

STATUS REPORT

**FEDERAL ROLE
IN
TRAFFIC SAFETY**

INSURANCE INSTITUTE for HIGHWAY SAFETY

Watergate Office Building
2600 Virginia Avenue, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20037

(Information in this report may be used with or without credit)

No. 82

August 1, 1969

AAA LEADERS RAP SAFETY RESEARCH TRENDS

Within the span of a week, two leading American Automobile Association executives have attacked the methods, sources, quality, and usefulness of federal highway safety research activities.

AAA's strong antagonism toward the direction of government highway safety research efforts emerged in statements by its executive vice president, George Kachlein, Jr., and its managing director for public and government relations, John de Lorenzi. Main themes of the Association's attack were that:

- The National Highway Safety Bureau has turned to "research and consulting firms" rather than "the so-called 'safety establishment'" to develop new solutions to highway loss problems.
- AAA "would hope" that the federal government would aid AAA's own "Bring 'Em Back Alive" traffic accident investigation program.
- The Bureau should be conducting research on developing effective restraint systems "without simply accepting the shoulder harness and lap belt as having solved the problem."
- "Air bag" restraint systems now being proposed and studied by the Bureau leave "many questions . . . unanswered" about their effectiveness, and may "straddle" the public with a device which "we have not fully studied in terms of its total effect on the safety problem and in actual driving conditions."

RESEARCH GRANTS -- More than \$4.3 million worth of research projects into key aspects of highway loss reduction were initiated by the National Highway Safety Bureau just before the June 30 close of fiscal year 1969. This brought total federal spending for highway safety research to \$44 million since passage of the Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966. The July 15 issue of Status Report listed the Bureau's end-of-year state and local safety program grants. This one lists the new research projects. See page 2.

-- "In all the mysteries surrounding traffic accidents, there are some things we know beyond a doubt. Better, improved highways save lives."

Mr. Kachlein's views were contained in testimony before a Senate hearing. Mr. de Lorenzi gave his in a speech before "Traffic Safety for Michigan."

Both AAA officers called for a reevaluation of highway safety program priorities.

Mr. de Lorenzi questioned Transportation Secretary John Volpe's reference to the "increasing average speed of vehicle travel" as a partial explanation of the continued rise in fatal highway crashes. (The statement was based on NHTSB annual report data derived from a study of Virginia rural crashes.)

"A great ado was made about the increasing trend in highway speeds," he said, in contradiction to a "fine study" done by the Bureau of Public Roads in 1964 showing that "more accidents occurred on main rural highways at lower speeds than at higher speeds."

In his testimony, Mr. Kachlein said that the "unfavorable state of affairs" in highway safety today is due to "lack of basic knowledge as to the causes of traffic accidents and, more especially, which measures are most effective in preventing highway crashes."

Citing AAA's "Bring 'Em Back Alive" safety program and "extensive investigations" by AAA affiliates into highway accident factors over long holiday weekends, the Association executive said he "would hope that the federal government, with its much greater resources, would aid studies in that area."

FISCAL YEAR CLOSING BRINGS RESEARCH GRANTS

Thirty-seven research projects initiated by the National Highway Safety Bureau just before the June 30 close of fiscal year 1969 total \$4,336,491 in value. They are broken down below by category of activity:

↓ VEHICLE INSPECTION: Automobile Club of Missouri, St. Louis, Mo., \$50,974, to survey the State's vehicle inspection program through use of random sampling methods; Northern Research and Engineering Corp., Cambridge, Mass., \$99,248, to study potential of vehicle diagnostic centers for State vehicle inspection purposes; RCA Service Co., Camden, N. J., \$150,856, to evaluate use of portable inspection facilities for remote areas.

↓ CRASH INVESTIGATION: University of Miami, Coral Gables, Fla., \$99,000, to study crash investigations, i. e., to identify accident and injury causation, evaluate new safety features, detect design and functional problems of vehicles and highways and value of periodic vehicle inspection; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich., \$179,280, to study non-fatal crashes and compare crash and injury of different classes of drivers and vehicles; University of New Mexico, School of Medicine, Albuquerque, N. Mex., \$92,000, to study highway crash investigation, etc.; Research Triangle Institute, Research Triangle Park, N. C., \$99,908, to study highway crash investigations, etc.; Ohio State University Research Foundation, Columbus, Ohio, \$91,094,

to study highway crash investigations, etc.; Teledyne Industries, Garland, Tex., \$81,568, to study development of crash recorder for installation in crash test vehicles; Baylor College of Medicine, Baylor University, Houston, Tex., \$74,010, to study highway crash investigations, etc.; Southwest Research Institute, San Antonio, Tex., \$87,528, to study highway crash investigation, etc.; State of Utah, Department of Health and Welfare, \$99,203, to study highway crash investigation, etc.

VEHICLE AND TIRE SAFETY: Wyle Laboratories, Eastern Operations Division, Huntsville, Ala., \$220,350, to develop standardized test procedures for federal motor vehicle standards, and a storage and retrieval data system for controlling compliance test and defects review programs; Stanford Research Institute, Menlo Park, Calif., \$153,400, for multidisciplinary investigations of relationships between vehicle defects and failures, and crashes; Measurement Analysis Corp., Marina Del Rey, Calif., \$89,559, to conduct a study to devise a comprehensive definition of vehicle handling; Booz-Allen Applied Research, Inc., Bethesda, Md., \$218,000, to conduct a system safety analysis of vehicles-in-use to develop criteria applicable to the performance of research and to develop standards to improve vehicle-in-use safety; Factory Mutual Research Corp., Norwood, Mass., \$38,650, to study means of protecting tank trucks and trailers from lateral intrusion; Sterling Institute, Boston, Mass., \$55,000, to prepare and conduct a training course for 30-40 National Highway Safety Bureau standards engineers for motor vehicle standards cost estimating system; Detroit Testing Laboratory, Detroit, Mich., \$96,118, to determine compliance of brake hoses, brake fluid and seat belt assemblies with federal safety standards; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich., \$167,157, to study bus, truck and tractor/trailer braking system performance; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich., \$193,065, to devise standardized method for testing the handling characteristics and qualities of passenger cars; University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Mich., \$220,125, to develop criteria for testing the crashworthiness of motor vehicle doors; Electrical Testing Laboratory, Inc., New York, N. Y., \$162,840, to conduct safety testing of hydraulic brake hoses, lamps, and reflective devices and passenger car tires; Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory, Buffalo, N. Y., \$207,445, to study bumper and heavy duty underride guards for trucks; Dayton T. Brown, Inc., Bohemia, L. I., N. Y., \$194,661, to test motor vehicles to determine compliance with federal safety standards; University of Oklahoma, Norman, Okla., \$202,600, to study crashworthiness of vehicles and consequent survival of occupants; Automotive Research Associates, Inc., San Antonio, Tex., \$86,777, to test 250 motor vehicle tires for safety compliance with federally established procedures; Southwest Research Institute, San Antonio, Tex., \$157,533, to study performance and inspection requirements for motor vehicle headlights; Southwest Research Institute, San Antonio, Tex., \$94,616, to test glare reducing headlights; Batelle Memorial Institute, Columbus, Ohio, \$59,455, evaluation of research from three previous contracts on the development of the experimental safety vehicles; Southwest Research Institute, San Antonio, Tex., \$86,000, to test 250 motor vehicle tires in accordance with federally established procedures.

ALCOHOL: University of California Institute of Transportation and Traffic Engineering, Los Angeles, Calif., \$100,000, to study the simulated driving of alcoholics and social drinkers.

MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS: Traveler Research Center, Inc., Hartford, Conn., \$51,928, to study factors affecting traffic injuries and fatalities, and analyze current

data on these factors so as to develop quantitative measures of effectiveness of safety actions, determine data required for such measures, and develop a prediction model to indicate potential effectiveness of existing and possible alternative safety measures (such as auto safety features) over a projected period.

HOT PURSUIT: Traveler Research Center, Inc., Hartford, Conn., \$49,876, to study high speed chases and prepare guidelines for police, determine the nature of high speed chases and resulting crashes, identify police agencies with police pursuit driver training courses and evaluate courses.

RESTRAINT SYSTEMS: Harvard College, Cambridge, Mass., \$29,000, to study the proper design for child restraints in motor vehicles; Southwest Research Institute, San Antonio, Tex., \$70,000, to study the application of passenger restraint systems to used cars.

BUYER INFORMATION JURISDICTION: WHO'S GOT IT?

✓ The Federal Highway Administration and a House committee are quietly disagreeing over the limits of FHWA's power to require that car makers give "consumer information" to car buyers on a timely basis.

✓ The House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee's view is that FHWA's National Highway Safety Bureau cannot now require that car makers give comparative safety information to car buyers in advance of an actual purchase. The Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act says that the agency may "require the manufacturer to give . . . notification of such performance and technical data at the time of the original purchase to the first person who purchases" a new car, and the committee reads "at the time of" to mean that such information need not be made available to prospective buyers until they sign a purchase order.

It has drafted an amendment to the Act making the information available to "each prospective purchaser of a motor vehicle . . . before its first sale . . ."

FHWA, on the other hand, thinks it already can require that car shoppers get such information before they buy. Federal Highway Administrator Francis C. Turner has issued a proposal under the present law that would "specify that this information must be provided . . . to prospective buyers." Under the proposal a car shopper would be shown copies of the comparative information at the dealer's showroom but would not be allowed to keep them.

FHWA has asked for public comment on the proposal before mid-September -- by which time the House Commerce Committee amendment will probably have been put to a House vote.

Information involved includes performance data on car stopping distances, tire reserve loads, and acceleration and passing ability. Under present FHWA rules it will be made public by car makers for all vehicles produced after January 1, 1970 for sale in this country. But unless either FHWA's proposal or the House Committee amendment takes effect, the only people receiving the "comparative" data will be those who have already purchased a vehicle.

HIGHWAY SAFETY RULES FOR RAILS?

Two members of the Senate Commerce Committee are showing interest in legislation to extend highway safety-type measures to passenger and other rail operations.

Committee Chairman Warren G. Magnuson (D.-Wash.), in a letter to a Maryland county commissioner, Francis J. Aluisi, has pointed out that although "seat belts are a safety device which should be installed in trains and particularly the high speed trains, there is, unfortunately, little that the federal government can do about the situation until railroad safety legislation is passed." So the committee is "now actively considering legislation" to give the Department of Transportation broadened railroad safety authority.

Mr. Aluisi stressed the need for safety belts in passenger trains in a recent letter to Sen. Magnuson following a train wreck in Maryland which killed one passenger and injured 100 others. The Maryland official said he was struck by continued references of passengers to people "flying through the air" inside the crashing train's cars.

Meanwhile, Sen. Vance Hartke (D.-Ind.) has introduced the proposed legislation -- the "Federal Railroad Safety Act of 1969" -- to extend DOT's powers over rail safety, including its authority to carry out research into rail as well as highway loss prevention. The legislation preceded a recent task force report that found, among other things, that only one-fifth of the nation's grade crossings are protected by automatic safety devices -- despite the fact that grade crossing crashes account for 1,600 deaths, or nearly two-thirds of all rail fatalities, a year.

* * *

SNOW TIRE RULES PROPOSED -- FHWA Administrator Francis C. Turner has proposed an amendment to federal tire safety standards to require that deep-tread winter tires meet the same level of high speed performance now required of other passenger car tires. If adopted, snow tires would have to pass the test of 85 miles per hour for 30 minutes now required of regular tires. Interested parties have until August 26 to comment to the FHWA's National Highway Safety Bureau on the proposed change.

MONEY BILLS STALLED -- Bills to belatedly provide current-year funding authority for federal vehicle safety standards and research activities are lying motionless in the House and Senate.

The House version, reported out last month by the House Interstate and Foreign Commerce Committee as H. R. 10105, is still awaiting Rules Committee blessing so that it can go to the floor for a vote. The bill would authorize \$23 million during this fiscal year, and \$35 million each during fiscal years 1971 and 1972, for programs under the Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act.

The Senate version is still being drafted by the Senate Commerce Committee. Meanwhile, the National Highway Safety Bureau has technically been without money to operate its vehicle and tire safety programs since June 30.

Truck-Auto Crashes Spur Study at Cornell

Special to The New York Times

BUFFALO, Aug. 16 — A

low side-and-rear guard for large trucks and trailers, to prevent passenger cars from crashing into them in under-riding accidents that may shear off the top of the passenger compartment, is under development at Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory, Inc.

The laboratory has received a \$207,445 contract from the Federal Highway Administration for this purpose.

The laboratory's crash research department will develop and crash-test two types of underslung rear bumper and side guard for heavy trucks that would engage the front bumper of a passenger car running into it.

It will also develop two types of car bumper that would match up with the truck under-ride guards. Guards and bumpers would have energy-absorbing devices to cushion impact.

FATALS 'DISCREPANCY' -- DOT's top spokesman has told an inquiring Senator that the text of DOT Secretary John Volpe's recent speech to the Automotive Safety Foundation contained an "inadvertent error" underestimating the number of probable highway deaths before 1978 by more than 250,000. The spokesman said the "discrepancy" was corrected by Sec. Volpe in his oral version of the speech.

Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D. -Wis.) wrote to Volpe on June 27 to ask why the speech text referred to 1978, rather than the widely accepted date of 1972, as the point by which a total of two million Americans will have lost their lives on the highway at present fatality rates. Sen. Nelson noted that DOT Undersecretary Charles Baker used the 1972 date in testimony earlier this year. Replying to Sen. Nelson's letter, DOT Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Walter Mazan expressed regret for the "printing error" contained in the Secretary's speech. He offered no comment on the variance between the speech's figure of 1.5 million for cumulative highway deaths as of June 1 this year, and the National Safety Council's figure of 1.745 million.

TEACH-TEST GRANT MADE -- A one-year automated teaching and testing program for licensing drivers will be conducted as a demonstration project for DOT by the State of Iowa under a \$127,336 grant. New and renewal applicants will be tested in simulated driving situations and instructed concerning the safety and legality of their answers. The project, to determine the effectiveness of more meaningful testing, will be directed by the Iowa Department of Public Safety and evaluated by the University of Iowa.

VEHICLE CERTIFICATION -- The DOT's Federal Highway Administration has amended regulations affecting the certification of motor vehicles for compliance with safety standards, effective on and after September 1, 1969. The change requires a permanent certification tag or label "in such manner that it cannot be removed without destroying it." The label contains the name of the manufacturer, month and year of make, identification number, and a statement to the effect of the vehicle's compliance with safety standards in effect on the date it was made.

#

INSURANCE INSTITUTE for HIGHWAY SAFETY
WATERGATE OFFICE BUILDING
2600 VIRGINIA AVENUE, N.W. • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20037

Address Correction Requested

STATUS REPORT

FEDERAL ROLE
IN
TRAFFIC SAFETY

FIRST CLASS MAIL