

Statement of the
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Before the Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
April 19, 2007

Good morning Chairman Murray, Senator Bond, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee. It is my pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the President's FY 2008 budget for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and to highlight for you some of the initiatives we have underway and planned for 2008.

NHTSA is charged with the responsibility of assuring the safety of vehicles and drivers on the roadways of America. We appreciate the support this Subcommittee has provided NHTSA in the past by funding our programs and activities.

Highway Safety Challenges:

In 2005, 43,443 people in the United States lost their lives in traffic-related crashes. Additionally, approximately 2.7 million individuals are injured in traffic-related crashes annually. Traffic-related fatalities are the leading cause of death for Americans in age groups 4 through 34. They also represent a staggering economic cost of about \$230 billion annually, or 2.3 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product.

The good news for America is that motor vehicles today are the safest in history. A 2004 study by NHTSA showed that vehicle safety technologies saved an estimated 328,551 lives from 1960 through 2002. The annual number of lives saved grew steadily from 115 in 1960, when a small number of people used seat belts, to 24,561 in 2002, when most cars and light trucks were equipped with modern safety technologies and seat belt use achieved 75 percent. Currently seat belt use stands at 81 percent.

To continue to improve the safety of vehicles, I am pleased to report that earlier this month Secretary Mary Peters and I announced the release of a final rule to require electronic stability control (ESC) on all new passenger vehicles starting in 2009, with 100 percent compliance by 2011. This technology, when fully deployed, has the potential to save between 5,000 and 9,600 lives annually.

Improving vehicle safety and reducing fatalities and injuries on the Nation's roads requires a comprehensive approach involving vehicle regulation, enforcement and behavior modification. Our areas of focus have been categorized into the following model shown below.

NHTSA's Priority Approach to Highway Safety



Keeping families safe when they drive is the core of NHTSA's mission, a goal shared by our local, State and national partners. Whether a new driver or a seasoned driver, everyone in the family has a responsibility to do all they can to make each and every ride as safe as possible. Parents must take responsibility by buckling their children in age appropriate restraints, and set the example themselves by buckling up. In February, NHTSA sponsored a public meeting on Lower Anchors and Tethers for Children (LATCH), furthering our commitment to ensure that appropriate child safety seats and technologies are available and properly used. Later this year we plan to host a meeting on school bus safety to address the safety issues in this important area.

Parents must remain involved as their children learn to drive. Obeying speed limits, wearing a seat belt, avoiding driver distractions and not driving impaired should be standard operating procedure for all novice drivers. We are seeing very promising safety results from State graduated licensing programs, but parents continue to be key contributors to young driver safety by establishing and enforcing reasonable safety practices.

As drivers mature, NHTSA programs help to promote safety among our Nation's seniors. Today, 35 million Americans are over age 65. By 2030, the population of those

over 65 is expected to double to 70 million. NHTSA is developing efforts to maintain personal mobility for as long as drivers are safe to drive while also providing guidance for medical professionals and families to help older drivers assess their driving capability before a tragedy occurs.

NHTSA also supports comprehensive Enhanced 9-1-1 technologies that provide system-wide improvements for communities to decrease response time and improve post-crash care. Enhanced Emergency Medical Services (EMS) technologies mitigate the injuries sustained by individuals in crashes, increasing the survivability of the incident. Our request includes \$1.25 million to implement the E-911 coordination office and to provide technical support to the EMS community. Additionally, we request \$250,000 to continue the development of the National EMS Information System (NEMSIS).

The support of law enforcement is crucial to our mission. We work closely with State and national law enforcement organizations to find and share best practices in traffic law enforcement. In this area, we are planning meetings later this year to address law enforcement leadership and expanded use of ignition interlock devices as a means of ridding our highways of impaired drivers.

NHTSA also coordinates with State and local law enforcement and other safety organizations to develop ways to decrease impaired driving and speeding, and increase safety belt use. Under SAFETEA-LU's High Visibility Enforcement programs, we added a third national mobilization effort starting in December 2006, and we developed a new tag line, "Drunk Driving. Over the Limit. Under Arrest." This is in addition to the agency's National Click It or Ticket mobilization that occurs each Memorial Day and the National Impaired Driving Crackdown that begins every August.

Finally, we strongly support the reform of fuel economy standards for the passenger car fleet, similar to how we reformed the standards for the light truck fleet last year. As part of the President's "20 in 10" proposal that he outlined in his State of the Union Address, NHTSA has submitted draft legislation to reform and increase the passenger corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards. We have also requested \$598,000 in additional funding to provide the analysis and rulemaking support for these changes.

FY 2008 Budget Request Summary:

For FY 2008, NHTSA requests \$833 million for its motor vehicle and highway safety programs and activities.

Within the total figure requested, \$711 million reflects the SAFETEA-LU authorized levels of contract authority for the Highway safety programs, grant programs, and the National Driver Register. The balance of \$122 million reflects our requested level to fund the vehicle safety programs as contract authority, not general funding as specified in SAFETEA-LU. Legislation to amend SAFETEA-LU to authorize contract funding for the vehicle programs has been proposed by the Administration. This change

will allow NHTSA to fund all of its programs and activities from a single source, the Highway Trust Fund. This is also consistent with the manner in which the vehicle safety program was funded in FY 2004-2007.

NHTSA's FY 2008 request is \$18 million more than the President's FY 2007 request. Of this, \$16.7 million will be used to align NHTSA's programs with the SAFETEA-LU authorized funding levels. The balance of \$1.3 million includes increases to several programs and activities offset by decreases to other programs and activities. Increases include \$1.1 million for research on crash avoidance technologies, \$598,000 for analysis to support a reformed CAFE standard for passenger cars, \$1.0 million for an E-911 implementation office and the National EMS Information System (NEMIS), \$1.0 million to support NHTSA's priority rulemaking actions and \$1.5 million for normal inflation in salaries and administrative areas. These are partially offset by decreases such as \$2.6 million to the New Car Assessment Program (NCAP) due to the completion of the testing schedule alignment in FY 2007, and \$500,000 to the biomechanics program due to the completion of work supporting an upgrade to the side-impact regulation.

Behavioral Safety:

For FY 2008, NHTSA requests \$107.75 million for its Behavioral safety programs and activities. This is \$2.5 million above the FY 2007 President's request, and the same as the level authorized in Section 2001(a)(2) of SAFETEA-LU.

After two consecutive years of decline in overall highway fatalities and impaired driving fatalities, and having achieved the lowest recorded fatality rate in history, the highway fatality rate per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) rose slightly to 1.45 in 2005, up from 1.44 in 2004. Contributing to this figure is a 13 percent increase in motorcycle fatalities in 2005, up to 4,553 from 4,028 in 2004. This marks an increase of 115 percent since 1997. NHTSA requests an increase of \$192,000, (or 24 percent) to its motorcycle program funding to assist in addressing this problem.

While the overall highway fatality rate has increased slightly, passenger vehicle occupant fatalities dropped by 451, from 31,866 in 2004 to 31,415 in 2005, the lowest level since 1994. The number of young drivers (16-20) killed declined by 4.6 percent from 3,538 to 3,374, and fatal crashes involving young drivers declined by 6.3 percent from 7,431 to 6,964. The number of children up to age 15 dying in crashes also dropped from 2,622 in 2004 to 2,348 in 2005.

In FY 2007 and 2008, NHTSA is focusing attention on those areas that can be most effective in continuing the downward trends experienced in past years. NHTSA recognizes that success will not be accomplished by the agency alone, but through the work of our governmental and non-governmental partners and the everyday behaviors of our citizens. NHTSA is dedicated to behavioral programs that encourage citizens to reduce the tragic loss of life on our highways by simple, controllable actions such as buckling up, ensuring that their children are buckled up on every trip, not driving when impaired, wearing a motorcycle helmet that is DOT-compliant and other protective gear

when operating a motorcycle, observing posted speed limits, not engaging in risky driver behavior and exercising parental responsibility by taking an active role in the driving education of teenagers.

NHTSA requests a total of \$3.82 million to increase the effectiveness of its EMS program. For FY 2008, \$2.32 million of this total will be used to maintain the agency's core programs, which support heightened National EMS leadership through the Federal Interagency Committee on EMS, as mandated by Section 10202 of SAFETEA-LU, in addition to continuing efforts to improve workforce capabilities of EMS personnel and assuring consistent nationwide EMS systems aimed at enhancing post-crash care of crash victims.

Vehicle Safety:

For FY 2008, NHTSA requests \$122 million for its Vehicle safety programs. Within the total of \$122 million, NHTSA requests increases for several program initiatives, such as \$1.1 million to conduct increased research on advanced crash avoidance technologies, and \$1.0 million in support of priority rulemaking activities.

Introduction of technology into the motor vehicle is occurring at an ever-increasing rate, providing consumers with greater choices in safety, ease-of-use and entertainment options. In addition to its traditional vehicle research, rulemaking, enforcement and safety defect investigation initiatives, NHTSA's Vehicle Safety programs will assess the lifesaving benefits of these emerging technologies as they enter into the vehicle fleet in FY 2008 and beyond. The additional \$1.1 million requested for advanced technology research will assist us in this effort.

As mandated by Section 10307 of SAFETEA-LU, NHTSA has published a rule requiring NCAP ratings on sales stickers of new vehicles, providing consumers with more information on the safety of new vehicles at the point of sale. The FY 2008 requested level of \$7.9 million reflects the annual cost for testing vehicles under the NCAP program. The additional funds provided for NCAP in FYs 2006-2007 were to realign the testing schedule to allow for these sales stickers on the new vehicles. This alignment will be complete in FY 2007, negating the requirement for additional NCAP funds in FY 2008.

National Driver Register:

NHTSA requests \$4 million for the National Driver Register program and associated activities, the same level requested in the President's FY 2007 budget and authorized in SAFETEA-LU. This program supports NHTSA's safety mission by providing a credible source of vehicle driver records for use by State motor vehicle administrators in determining whether to issue or renew a license and for use by maritime and airline agencies and private industries. In addition, this information is becoming increasingly important for security background checks by the Office of Personnel Management.

Highway Safety Grants:

In recognition of the role of the agency in delivering data-driven programs and countermeasures in highway safety, NHTSA is requesting funding for its grant programs at the SAFETEA-LU authorized levels. We request \$599.25 million, an increase of \$15.5 million above the President's FY07 request. The Act extended several highway safety grant programs and created several more that will serve to improve safety, including new programs for safety belt performance (Section 406), motorcycles (Section 2010), child safety and booster seats (Section 2011) and data/information systems (Section 408).

During FY07 and FY08, in addition to implementing the four new grant programs, continued attention will be given to NHTSA's core grant programs: Section 402 Formula Grants, Section 405 Occupant Protection Incentive grants and Section 410 Alcohol Impaired Driving Countermeasures Incentive Grants. Combined, these grant programs will provide States with the resources to implement strategies based on national data and analysis but tailored to meet the safety problems of diverse municipalities across the Nation.

Additionally, the requested level includes the fully authorized funding of \$29 million for the high visibility enforcement campaigns. NHTSA will conduct three campaigns annually and the additional funds above the FY 2007 requested level represent the SAFETEA-LU authorized funding level to provide three campaigns.

Finally, grant administrative expenses are requested at the authorized level of \$18.25 million. These funds cover a proportionate share of NHTSA's salaries and administrative costs in support of the highway safety grant programs; provide full funding for the annual National Occupant Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) and provide partial funding for the Highway safety research program.

Support of the President's Management Agenda

NHTSA continues to fully support all of the initiatives contained in the President's Management Agenda (PMA). As evidenced by our FY 2008 congressional justification, NHTSA assures a direct linkage of plans, programs and budgets, one of the most important tenets of the PMA. NHTSA is a data-driven and science-based agency. Funding and program decisions are based on maximizing lives saved and reducing the severity of injuries and supporting DOT and NHTSA goals and objectives in quantifiable ways.

In partnership with the other trust-funded DOT agencies, NHTSA has enjoyed a "clean" unqualified audit opinion for 8 years in a row. In response to recent OMB guidance on internal controls (Circular A-123), NHTSA has initiated an aggressive internal management control program to fully document all processes and activities, identify any weaknesses and mitigate them to acceptable risk levels.

NHTSA also fully participates with the Department to implement technology where it sees benefits. Included are recent efforts to automate the procurement, invoicing, payroll, personnel and travel activities in conjunction with other DOT agencies. Also, NHTSA recently integrated all its desktop support, e-mail, and infrastructure within DOT's common operating environment in anticipation of the move to the new DOT headquarters building. Future efforts will include integration and standardization of grants processing and administration as well as document management. All IT investments made by NHTSA are reviewed and approved by a senior management governance structure to assure optimal use of the limited investment funding and full integration within the DOT infrastructure.

Conclusion

Previous safety efforts by NHTSA, such as identifying safety technologies, issuing safety rules, modifying driving behaviors and educating the public on motor vehicle safety have significantly reduced the safety problem over time. These efforts have also resulted in motor vehicles today that are the safest in history and behaviors that are the safest in history, such as near record seat belt usage. Still, with over 43,000 annual deaths resulting from motor vehicle crashes, NHTSA's work is far from complete. Accordingly, we respectfully request support for the President's budget so our life-saving work may continue.