

STATUS REPORT**FEDERAL ROLE
IN
TRAFFIC SAFETY****INSURANCE INSTITUTE for HIGHWAY SAFETY**

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SAFETY STANDARDS COMPATIBILITY URGED

The National Transportation Safety Board has expressed alarm over the growing incompatibility of national standards affecting the safety performance of roads, vehicles, and drivers. It has urged the Federal Highway Administrator to remedy the problem before a serious breakdown in communications between highway safety influence groups occurs.

NTSB Chairman John H. Reed transmitted a copy of a special study of the subject to Federal Highway Administrator Francis C. Turner. The study cites examples of everyday traffic situations in which the interrelationships of all elements of the traffic safety system -- drivers, vehicles, and the highway environment -- are not adequately described by existing standards.

While seemingly a technical problem, the Board said, incompatibility of standards actually has far-reaching implications. It contributes to confusing and conflicting safety decisions, as well as a failure of safe operation of elements within the highway system.

An example cited by the study to illustrate how standards must serve to inter-relate drivers, vehicles, and highways as parts of an operating system is windshield visibility and traffic signing. The National Highway Safety Bureau describes the angular visibility through vehicle windshields in terms of vertical and lateral angles. These angles are employed to describe requirements for windshield defrosting and defogging systems and wiping and washing systems. In both cases, the study explains, the angles of visibility are determined in relation to the driver, and do not consider the variations in visibility of roadside objects created by changes in driver eye height -- which is not subject to a standard -- thus making it difficult to analyze visibility of traffic signs and signals.

Other problem areas that were cited by the study for inconsistency of existing standards are "Rearview Mirror Visibility and Geometric Design of Highways" and

"Compatibility of Vehicle Design Standards and Highway Design Standards." The Board said it might eventually be necessary to change tests or measurements in many of the standards -- changes that it noted could not be made overnight, but nevertheless must be achieved to prevent further degradation of safety.

"It is clear that this type of coordination will require the development of new and different relationships between FHWA and the standards-writing agencies. It is possible that some changes of direction are needed in research or the employment of research funds to determine the full scope of desirable compatibility," the study stated.

The Board's recommendations provide that:

-- all new standards for drivers, vehicles, and highways be compatible and that existing standards be made so as quickly as possible.

-- FHWA assert leadership over standards-influencing organizations, and recommend steps to ensure technical compatibility of their output.

-- FHWA develop technical definitions for interim use toward better understanding of relationships between rules, regulations, specifications, and other documents to ensure coordinated safe operation of the driver-vehicle-highway system.

"AIR BAG" MAY BE REQUIRED . . .

Inflatable occupant restraint systems, commonly referred to as "air bags," may be required on all passenger cars, multipurpose passenger vehicles, trucks, and buses by January 1, 1971. DOT announced this in an official rulemaking proposal published in the Federal Register.

Properly designed, the "air bag" inflates in about four-hundredths of a second after an initial crash contact and effectively cushions occupants, preventing injuries caused by the "second crash" when occupants are hurled against the vehicle's interior.

DOT noted in its proposal that even though safety belts have been proven to reduce death and injury, "only a very low percentage of the motoring population takes advantage of the life-saving restraint protection they afford." The installation of "air bags" in vehicles would substantially reduce driver and passenger injury and death, it said.

The DOT notice allows interested persons to submit written data, views or arguments concerned with the proposed regulations. All comments must be submitted by September 29, 1969 to be considered prior to final rulemaking.

DOT's National Highway Safety Bureau first expressed interest last year in inflatable occupant restraint systems. The National Motor Vehicle Safety Advisory Council, in a recent formal recommendation to Secretary Volpe, urged "an accelerated effort in implementing inflatable passive restraint system development efforts, including appropriate administrative actions to assist in the early installation of such a system in motor vehicles."

More recently, Dr. Paul W. Cherington, assistant secretary of transportation for policy and international affairs, said he hoped the auto industry would on its own consider such safety features as air bag restraints and roll bars for incorporation on future models. "If industry does move out on its own, rather than waiting for us to regulate, it will also avoid the danger of having our (DOT) performance standards inhibit new design concepts," he told the International Association for Accident and Traffic Medicine.

. . . BUT BELTS STILL SUPPORTED

A proposal to make the use of safety belts mandatory for the drivers of more than 2½ million commercial vehicles has been announced by the DOT's Federal Highway Administration.

The proposal, published in the Federal Register, would require drivers of trucks, truck-tractors, and buses engaged in interstate commerce to use safety belts. It also would require that commercial vehicles already in use be fitted with safety belts by January 1, 1971. Vehicles built after May 31, 1970, would be required to have seating systems, safety belts, and anchorages meeting the National Highway Safety Bureau's safety belt and seat strength standards now applied to new cars.

Announcing the proposal, Federal Highway Administrator Francis C. Turner said, "Studies have indicated that ejection from the cabs of commercial vehicles is an important cause of fatality and injury to the drivers of these vehicles when they are involved in accidents."

Interested persons have until September 25, 1969 to submit comments and recommendations on the proposal, which will then be considered prior to final rule-making.

SIZE-WEIGHT HEARINGS START

The Roads Subcommittee of the House Public Works Committee has opened hearings on proposed legislation to allow increases in the widths and weights of trucks and buses on the interstate highway system.

Opposition to similar "size-weight" proposed legislation was led last year by Congressman Fred Schwengel (R-Ia.), who said he will oppose the current proposal. On announcement of the hearings, Mr. Schwengel said that, "As was the case last year, I am strongly opposed to the enactment of this legislation . . . it is incredible to me that there have been published reports recently indicating that the Department of Transportation is going to support the big truck bill. . . ."

Representatives from organizations supporting the legislation, including the National Association of Motor Bus Owners and the American Trucking Associations, have appeared before the Subcommittee. The National Association of Counties has testified in opposition.

Hearings will continue this month and in August, when the Department of Transportation is expected to testify. DOT this month approved a research study of the safety implications of the proposed truck size-weight hike, which it says will be completed in August in time for its appearance at the hearings.

GRANTS MADE FOR 96 PROJECTS

An increase in the tempo of allocating federal highway safety money to the states during the last few weeks of the past fiscal year has resulted in the rapid release of more than \$17 million for 96 projects in 34 states and Puerto Rico.

The Department of Transportation has made the money available to states and their political subdivisions under the Highway Safety Act of 1966 to assist them in complying with the 16 federal highway safety standards. The new grants, with the total project cost where appropriate in parentheses:

CALIFORNIA -- To establish a consolidated numbering system for driver records and legal files, \$135,300 (\$227,700). . . . To define the state of the art in dealing with traffic violators at all government agency levels, \$392,327 (\$660,039). . . . To computerize traffic accident reporting for 18 San Mateo County cities, \$123,810 (\$208,294). . . . To finance an inventory leading to creation of a new pedestrian safety program in San Jose, \$142,409 (\$239,585). . . . For continuation of an expansion of the Los Angeles traffic records system, \$248,513 (\$418,090). . . . For a state-wide study of lower courts for traffic court improvement, \$278,500 (\$468,540). . . . To finance a five-phase driver education program in San Diego County, \$276,888 (\$469,381). . . . To help finance a project using helicopters, TV cameras and two-way radio for clearing wreckage and hazardous debris from Los Angeles freeways, \$1,978,099 (\$3,327,894). . . . For initial stage of a three-year highway patrol expansion (to total \$7,668,990 in state and federal funds) program, \$1,625,337.

COLORADO -- To correlate all motor vehicle information, \$65,000 (\$131,013). . . . To purchase 60 Vascar speed detection units and train 100 state patrolmen in their operation, \$80,900 (\$144,500).

CONNECTICUT -- For state-wide highway safety planning and administration, \$60,370 (\$120,740). . . . To purchase a rescue vehicle for the Stratford Police Department, \$52,475. . . . For state-wide classification of driver licenses by type of vehicle to be operated, \$143,700.

FLORIDA -- For state-wide evaluation of emergency medical competency and development of appropriate strengthening measures, \$108,661 (\$221,060). . . . To assist in computerization of driver licensing records, \$229,601. . . . For computerization of all traffic records, \$139,649.

GEORGIA -- For two new ambulances and personnel to operate them in Atlanta, \$129,446.

HAWAII -- To integrate traffic records of the four counties into a centralized, state-wide system, \$84,172 (\$372,904). . . . For highway safety planning and administration state-wide, \$50,000 (\$100,000).

ILLINOIS -- To expand driver education in Chicago public schools, \$130,000.

INDIANA -- For highway safety planning and administration in FY 1970, \$90,000 (\$180,000). . . . For two driver education consultants over the next three years and for state-wide driver education workshops, \$67,530 (\$135,060).

IOWA -- For a driving range and driving simulators in Cedar Falls, \$168,900 (\$337,800). . . . For 25 ambulances and related communications and equipment state-wide, \$183,000 (\$250,000).

KANSAS -- For recruitment and training of Kansas Highway Patrolmen, \$126,550 (\$253,100).

KENTUCKY -- For state-wide highway safety planning and administration, \$90,230 (\$180,460). . . . For a three-year traffic records computerization project, \$365,164.

LOUISIANA -- For four area city and parish police seminars on new traffic safety laws, \$61,570. . . . To buy and operate traffic helicopters, \$501,617.

MASSACHUSETTS -- To buy a police ambulance for Oxford, \$8,500 (\$17,000). . . . To buy vehicles for expressway accident investigation in the Boston area, \$110,545 (\$110,545). . . . For state-wide highway safety program planning and administration, \$74,214 (\$148,429).

MICHIGAN -- To upgrade the Warren Police Department communications and highway response, \$72,000. . . . To buy mobile radio equipment for emergency response in Washtenaw County, \$66,300 (\$132,600). . . . To buy and operate state police helicopters \$180,300. . . . For a backup computer system in the traffic records system, \$599,500. . . . To create and staff a traffic bureau in Fraser, \$52,200 (\$104,000). . . . For a comprehensive, three-year driver education program in Plymouth, \$50,886 (\$101,772). . . . To develop in-service driver education for state employees, \$51,850 (\$103,700). . . . For improved traffic supervision in Kalamazoo County, \$55,600 (\$110,500). . . . To improve driver education in Lansing, \$55,600 (\$111,200). . . . For a three-year Police-School Crossing Guard project in Inghram County, \$87,300 (\$174,600). . . . To staff and equip a Traffic Division in Clinton, \$97,750 (\$195,500). . . . For state-wide highway safety planning and administration, \$157,600 (\$315,200). . . . To establish and train a traffic division in the city of Westland, \$86,700 (\$153,400).

MINNESOTA -- To buy 50 drinking-driver testing devices and train 120 operators in their use, \$120,700 (\$241,400).

MISSISSIPPI -- To improve the state's emergency medical services, \$87,700.

MISSOURI -- For planning and administration of state and local emergency services, and to buy and operate ambulances and related equipment, \$405,200 (\$810,400). . . . For state-wide highway safety planning and administration in 1970, \$67,350 (\$134,700).

MONTANA -- To upgrade truck registration information, \$71,725 (\$126,522).

NEW JERSEY -- To electronically link motor vehicle registration and driver licensing files, \$724,816. . . . For a 30-week accident investigation training course for local police \$146,785. . . . For state-wide highway safety planning and administration in 1970, \$96,033 (\$192,067).

NEW MEXICO -- For a multidisciplinary highway crash investigation project in Bernalillo County, by the University of New Mexico School of Medicine, \$92,000.

NEW YORK -- To establish and utilize a "traffic records system design staff," \$122,850 (\$245,700). . . . To computerize accident reports with traffic tickets, \$140,269. . . . To build a children's model Safety Town in Nassau County, \$83,050 (\$217,200).

NORTH CAROLINA -- For driver licensing instrumentation, \$183,000 (\$366,000). . . . To finance a multidisciplinary highway crash investigation project for Durham and Wake Counties, by the Research Triangle Institute, \$99,908.

OHIO -- For driver "evasive action" effect studies, \$61,383. . . . To evaluate experimental safety vehicle research reports in Franklin County, by Battelle Memorial Institute, \$59,455.

OKLAHOMA -- For three 7-week training sessions for highway patrol trainees, \$69,350 (\$138,700). . . . To employ and equip six additional driver improvement hearing officers, \$92,000.

OREGON -- To train and equip new state patrol officers, \$88,669 (\$139,637). . . . To buy equipment and train Benton County driver education teachers and students, \$53,960.

PENNSYLVANIA -- To upgrade and expand the Department of Highways' radio communications and crash emergency system, \$84,725 (\$169,450). . . . To buy and operate emergency transportation vehicles, \$540,039 (\$1,109,700). . . . For a new motor vehicle registration system, \$1,051,574 (\$2,103,148). . . . To train personnel and equip emergency medical vehicles in Philadelphia, \$157,628 (\$323,778).

PUERTO RICO -- To intensify traffic safety education programs for out-of-school youths, \$79,077 (\$158,155). . . . To buy 15 speed detection devices and train personnel in their use, \$123,859 (\$247,718).

SOUTH CAROLINA -- To help establish county-administered emergency medical service programs, \$75,700 (\$151,400).

TENNESSEE -- To computerize all traffic records pertaining to the driver, \$592,142. . . . To implement state-wide periodic motor vehicle inspection, \$84,117.

TEXAS -- To implement a state-wide emergency medical service program developed in an earlier project, \$78,250 (\$156,500). . . . To build a multi-range police training facility in Fort Worth, \$143,223 (\$286,447). . . . To employ a driver licensing consultant, \$83,570. . . . For a multidisciplinary highway crash investigation project in Bexar County, by Southwest Research Institute, \$87,528.

UTAH -- For a multidisciplinary highway crash investigation project in Salt Lake County, by the Utah Health and Welfare Department, \$99,203. . . . To assist in the computerization of state-wide motor vehicle registration records, \$51,397 (\$137,031). . . . To fund traffic law enforcement courses over a two-year period, \$50,000 (\$150,150).

VIRGINIA -- To upgrade driver education in Henrico County, \$198,743 (\$397,487). . . . To upgrade driver education in Roanoke County, \$61,750 (\$123,500). . . . To upgrade crash investigation in Portsmouth, \$65,093 (\$65,093). . . . To upgrade driver education in Fairfax County, \$97,203 (\$194,406). . . . To upgrade driver education in Chesapeake, \$135,735 (\$360,440).

WASHINGTON -- To determine the relationship between traffic volume and "conflict" at Olympia intersections, \$66,693. . . . To establish a driver and safety education program in Kittitas, Spokane and Whatcom Counties, \$86,866. . . . For state-wide highway safety planning administration, \$105,730 (\$197,700).

WEST VIRGINIA -- To establish a central traffic records system, \$337,000.

WISCONSIN -- To facilitate driver licensing under a new law related to sight and vehicle testing, \$101,362. . . . To study and produce a conceptual design for handling traffic data at remote locations, \$55,056. . . . To buy a mobile driver simulator, \$50,000. . . . To plan and administer the state's highway safety program, \$55,900 (\$111,800). . . . To expand Dane County's emergency medical services communications, \$61,500 (\$123,000).

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NUMBERS GAME ? -- Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D-Wis.), longtime safety advocate, wants to know why top DOT officials can't agree on how many Americans are dying on the nation's highways. In a letter to DOT Secretary Volpe, Nelson pointed out that Undersecretary Charles Baker testified on March 17 that at present rates two million Americans will lose their lives on the highway by 1972 -- thus agreeing with projections based on the 1,745,000 highway deaths recorded to date in this country.

Why then, asked the Nelson letter, did Volpe state in a speech on June 3 that only 1.5 million people have died so far, and that the two million death mark won't be reached until 1978 ? DOT has not yet replied.

NEW APPORTIONMENT RECOMMENDATIONS -- The Secretary of Transportation has recommended to Congress that the apportionment formula for highway safety funds for fiscal 1970 and thereafter be strictly on the basis of population. Highway safety funds currently are apportioned to the states 75 per cent on the basis of population and 25 per cent at the discretion of the Secretary. Since appropriated safety funds actually have been far below Congressional authorizations, the "discretionary" feature actually has been no more than a point of law, with actual apportionments to date on a population basis as well. The last DOT administration recommended a new formula based on the percentage of highway deaths in a state, but this has been abandoned. The recommendations that went to Capitol Hill on June 4, for action by this session of Congress, also specifies that no state could receive less than one-quarter of one per cent of total apportionments.

TURNER ON SPOT IMPROVEMENTS -- Francis C. Turner, FHWA administrator, told a conference of western state highway officials that states should exert a "maximum effort" in making spot safety improvements. Saying he is "the first to admit" that drivers shouldn't be driving cars off the designed surface, he said the "inescapable fact" is that many do. He said it is therefore necessary to eliminate narrow bridges, unprotected bridge rail ends, unprotected piers and sign mounts, and to do everything else possible to make the driving task easier and improve the chances for recovery. Mr. Turner said at the present rate of funding it would take 40 years to bring the entire federal-aid system up to today's standards. "We must therefore carry out this upgrading program on a spot basis, exerting more effort to pinpoint bad or unsafe features and locations, and put the maximum amount of funds possible in a program to eliminate them," he said.

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