

STATUS REPORT

FEDERAL ROLE
IN
TRAFFIC SAFETY

INSURANCE INSTITUTE for HIGHWAY SAFETY

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2600 Virginia Avenue, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20037

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No. 83

August 13, 1969

SAFETY BUREAU'S FUTURE STATUS UNCERTAIN

A confidential report now circulating within the Department of Transportation has raised serious new questions about the future status and structure of the National Highway Safety Bureau.

The report, prepared by an internal DOT management task force, recommends strongly against removing the Bureau from the Federal Highway Administration -- a step urged earlier this year by the Presidentially appointed Highway Safety Advisory Committee.

The Bureau's activities are "not solely related to safety but specifically encompass traffic situations" involving "all elements of the traffic safety system," the report says. Therefore the Bureau should remain in the road agency rather than reporting directly to the Secretary of Transportation, it concludes.

The report -- known within DOT as the "Davis Report" -- recommends the following changes in the Safety Bureau's organization and resources:

-- Merging NHSB and the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety, which regulates truck and bus operating safety, into a single unit within the Highway Administration.

-- Retitling of the directors of the NHSB and the Bureau of Public Roads as "deputy federal highway administrators."

-- Combining research and development activities of the Bureau of Public Roads and the NHSB into a single unit, with a director reporting to the highway administrator.

-- Increases in Safety Bureau staff to levels planned previous to job freezes during the past two years.

-- Exchange of staff between the Safety Bureau and the Bureau of Public Roads to "break down existing barriers" that have been "built up between 'safety' and 'roads' types in FHWA. "

The "Davis Report" brings to three the number of pending official proposals for substantially changing the structure and ranking of the Safety Bureau within the Department.

The first was offered early this year by Senator Abraham Ribicoff (D-Conn.), an active proponent of the 1966 legislation to establish the Safety Bureau. The Senator introduced an amendment to S. 1245, still pending in the Senate Commerce Committee, to remove the Bureau from the highway agency and place it directly under the DOT Secretary.

The second was the Highway Safety Advisory Committee's recommendation, growing out of a study initiated by Secretary of Transportation John Volpe, to make the Bureau an independent unit under the Secretary. The Committee concluded that "it is not reasonable to expect the basic conditions to change within the Federal Highway Administration so as to create a better environment for progressive development of the broader approach to highway safety. "

So far, Secretary Volpe has not publicly indicated which of the two currently recommended courses -- elevating the Safety Bureau's status, or further absorbing it into the highway agency -- he prefers.

HIGH CRASH SPEEDS GET NHSB LOOK . . .

An unpublicized but public National Highway Safety Bureau study has indicted high speeds as a major factor in increasing chance of death and severity of injury in highway crashes.

The study, entitled "Maximum Safe Speed for Motor Vehicles," summarizes investigative work done over the past five years into the role of speed in crash causation, death and injury aggravation in crashes, and post-crash complications.

It has been officially made available by the Government Printing Office,* but so far the Department of Transportation has issued no press release announcing the study's findings.

The report concludes that "high speed attends a disproportionately large percentage of accident casualties, that it aggravates the severity of the crash, and is associated with increasing fatality rate." Four studies discussed in the report show that "the ratio of injury to fatality decreases over increasing speed bands, such that at speeds above 70 mph the chances may be as slim as three survivals to one fatality. "

*Send one dollar to: Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402.

Projecting data gathered in 1967 as to crash-fatality relationships in Virginia, the study estimates that nationwide, 12,100 of the 53,100 fatalities that year were associated with crashes at speeds above 60 mph, of which as many as 6,800 might have been prevented by crash speed ceilings of 60 mph.

It also finds a "marked relationship between increased crash severity and high blood alcohol concentrations among crash involved drivers, from which it is inferred that many alcohol related crashes are also high speed associated. "

The report states that no relationship between posted speed limits and fatality levels in individual states could be found. However, after noting that domestic vehicle speed capabilities peak at 110-120 miles per hour -- far in excess both of average posted speed limits and foreign car speed peaks -- the report concludes that there is a "considerable mismatch between the higher motor vehicle speed capability and the lower highway design standards. "

The report also notes that the Bureau earlier invited comment on a proposal to require maximum speed control devices on new cars -- "acceleration performance does not seem to be affected adversely" -- and that "147 of 150 replies (to the proposal) were opposed. " It contrasts this with the results of a 1967 Columbia Broadcasting System survey showing that 52 per cent of 1081 drivers questioned favored vehicle speed regulator devices.

. . . AS SPEED IN TIRE ADS DRAWS FTC PROBE

"Built low and wide like a racing tire; tested at 130 mph. . . . All new wide tire made especially for the young crowd and today's high-performance cars. . . . Certified safe at 100 mph, so you're safe at 60, 70 or 80. . . . Safety tested at over 100 mph. . . . Stamina so great we safety tested them at 130 mph. . . . Stops 25% quicker. . . . "

The Federal Trade Commission has ordered its staff to challenge such allegedly "deceptive" advertising. The FTC is attempting to determine if tire advertisements, when they misrepresent overall speed and safety features, can be deemed "an obvious and serious hazard to life and safety. "

The FTC is concerned that tire manufacturers' road tests do not reveal whether tires at excessive speeds can "withstand various road hazard impacts, the sustained flexing to which tires would be subjected, and whether the tires would remain seated on the rim of the wheel under such conditions. "

The FTC maintains that such advertisements lead a driver to believe that he can "drive safely at the represented speeds" and "that high speed driving may be safely engaged in at any time during the life of the tire. "

A commission announcement said the FTC is challenging "such misleading and deceptive speed representations" as have appeared or will appear anytime after July 3 of this year.

HIGHWAY SAFETY PROGRAM GUIDES AVAILABLE

Manuals to guide state and local agencies in implementing programs under the 16 National Highway Safety Standards are now available through the Federal Highway Administration. The manuals are based on the best knowledge currently available and will be updated as research and operating experience provide new insights and information, according to FHWA.

The manuals, which detail needed operating programs for states and communities under each standard, are:

0 -- Planning and Administration	\$ 1.95
1 -- Periodic Motor Vehicle Inspection	1.15
2 -- Motor Vehicle Registration	3.30
3 -- Motorcycle Safety	2.80
4 -- Driver Education	2.15
5 -- Driver Licensing	2.70
6 -- Codes and Laws	1.10
7 -- Traffic Courts	1.70
8 -- Alcohol in Relation to Highway Safety	2.80
9 -- Identification and Surveillance of Accident Locations	2.00
10 -- Traffic Records	4.00
11 -- Emergency Medical Services	6.50
12 -- Highway Design, Construction and Maintenance	(not yet available)
13 -- Traffic Control Devices	(not yet available)
14 -- Pedestrian Safety	3.95
15 -- Police Traffic Services	2.70
16 -- Debris Hazard Control and Cleanup	2.75

When ordering the manual, the words "highway safety program manual" should precede the title of the standard. (For example, Highway Safety Program Manual -- Periodic Motor Vehicle Inspection).

Requests should be forwarded to Mr. H. H. Kramer, Records Management Branch, Federal Highway Administration, Room 250, Matomic Building, Washington, D. C. 20591. Payment with the order will expedite delivery. Checks should be made payable to the Treasurer of the United States.

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DEMS RAP ADMINISTRATION CONSUMER POLICY -- Nixon Administration cutbacks, including "an 18 percent cut in traffic and highway safety funds including grants to states and communities, when there are over 53,000 auto fatalities and 4 million injuries each year," have been challenged in a Democratic Study Group task force report on consumer affairs.

The study group, under the chairmanship of Representative Benjamin S. Rosenthal (D-N. Y.), charged that "the Secretary of Transportation has not added to the obviously inadequate staff of two employees of the National Bureau of Highway Safety who are charged with assuring that the million foreign autos sold in the United States each year comply with his Department's safety standards."

In addition, the group suggested in its report that the Administration has been derelict in its failure to appoint a director for the National Highway Safety Bureau -- a job that has been vacant for more than six months. DOT Secretary John A. Volpe, in a press conference shortly before release of the report, said it will be another two or three weeks at least before an announcement will be made concerning the new director for the NHSB. Secretary Volpe made a similar statement concerning the nation's top safety position last June 17. Presently, Dr. Robert Brenner is the acting director of the NHSB.

In calling for stepped up consumer oriented legislation, the 17-member task force supported the tire safety amendment to the pending House authorization bill (H. R. 10105) for federal vehicle safety standards and research money. The amendment would require tire manufacturers to comply with federal tire safety standards and recall defective products with adequate notice to the purchaser.

HIGHWAY, SAFETY JOBS SHIFT -- In addition to the directorship of the National Highway Safety Bureau, three top-level Federal Highway Administration jobs concerned with safety currently are unfilled, and a fourth is changing hands.

The posts of Deputy Federal Highway Administrator, director of the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety, and director of FHWA Public Affairs are currently awaiting action by the administration. In the interim, the BMCS job is being held down by Acting Director Kenneth L. Pierson, whose permanent position has been special assistant to the director. High on the list of candidates to fill the FHWA public affairs directorship, it is reported, is Fred W. Morrison, former director of public relations for the Republican National Committee.

Meanwhile, David Wells, former trucking company lawyer has been appointed FHWA chief counsel. He succeeds Howard A. Heffron, who is leaving the agency to enter private practice.

D. C. AMBULANCE CORPS PROPOSED -- Representative Lawrence J. Hogan (R-Md.) has introduced a bill calling for establishment of an Ambulance Service Corps within the District of Columbia. Under the proposal, the Corps would coordinate with other interested local agencies but be "a distinct and separate public service unit" to upgrade personnel qualifications, more adequately equip emergency room facilities, employ helicopters, establish neighborhood medical clinics, and generally improve D. C. emergency medical services. In his introductory speech, Congressman Hogan said that "by an enlightened program, the Capital City can lead the way in establishing the model ambulance service for the country. . . ."

UNDERRIDE PROTECTION DELAYED -- Federal Highway Administrator Francis C. Turner has again extended the date for interested industry associations to file comment

concerning a proposed safety standard on Rear Underride Protection. The dates have been extended from March 19, the initial deadline, to June 3, August 1, and now until December 1, 1969.

ELECTRONIC PASSING TEST OKAYED -- The first operational experiment of an electronic "Passing Aid System" is to be installed on 15 miles of U. S. Route 2 between Canaan and Newport, Maine, DOT has announced. The system was developed for the Bureau of Public Roads by Raytheon Co. of Waltham, Massachusetts, to help motorists pass other vehicles safely on two-lane roads through the use of computers and sensors. BPR Director Ralph Bartelsmeyer said that if the Maine tests prove it practical, the system may ultimately be installed on 15,000 or more miles of heavily traveled two-lane roads with poor sight distances.

TRAILER GLASS EXEMPT -- Federal Highway Administrator Francis C. Turner has cancelled a proposed rule change to extend the Glazing Material Standard (No. 205) to trailers. In a separate order, he granted an extension for filing comments (from August 1 until October 1, 1969) in connection with the applicability of this standard to the forward facing windows of campers, pickup cabs, and pickup covers and canopies.

DOT SIZE-WEIGHT STUDY PROLONGED -- DOT's current research into how highway safety would be affected by the increase in size and weight of trucks and buses has been prolonged. Initially scheduled for unveiling before the House Subcommittee on Roads in August, the study has been extended to September 3.

HIGHWAY SAFETY GRANTS -- The Department of Transportation has announced grants to assist six states in complying with the Highway Safety Act of 1966. The states, amount of the federal contribution and nature of the projects are as follows, with total project costs in parentheses where appropriate: IOWA -- to conduct an automated driver licensing teaching and testing project in Des Moines, \$127,336 (see S. R. No. 82) . . . NEW JERSEY -- to study car-driver relationship and to develop a motor vehicle with improved safety features, by Princeton University, \$50,000 . . . NORTH CAROLINA to establish a driver evaluation track in Raleigh for use by enforcement agencies, driver teachers and license examiners, \$400,000 . . . PENNSYLVANIA -- to upgrade Pennsylvania State Police communications at 93 sites, \$100,000 (\$200,000) . . . VIRGINIA -- for statewide highway safety planning and administration, \$230,000 (\$460,000) . . . WEST VIRGINIA -- to provide an eight-man selective enforcement police squad, \$74,450 (\$153,280).

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