

STATUS REPORT

FEDERAL ROLE
IN
HIGHWAY SAFETY

INSURANCE INSTITUTE for HIGHWAY SAFETY

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DOT SIGNS CONTRACTS TO BUILD SAFETY VEHICLES

Three contracts to develop experimental safety vehicles have been announced by Secretary of Transportation John A. Volpe.

Contracts were awarded to American Machine and Foundry Company's Advanced Systems Laboratory for \$3,240,000 and Fairchild Hiller Corporation's Republic Aviation Division for \$4,547,500. An additional contract was awarded to General Motors for \$1.

"We believe that advanced safety concepts are both technically and economically feasible," Volpe said in announcing the contracts. "We want to wake the public up to the fact that motor vehicles can be designed and built in a way that substantially reduces the risk of death or injury."

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Under the contracts, the cars are to incorporate both advanced crashworthiness and crash avoidance technology.

Crashworthiness of the vehicles must minimize injuries in 50 mile-per-hour front end barrier crashes and in two car head-on collisions at 75 miles per hour. Passive restraints are also prescribed.

Vehicle damage must be kept to "a minimum in impacts below approximately 10 miles per hour" in front and rear end crashes. Passenger compartments are to remain intact in a 70 mile per hour "uncomplicated" roll over. Passenger compartment intrusion will be limited to three inches in a side pole crash of 25 miles per hour.

(cont'd.)

TOMS TO LEAVE NHSB

Douglas Toms, sworn in as director of the National Highway Safety Bureau on Jan. 15, will leave the post this autumn to take a position with, it is understood, a firm manufacturing driver licensing processing equipment. Until his swearing in, NHSB had been without a director for 10 and a half months.

Toms, formerly motor vehicle administrator for the State of Washington, joined DOT on Sept. 1 last year as a consultant to Secretary Volpe to assist in a reorganization of the NHSB.

As of this writing, there was no indication who will replace Toms. If no replacement is appointed on his departure, one of the Bureau's deputy directors presumably would act as director. They are Dr. Robert Brenner, NHSB's deputy director for technology, appointed in 1967, and Dr. Charles H. Hartman, appointed in late June to the new post of deputy director for programs. (Dr. Hartman previously was employed by Illinois State Univ., the Univ. of Wisconsin, the Highway Users Federation for Safety and Mobility and the Automotive Safety Foundation.)

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The experimental safety vehicle prototypes must have crash avoidance characteristics including:

Handling and stability equal or better than present vehicles' capabilities;

Brakes that provide minimum stopping distance, prevent skidding and provide good emergency braking in case the primary braking system fails;

Visibility characteristics that minimize driver view obstructions and provide improved rear viewing and advanced lighting instruments;

Controls and instruments easily readable and accessible to the driver.

In addition, the exterior will be designed to "minimize injury to the pedestrian upon impact."

The five passenger, 4-door sedans are to weigh approximately 4,000 pounds with wheel bases between 116 and 124 inches.

The Fairchild Hiller and AMF prototypes are to be delivered in approximately 18 months. Those vehicles will be tested and, on the basis of the test results, another contract will be awarded for the construction of 12 additional cars.

The GM vehicle, which is to be delivered in 28 months, is not in contention for the second contract. However, a DOT spokesman said General Motors may be asked to build additional vehicles if its ESV is considered superior to the Fairchild Hiller or AMF vehicles.

Subcontractors on the AMF vehicle are Minicars, Inc., Pioneer Engineering and Manufacturing Company, Bendix Research Laboratories and Cornell Aeronautical Laboratory.

Subcontractors on the Fairchild Hiller contract are Chrysler Corporation, Digitek Corporation and Raymond Loewy/William Snaith, Inc.

A total of six bids were submitted. In addition to bids from AMF, Fairchild Hiller and General Motors, bids were also received from Ford Motor Company for \$6,775,000, Walter C. Jerome of Worcester, Massachusetts, an inventor, for \$400,000 and Safety Consultants, Inc., of Cincinnati, Ohio, for \$1,708,000.

Volpe said that other countries, including Japan, Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Sweden, have indicated an interest in developing experimental safety vehicles in the 2,000 and 3,000 pound range.

ESV: HOW MUCH TO REPAIR ?

Sen. Philip A. Hart (D-Mich), in a letter to Volpe following award of the ESV contracts, urged that provisions be added to the contracts to "assure consumers that their bankbooks will not be fractured in auto accidents any more than they themselves will be. "

He warned that "unless we keep costs in mind, it is easily conceivable the innovations in the prototype may well increase vehicle accident repair bills. "

NHSB LAUNCHES ALCOHOL COUNTERMEASURES

Nine demonstration projects aimed at developing methods to deal with the abusive drinker who drives are being sponsored by DOT. The countermeasure demonstrations are designed to identify problem drinkers and control and rehabilitate them through community programs. The demonstration projects are funded with non-matching federal grants under Section 403 of the Highway Safety Act.

The demonstration projects were developed by the National Highway Safety Bureau and will be coordinated by the Bureau's new Office of Alcohol Countermeasures. The recently created office plans to expand its countermeasure programs to 20 projects in 20 states in fiscal 1971. Long-range plans call for at least one demonstration project in each state.

The initial nine demonstration projects:

Denver Metropolitan Area — A \$1,617,066 contract to the Colorado State Department of Health for a program to identify, control and rehabilitate the problem drinking driver.

Oregon (Portland) — A \$2,149,898 contract to the Oregon Division of Mental Health to "identify" the abusive drinker who drives and "develop community programs" for control and rehabilitation.

University of Wisconsin — A \$1,951,357 contract to develop a countermeasures program in "driver education, driver licensing, driver control and community education."

Washtenaw County, Mich. — A \$1,589,950 contract to establish programs to control the problem drinker-driver through use of "Antabuse," "early detection and control of alcohol abusers who drive" and an "information and education campaign designed to favorably alter the driving-after-drinking behavior of the public at large."

Washington State — A \$1,915,194 contract to the Department of Motor Vehicles to establish "treatment, education, surveillance and information" programs.

Albuquerque, N. M. — A \$1,435,342 contract to design programs to reduce the number of people driving with high blood alcohol levels by identifying and modifying the behavior of problem drinkers.

Nassau County, N. Y. — A \$909,725 contract for "rehabilitation and prevention."

Mecklenburg County, N. C. (Charlotte) — A \$1,899,144 contract for two programs, "public information-education and enforcement-court countermeasures."

State of Vermont — A \$2,055,000 contract to the Vermont Department of Mental Health to document the extent of the problem in the state and to develop a plan of action including "transportation arrangements for drivers who have had licenses suspended or revoked, development of predictive psychological-biological profiles of drivers from licensing examinations and intensified enforcement on the highways."

Meanwhile, a bill has been introduced in the Senate to require that state programs funded under the Highway Safety Act of 1966 include "provisions for the prevention and treatment of alcohol abuse and alcoholism among licensed drivers."

The bill, entitled "Comprehensive Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Prevention, Treatment, and Rehabilitation Act of 1970" (S. 3835), calls for a broad range of state programs to "provide for screening, diagnosis and treatment of alcoholism coordinated with and integrated into comprehensive community health and rehabilitation planning."

In outlining how federal highway safety and other funds would be used in such a program, the legislation would authorize such expenditures "for the purpose of education, treatment and rehabilitation and not for the purpose of punishment"

It was introduced by Sen. Harold E. Hughes (D-Iowa) with the bi-partisan support of 37 other senators.

GOVERNMENT ASKED TO BUY CARS WITH AIR BAGS

Two federal advisory bodies are asking that government respond to automakers' objections that air bags lack "real world" experience by demanding that they be given that experience on the cars governments buy.

At a DOT-sponsored public meeting on air bags June 24 and 25, auto manufacturers continued to insist that, because passive restraints have not been road tested under "real world" conditions, they can't possibly be installed safely on all cars by the proposed deadline, Jan. 1, 1973.

DOT's National Transportation Safety Board and National Motor Vehicle Safety Advisory Council now are urging that federal and state governments require early installation of air bags on government fleet vehicles.

1) In a special study, NTSB has asked the General Services Administration, the federal government's chief buyer of commercial vehicles, to use its statutory authority to require advanced safety devices, including the passive passenger restraint systems, in government civilian vehicles.

2) The advisory council, in a letter to manufacturers, demanded that "the auto industry make available, for state and federal government fleet purchase, 1971 model cars installed with the air bag system. We are requesting these government agencies to specify this requirement in their 1971 contracts. We also request that the industry itself, in its 1971 fleet-owned vehicles, install the air bag system."

The council sent letters urging government fleet adoption of air bags to governors, chiefs of police and motor vehicle administrators.

Lines of confrontation between DOT and Detroit have not changed since early May when, at an international conference in Milford, Mich., automobile manufacturers proclaimed their inability to meet the proposed DOT deadline of Jan. 1, 1973, for air bag installation.

The two-day DOT public meeting on the air bag in June brought further claims from foreign and domestic manufacturers that the January 1973 deadline is "unrealistic." Automakers suggested that air bag development had not reached a failsafe point of reliability or technology.

On the opening day of the air bag meeting a letter signed by 81 members of Congress was sent to Volpe urging him to "stand firmly by your current timetable" for requiring air bags in automobiles by Jan. 1, 1973. The letter was circulated in the Senate by Sen. Frank E. Moss (D-Utah) and in the House by Rep. Benjamin S. Rosenthal (D-N. Y.).

The day after the air bag meeting, Transportation Secretary John Volpe told a press conference, "From the knowledge we have today we believe that it (passive restraint installation by 1973) can be done. We are going to work our head off to get it done -- no matter what the industry says."

TRUCKERS AGAINST SAFETY BELTS FOR THEIR DRIVERS

Despite a recent DOT study showing that belted truck drivers fared better in crashes than non-belted drivers, the organized trucking industry is opposing installation of safety belts for driver protection.

A spokesman for the American Trucking Associations' safety office told Status Report that ATA questions the need for truck drivers to wear safety belts.

And, in a lengthy statement filed with DOT's Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety to oppose a bureau proposal requiring belts in trucks, ATA has stressed the "cost to the industry of complying with the proposed rule" as a principal objection.

ATA's other objections to safety belts in trucks:

- "Fleet experience" showed that "drivers had been saved from injury or death by being thrown clear of the vehicle."
- Belts would "increase fatigue and discomfort by holding the driver in a fixed position."
- "... Constant impacting against the seat belt becomes most annoying. The possibility of internal injuries after long use should not be discounted."
- With belts, drivers would "take curves at higher speeds with the belts counteracting the effects of centrifugal force which is now a limiting factor on driver behavior in this regard."
- "... Seat belts would be apt to pose a tripping and falling hazard to drivers in getting out of a cab."

The government study said that "out of 231 truck drivers (and relief drivers) involved in the study, nine (3.9%) were wearing seat belts. None of those nine drivers were ejected or suffered a fatal injury."

It pointed out that "24 other vehicles had seat belts installed but were not in use. Of the 222 drivers not wearing seat belts, 79 (35.6%) were ejected from their cabs or from sleeper berths, and 143 (64.4%) were injured by impact with interior objects of the power unit.

"Twenty-eight (63.3%) of the ejection injuries and 16 (36.4%) of the non-ejection injuries proved fatal."

Evidently the truck drivers themselves would prefer to have belts in their trucks. In recently concluded negotiations with the trucking industry, the Teamsters union proposed that seat belts be installed in all equipment by December 31, 1970. The proposal was rejected by the industry.

NHSB BUDGET CUT BY HOUSE

The Department of Transportation appropriations bill for fiscal year 1971 has passed the House with cuts in funds for the National Highway Safety Bureau.

The Nixon Administration's request for \$53.1 million to carry out vehicle safety standards and research programs under the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act was cut by \$12.6 million to about \$40.4 million. The Administration's request for an \$80 million limit on highway safety grants for states and communities was cut by \$10 million to \$70 million.

Of the \$40.4 million recommended by the House for Motor Vehicle Safety Act programs, \$29 million is for the Bureau's contract program involving such research efforts as the experimental safety vehicle and air bag programs. The \$12.6 million cut from the Bureau's funds included \$11.1 million that had been earmarked for contract research.

The \$70 million limit placed on highway safety grants for states and communities is identical to that placed on such spending for fiscal year 1970 and represents a \$5 million increase over the fiscal year 1969 ceiling.

The Bureau's separation from the Federal Highway Administration has brought with it additional administrative costs for running the Bureau. Because of the added expense of administration, funds available to states and communities in the form of matching grants will actually be less than in fiscal year 1970.

Even though federal funds available to states and communities for fiscal year 1971 will be less, in effect, than in fiscal year 1970, Rep. Edward P. Boland (D-Mass.), Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation, in outlining the appropriations bill before the House, voiced committee concern over the "lack of state participation in this program which was designed to encourage and assist the states to create new highway safety projects."

Senate hearings on Transportation appropriations are expected later in the summer

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CTSF QUESTIONS QUALITY CONTROL — "Can't the auto industry find a more sophisticated method of improving end of the line inspections? Millions are wasted in recalling autos with defects. How many lives are at stake before cars are returned to the manufacturer to repair mistakes?"

The California Traffic Safety Foundation, a privately financed safety organization disseminating information on human and economic highway loss factors, raises these questions in its newsletter, Traffic Facts. In an editorial citing 1969 vehicle recalls that involved more than 7.5 million cars, the foundation also asks, "When will the day come when the auto manufacturers and unions will have improved end-of-the-line inspections? Do we really need federal inspectors in white coats putting inspection stamps on each car manufactured?"

It would be "only good business sense," the editorial concludes, "if mistakes were caught and corrected before delivery rather than going to the expense of notifying every buyer to return the vehicle for subsequent correction."

ROBERTSON JOINS IHS — Dr. Leon S. Robertson, a behavioral scientist, has joined the Institute's research staff. Robertson has served as an assistant professor of sociology at Wake Forest College and as a research associate in sociology at Harvard Medical School and Children's Hospital Medical Center, Boston, Mass. Most recently he was in an assistant professor of sociology at Harvard Medical School.

He holds a Ph.D. from the University of Tennessee. His work with the Institute will be in the area of human behavior as related to highway loss reduction.

COMMENT

The following is excerpted from an editorial in Science Magazine, May 22, 1970:

"Even if one day water and air again are as pure as they were before man polluted them, many other environmental problems -- from ugly cities to overcrowding -- will still be with us.

"Now we should continue to give top priority to 'unfashionable' human problems. Fighting hunger, malnutrition and rats should be given priority over saving wildlife, and improving our schools over constructing waste disposal systems. If we must turn to 'environment,' first attention should be given to the 57,000 Americans who will lose their lives on the roads in 1970.

"More deeply, we must face the fact that our society and policy are still organized as if our real top priority was the production of consumer goods and their consumption. Unless we learn to turn much more of our resources, manpower, organizational skills and attention to public issues, none of the annual fads will cause a significant, lasting reduction in any of our domestic problems." — Amitai Etzioni, chairman, Department of Sociology, Columbia University, New York, New York.

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