

STATUS REPORT**FEDERAL ROLE
IN
HIGHWAY SAFETY****INSURANCE INSTITUTE for HIGHWAY SAFETY**Watergate Office Building
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Washington, D. C. 20037

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SAFETY TASK FORCE NAMED BY WHITE HOUSE

After weeks of rumors, the White House has officially announced creation of its task force on highway safety.

As predicted in the September 16 issue of Status Report, the 11-member task force is being chaired by Northwestern University Vice President Franklin M. Kreml. Secretary to the group is Dr. William J. Harris, Jr., of Battelle Memorial Institute. (See box on page 2 for full list of members.)

A White House announcement of the group's formation said it will "assist the Administration with ideas and recommendations for 1970 and beyond" and will "consider the effectiveness of present highway safety programs, recommend how such programs might be improved or better coordinated, and advise on what actions might be taken to increase further the effectiveness of our nation's highway safety efforts."

Behind these broad generalizations, however, has emerged more specific information about the task force's background and purpose.

For one thing, it is reported that the White House had intended that the group's membership be considerably larger -- more than 30 participants -- but that many candidates declined to serve.

For another, it is understood that the group has been admonished to "avoid . . . avenues of inquiry" involving "internal administrative matters within concerned departments of the Government." This seems to mean that the task force will not be asked to make recommendations for resolving current disagreement, both within the Department and elsewhere, over the future status of the National Highway Safety Bureau. The disagreement centers on whether the NHSB should continue as a subordinate of the Federal Highway Administration rather than being placed directly under the Secretary.

The task force held its first meeting on October 23, at which time it was briefed by DOT and NHSB officials on current highway safety programs. Its next meeting is

scheduled in late November, and it is expected to complete its work by the end of the year -- in time for its recommendations to be considered for inclusion in President Nixon's State of the Union and Budget messages to the Congress.

Meanwhile, it has asked a number of prominent non-governmental experts to supply it with briefing material on highway safety activities and needs.

Task Force on Highway Safety

Franklin M. Kreml, Chairman
Vice President
Planning and Development
Northwestern University

William J. Harris, Jr., Secretary
Assistant Director - Technology
Columbus Laboratories
Battelle Memorial Institute

George W. Barton
President
Barton-Aschman Associates, Inc.

Harry D. Holt
President
American Automobile Association

Roy D. Chapin, Jr.
Chairman of the Board
American Motors Corporation

Ross A. MacFarland
Professor of Public Health
Harvard University

John Conger
Vice President for Medical Affairs
University of Colorado Medical Center

Marion E. Martin
Commissioner
Department of Labor and Industry
State of Maine

Harmer E. Davis
Director, Institute of Transportation
and Traffic Engineering
University of California

Thomas C. Morrill
Vice President
State Farm Mutual Automobile
Insurance Company

Sherman G. Finesilver
Denver District Judge
District Court

Howard Pyle
President
National Safety Council

DOT EVALUATING STATE SAFETY PROGRAMS

The Department of Transportation has begun its final evaluations of each state's highway safety activities under the 16 national highway safety standards. The evaluations will be completed by the end of this year: states failing to win approval from DOT of their activities are subject, under the Highway Safety Act of 1966, to lose up to 10 per cent of their federal-aid highway funds.

Beginning with this issue, Status Report will furnish highlights of the DOT evaluations as they are made available. In this issue the first evaluation released --

for Tennessee -- is summarized in the format to be followed in future issues:

Tennessee: Program approved (original program submission was rejected in March for "shortcomings") but remedial action called for in two areas of "conspicuous weakness" -- Identification and Surveillance of Accident Locations, and Highway Design, Construction and Maintenance, both of which have experienced "little local government activity." Also, Driver Education found to be still too weak, and legislative or administrative ways urged to cut down delays in Traffic Court action.

PUBLIC TO GET FACTS ON CAR TESTS . . .

A long-standing dispute between Congressional leaders and DOT officials has been resolved by DOT Secretary John Volpe's announcement that results from motor vehicle safety compliance tests conducted by National Highway Safety Bureau contractors will be routinely made public in the future.

Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Warren G. Magnuson (D-Wash.) and House Commerce and Finance Subcommittee Chairman John E. Moss (D-Calif.) had for some time been demanding that DOT make public the results of tests to determine whether, and to what degree, new vehicles are complying with its safety standards. The Secretary's decision responded, in effect, to those requests. Under it, DOT will immediately make public 1,400 reports on completed testing that had previously been withheld from release.

Secretary Volpe said that monthly reports on future tests will be issued by the Federal Highway Administration, and will contain the following information:

- List of compliance test reports completed, with a brief summary of the contents and where they can be obtained;
- Investigations initiated;
- Investigations completed;
- Listing of investigations in progress;
- Investigations referred to the Department of Justice for action; and
- Completed investigatory files released.

Secretary Volpe said NHSB will "initiate an investigation into any matter where unfavorable test results are produced." The file will be closed until the investigation is completed, at which time it will be opened to the public, he said.

DOT will issue an "executive summary" shortly after the contractor's report is received. Full reports will be made available at the Clearinghouse for Federal, Scientific, and Technical Information for purchase, and will be available for review in a public file established by the Motor Vehicle Safety Performance Service.

Both Senator Magnuson and Representative Moss said they were "extremely pleased" that DOT had decided to make test results available to the public on a regular basis, because "the public has paid for these tests and the public has every right to obtain this vital information about safety characteristics of vehicles they own or are buying. "

. . . AND EARLIER NEW-CAR COMPARISON DATA

New-car shoppers must be given comparative performance information concerning stopping distances, acceleration and passing, and tire reserve loads before they make their car purchase, under a new motor vehicle safety regulation.

The National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act requires only that such information be provided to car buyers "at time of" purchase. To remedy this, the Federal Highway Administration proposed in July that a regulation be adopted to require that car manufacturers make the information available also to "prospective buyers" for use in comparing safety performance of competing new-car makes and models.

FHWA now has announced adoption of the proposal as a final regulation. The regulation also calls on manufacturers to make consumer comparative performance information available to the FHWA on December 1, presumably for publication and dissemination to the public.

Meanwhile, the Senate Commerce Committee is considering House-passed legislation to amend the Act to include "prospective purchasers, as well as those who have already bought a vehicle, " within the scope of the consumer information provision. Proponents of the amendment contend that FHWA is powerless under the present law to require that such information be given to car shoppers prior to their purchase.

CARMAKERS, INSURERS COOPERATION URGED

Automobile makers and the insurance industry have been urged to "cooperate" in the "important effort to reduce the costs of auto accidents. "

Senator Philip A. Hart (D-Mich.), chairman of the Senate Antitrust and Monopoly Subcommittee, said in a statement that "both the consumer and industry" would benefit from these and other efforts to "reduce the costs for buying, operating, maintaining and insuring our vehicles. "

His remarks were contained in his official remarks closing the subcommittee's recent hearings into auto repairability issues and problems. Although the hearings concluded in mid-October, the statement was not released until some weeks later.

"As we conclude this third of four planned series of hearings, " the Senator said, "one single point on which all would agree is that the nation is faced with an acute shortage of skilled automobile mechanics. Some auto manufacturers have asked government -- state and federal -- to act on this problem.

"We have notified the Departments of Transportation, Labor, and Health, Education and Welfare that we will ask each to appear later this winter to review activities they are undertaking to respond to this vital national need.

"Manpower requirement is only one area we expect to develop during the later hearings. Vehicle standards, quality of new cars, costs of repairs, costs of insurance and the federal and state agencies' roles in carrying out the existing mandates of Congress will be among areas of principal concern.

"Industry and government cooperatively must seek means of mitigating problems we now face in our principal transportation system. . . . I again urge the automobile manufacturers and the insurance industry to cooperate in this important effort to reduce the costs of auto accidents. "

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AFTER VIETNAM -- Defense Secretary Melvin Laird has disclosed that DOD and HEW are working on "means of making the helicopter a flying ambulance here at home as it is in Vietnam. "

In remarks to the Marshfield Clinic in Wisconsin, he singled out the highway fatalities problem by noting that crash death rates in remote and rural areas are four times greater than in urban areas "because of delay in administering emergency medical treatment and transporting victims to medical facilities. " He said the DOD-HEW joint effort will "draw upon our battlefield experience in the use of helicopters for speedy evacuation" in domestic emergency medical care situations.

VOLPE ON ALCOHOL -- Secretary of Transportation Volpe directed a major portion of his remarks, before the annual meeting of the National Safety Council, to alcohol and its relation to highway losses. "An astonishing 44 percent of the drivers killed in accidents lost their lives because the other driver was drunk, " he said, and described the issuance of driver licenses to alcoholics as "illogical and inhumane. " DOT intends to focus its attention on the curtailment of "chronic alcoholics" as opposed to the "social drinker . . . the Report on Alcohol and Highway Safety which we submitted to Congress in 1968 clearly pinpoints the alcoholic as the principal offender, " Secretary Volpe said.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS TASK FORCE ESTABLISHED -- DOT has established an internal task force on hazardous materials. The group will make an in-depth examination of the roles, relationships and statutory responsibilities of various offices throughout the Department, and by the end of the year will recommend ways to strengthen the Department's program. "Responsibility and authority for the safe movement of hazardous materials is presently diffused throughout the Department, " Secretary Volpe said. John L. McGruder, who heads the Secretary's Office of Management Systems, is director of the task force.

NEW FHWA ADDRESS -- The Federal Highway Administration has recently moved into new quarters. The agency's new address is: Federal Highway Administration, 400 Seventh Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20591. FHWA phone numbers will remain the same.

SAFETY FUNDING URGED -- Two safety organizations, in separate statements to the House Appropriations Committee, have urged that Congress approve the spending levels sought by the Department of Transportation for continuing highway safety activities in this fiscal year.

The National Safety Council asked that full funding requested by the administration for programs under the Highway Safety Act of 1966 be granted. The Act contains a three-year authorization for \$267 million for grants to states and local communities. NSC said that "only some \$92 million has been made available for obligation," and it recommended that the total remaining authorization, some \$175 million, be made available for obligation.

Past lack of funds, it said, has resulted in numerous states being unable to comply with the national highway safety standards.

The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety urged full funding of programs under both the National Highway Safety Act and the Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966. It noted that while the latter calls for testing of representative makes and models of vehicles to determine their compliance with safety standards, and for development of a research and testing facility, DOT's appropriations request would not permit progress in the planning or development of such programs and facilities in this fiscal year.

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