

15000 Aviation Blvd., Lawndale, CA 90261.

Issued in Hawthorne, California, on April 26, 2001.

Ellsworth L. Chan,

Acting Manager, Airports Division, Western-Pacific Region.

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Federal Highway Administration

Intelligent Transportation Society of America; Public Meeting

AGENCY: Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DOT.

ACTION: Notice of Public Meeting.

SUMMARY: The Intelligent Transportation Society of America (ITS AMERICA) will hold a meeting of its Coordinating Council on Sunday, June 3, 2001. The meeting begins at 1:30 p.m. The letter designations that follow each item mean the following: (I) is an information item; (A) is an action item; (D) is a discussion item. The General Session includes the following items: (1) Housekeeping items—introductions, antitrust, previous minutes, etc.; (2) Federal Report (I/D); (3) President's Report (I/D); (4) 10-Year Program Plan & Research Agenda Update (I/D); (5) Break; (6) 511 Update (I/D); (7) Driver Focus Update (I/D); (8) Expedited Standards Update (I/D); (9) Closing Housekeeping—next meeting dates/locations, adjourn.

ITS AMERICA provides a forum for national discussion and recommendations on ITS activities including programs, research needs, strategic planning, standards, international liaison, and priorities.

The charter for the utilization of ITS AMERICA establishes this organization as an advisory committee under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) 5 U.S.C. app. 2, when it provides advice or recommendations to DOT officials on ITS policies and programs. (56 FR 9400, March 6, 1991).

DATES: The Coordinating Council of ITS AMERICA will meet on Sunday, June 3, 2001 from 1:30 p.m.–4 p.m.

ADDRESSES: Fontainebleau Hilton Resort, 4441 Collins Avenue, Miami Beach, Florida 33140. Phone: (305) 538-2000.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Materials associated with this meeting may be examined at the offices of ITS AMERICA, 400 Virginia Avenue SW., Suite 800, Washington, DC 20024. Persons needing further information or who request to speak at this meeting

should contact Debbie M. Busch at ITS AMERICA by telephone at (202) 484-2904 or by FAX at (202) 484-3483. The DOT contact is Kristy Frizzell, FHWA, HOIT, Washington, DC 20590, (202) 366-9536. Office hours are from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., e.t., Monday through Friday, except for legal holidays. (23 U.S.C. 315; 49 CFR 1.48)

Issued on: May 10, 2001.

Jeffrey Paniati,

Program Manager, ITS Joint Program Office.

[FR Doc. 01-12171 Filed 5-14-01; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

[Docket NHTSA-99-5087]

Safety Performance Standards Program Meeting

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (DOT).

ACTION: Notice of NHTSA rulemaking status meeting.

SUMMARY: This notice announces a public meeting at which NHTSA will answer questions from the public and the automobile industry regarding the agency's vehicle regulatory program.

DATES: The Agency's regular public meeting relating to its vehicle regulatory program will be held on Thursday, July 26, 2001, beginning at 9:45 a.m. and ending at approximately 12 p.m. at the BWI Airport Marriott Hotel in Baltimore, Maryland. Questions relating to the vehicle regulatory program must be submitted in writing with a diskette (Microsoft Word) by Monday, July 2, 2001, to the address shown below or by e-mail. If sufficient time is available, questions received after July 2, may be answered at the meeting. The individual, group or company submitting a question(s) does not have to be present for the question(s) to be answered. A consolidated list of the questions submitted by July 2, 2001, and the issues to be discussed, will be posted on NHTSA's web site (www.nhtsa.dot.gov) by Monday, July 23, 2001, and also will be available at the meeting. The agency will hold a second public meeting on July 26, devoted exclusively to a presentation of research and development programs. This meeting will begin at 1:30 p.m. and end at approximately 5 p.m. This meeting is described more fully in a separate announcement. The next NHTSA Public Meeting will take place on Thursday, November 15, 2001, at the

Best Western Gateway International Hotel, Romulus, Michigan.

ADDRESSES: Questions for the July 26, NHTSA Rulemaking Status Meeting, relating to the agency's vehicle regulatory program, should be submitted to Delia Lopez, NPS-01, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 5401, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590, Fax Number 202-366-4329, e-mail dlopez@nhtsa.dot.gov. The meeting will be held at the BWI Airport Marriott Hotel, 1743 West Nursery Road, Baltimore, MD 21240. The telephone number for the BWI Airport Marriott Hotel is 410-859-8300.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Delia Lopez, (202) 366-1810.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: NHTSA holds regular public meetings to answer questions from the public and the regulated industries regarding the agency's vehicle regulatory program. Questions on aspects of the agency's research and development activities that relate directly to ongoing regulatory actions should be submitted, as in the past, to the agency's Safety Performance Standards Office. Transcripts of these meetings will be available for public inspection in the DOT Docket in Washington, DC, within four weeks after the meeting. Copies of the transcript will then be available at ten cents a page, (length has varied from 80 to 150 pages) upon request to DOT Docket, Room PL-401, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590. The DOT Docket is open to the public from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The transcript may also be accessed electronically at <http://dms.dot.gov>, at docket NHTSA-99-5087. Questions to be answered at the public meeting should be organized by categories to help us process the questions into an agenda form more efficiently.

Sample Format

- I. Rulemaking
 - A. Crash avoidance
 - B. Crashworthiness
 - C. Other Rulemakings
- II. Consumer Information
- III. Miscellaneous

NHTSA will provide auxiliary aids to participants as necessary. Any person desiring assistance of "auxiliary aids" (e.g., sign-language interpreter, telecommunications devices for deaf persons (TDDs), readers, taped texts, brailled materials, or large print materials and/or a magnifying device), please contact Delia Lopez on (202) 366-1810, by COB Monday, July 23, 2001.

Issued: May 8, 2001.

Stephen R. Kratzke,

Associate Administrator for Safety Performance Standards.

[FR Doc. 01-12170 Filed 5-14-01; 8:45 am]

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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Denial of a Petition for a Defect Investigation and for Rulemaking, DP00-005

AGENCY: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), Department of Transportation.

ACTION: Denial of petition for a defect investigation and for rulemaking.

SUMMARY: This notice sets forth the reasons for the denial of a petition submitted to NHTSA under 49 U.S.C. 30162, requesting that the agency investigate an alleged safety-related defect in certain Ford pickup trucks and to begin a rulemaking proceeding. The petition is hereinafter identified as DP00-005.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For defects issues, Peter C. Ong, Office of Defects Investigation, NHTSA, 400 Seventh Street, SW., Washington, DC 20590. Telephone: (202) 366-0583. For rulemaking issues, Michael Huntley, Office of Safety Performance Standards, Telephone: (202) 366-0029.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Dr. Carl E. Nash (petitioner) submitted a petition to NHTSA by letter dated September 1, 2000, requesting, among other things, that a safety-related defect investigation be initiated with respect to the interaction of a vehicle seat belt in the model year (MY) 1997 Ford Ranger pickup truck and certain child safety seats (CSS). Specifically, the petitioner alleges that the 2-point, manually-adjusting lap belt design located in the center seating position of the MY 1997 Ford Ranger is defective because it does not securely hold certain forward-facing CSSs, such as the 1997 Cosco Touriva. Since both the MY 1996 and 1997 Ford Rangers have the same lap belt design in the center seating position, they will be the subject vehicles in this phase of the analysis. Additionally, the petitioner requests that a rulemaking be considered to prohibit this type of lap belt assembly from being used in any passenger vehicles in the future.

A review of the agency's data files, including information reported to the DOT Auto Safety Hotline, does not indicate any complaints about the lap

belt for the center seat on the subject vehicles, including when that belt is used with a CSS. Also, a review of the data for complaints about the Cosco Touriva CSSs showed no complaints referring to CSS attachment or installation problems when used in the subject vehicles, or in any other vehicles.

The subject vehicles have a 3-point combination lap and shoulder belt assembly and an air bags at the driver and outboard passenger seating positions, and a manually-adjusting lap belt assembly at the center seating position. The outboard passenger seat belt assembly has a dual locking mode belt retractor to help maintain belt tension for both the occupants and a CSS. The lap belt assembly for the center seating position has a built-in friction locking bar inside the latch plate assembly to keep the belt tight, but no retractor.

Instructions are given in the subject vehicles' owner's guides,¹ describing how to install a CSS in a seating position with a combination lap and shoulder belt, which is the outboard seating position. According to those instructions, the seat belt assembly is to be engaged in the automatic locking mode to ensure that the seat belt remains tight when used to restrain a CSS. The instructions also recommend the use of a top tether strap with forward-facing CSSs. The guide also states that when using a rear-facing infant CSS, the passenger air bag must be turned off. No instructions are given for the installation of a CSS in the center seating position, although there is no specific direction not to do so.

ODI personnel easily installed and secured a Cosco Touriva CSS in the outboard passenger seating position of a subject vehicle following the instructions provided in the vehicle's owner's guide. It was difficult to install the Touriva CSS in the center seating position because the base of the CSS was wider than the distance between the seat belt latch plate assembly exit point and the buckle assembly exit point in the bench seat. ODI also observed that when the latch plate end was inserted into the buckle, the buckle portion of the lap belt assembly protruded 5-6 inches out from the seat and was about the same height as the height of the slot in the CSS for the seat belt to pass through.

ODI personnel then checked the CSS for tightness as prescribed in the

Touriva instruction manual:² "Tilt and push the child restraint forward and to both sides." The CSS moved and loosened from the lap belt when it was tilted in the side to side direction. It appeared that the belt webbing could form a 90° angle to the latch plate assembly and prevent the engagement of the friction locking bar in the belt assembly of the vehicle. This inability of the Touriva CSS to remain tightly secured on the center seat was evident.

ODI personnel also installed another forward-facing CSS, the Gerry One-Click Model 691, in a subject vehicle. Again, ODI personnel easily installed and secured the One-Click CSS in the outboard passenger seating position. Due to its narrower base, it was also easier to install and secure in the center seating position than the Cosco Touriva CSS. In the final check for proper fit/tightness, the One-Click was "rocked from side to side" as instructed in the One-Click instruction manual,³ and it remained tight and secured to the center seat.

It was noted that even if the Cosco Touriva CSS could have been securely attached at the center seating position, its left side intruded into the driver's seating area, and therefore could interfere with the driver's ability to operate the vehicle. In addition, the driver would not be able to readily operate the floor-mounted shift lever because it would be blocked by the left-front corner of the CSS (approximately 60% of the subject vehicles were sold with a floor-mounted shift lever).

Proper interaction and fit between a vehicle and a CSS are very important. NHTSA's child passenger safety brochures advise parents and caregivers that "Not all child seats can be installed in all vehicles and all seating positions. With numerous models of child seats, almost 300 models of passenger vehicles, and the wide range of belt systems available today, correctly installing a child seat can be challenging." These brochures also caution owners that "Vehicle seats and seat belts are built for the comfort of adults, not to secure a child car seat correctly. Some child car seats cannot be used safely in certain seating positions."⁴ It is, therefore, imperative that consumers check their vehicle owner's manual and child restraint

² Cosco Touriva One-Guard models 02-014/02-015, Instruction Manual for a MY 1997 CSS, Page 7, Sections "Do You Have a Manual Belt?"

³ Evenflo/Gerry One-Click Model 691 CSS Owner's Manual, Page 11, Section "Manually Adjusted Belt and Locking Latch Plates."

⁴ NHTSA Publications DOT HS 809 011, "Buying a Safer Car for Child Passengers 2000," and DOT HS 808 302, "Are You Using It Right?"

¹ E.g., MY 1997 Ford Ranger Owner's Guide, First Printing, Pages 101-145 and MY 1996 Ford Ranger Owner's Guide, First Printing, Pages 9-40.