jan. 2024.

⁹<https://infrastructurereportcard.org/cat-item/roads-infrastructure/>.

¹⁰*Id.*

¹¹*Id.*

¹²*Id.*

¹³Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study: Bridge Structure Comparative Analysis Technical Report, FHWA, June 2015.

¹⁴Effect of Truck Weight on Bridge network Costs, NCHRP Report 495, National Cooperative Highway Research Program, 2003.

¹⁵An Analysis of Truck Size and Weight: Phase I—Safety, Multimodal Transportation & Infrastructure Consortium, November 2013; Memorandum from J. Matthews, Rahall Appalachian Transportation Institute, Sep. 29, 2014.

major reason for out-of-service violations.¹⁶ According to a North Carolina study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), trucks with out-of-service violations are 362 percent more likely to be involved in a crash.¹⁷ This is also troubling considering that tractor-trailers moving at 60 miles per hour are required to stop in 310 feet—the length of a football field—once the brakes are applied.¹⁸ Actual stopping distances are often much longer due to driver response time before braking and the common problem that truck brakes are often not in adequate working condition.

There is overwhelming opposition to any increases to truck size and weight limits. The public, local government officials, safety, consumer and public health groups, law enforcement, first responders, truck drivers and labor representatives, families of truck crash victims and survivors, and even Congress on a bipartisan level have all rejected attempts to increase truck size and weight. Also, the technical reports from the U.S. DOT Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study concluded there is a “profound” lack of data from which to quantify the safety impact of larger or heavier trucks and consequently recommended that no changes in the relevant truck size and weight laws and regulations be considered until data limitations are overcome.¹⁹

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) investments are improving and elevating the safety of our Nation’s roads and bridges.²⁰ Any increase to federal truck size and weight limits will undermine this objective, worsen safety problems, and divert rail traffic from privately owned freight railroads onto our already overburdened public highways. Despite claims to the contrary, bigger trucks will not result in fewer trucks. Following every past increase to federal truck size and weight limits, the number of trucks on our roads has gone up. Since 1982, when Congress last increased the gross vehicle weight limit, truck registrations have more than doubled.²¹ The U.S. DOT study also addressed this meritless assertion and found that any potential mileage efficiencies from the use of heavier trucks would be offset in just one year.²²

We urge Congress to oppose any increases to federal truck weight limits, including pilot programs and state or industry specific exemptions.

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¹⁶Roadside Inspections, Vehicle Violations: All Trucks Roadside Inspections, Vehicle Violations (2019—Calendar), FMCSA.

¹⁷Teoh E, Carter D, Smith S and McCartt A, Crash risk factors for interstate large trucks in North Carolina, *Journal of Safety Research* (2017).

¹⁸Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 49 Part 571 Section 121: Standard No. 121 Air brake systems (FMVSS 121).

¹⁹Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study, Federal Highway Administration (June 2015).

²⁰Pub. L. 117–58 (2021).

²¹2017 Annual Report.

²²Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Limits Study, Federal Highway Administration (June 2015).