

DOT TO QUIT SAFETY MANPOWER EFFORT

The Department of Transportation is planning to withdraw support from all "scholarships, fellowships and similar long-term career assistance programs" in the highway safety field, according to its top highway safety official.

Douglas Toms, acting administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, served notice of the plan in letters to 35 private sector executives, whose organizations he believes should fill the gap that DOT will thus create.

The letter came three months before the close of the current fiscal year — a year in which DOT earlier told Congress it would undertake and expand "major new programs for training vitally needed safety manpower."

The Toms letter has gone to four domestic auto companies, 10 insurance companies, three insurance trade associations and 18 other organizations which, the letter charges, have effected an "almost total withdrawal of private funding for highway safety manpower development at the national level" since passage of the Highway Safety Act of 1966.

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According to Toms, his agency's funding of national highway safety manpower development has been "literally a drop in the bucket . . . Unless ways are found to increase education and training opportunities (including financial support) in the field of highway traffic safety we all will face a deteriorating support of technical, professional and research personnel in the very near future."

The letter concludes by asking the private-sector addressees to give "serious and thoughtful consideration of how your organization might become directly and forcefully involved in a renewal of private support for these programs" because "the NHTSA is ending its 'drop in the bucket' support of scholarships, fellowships and similar long-term career assistance programs.

"In the absence of a clear mandate and specific funds to support manpower development of this type, we feel it is detrimental to continue with the illusion that the federal government is meeting this need."

Section 403 of the Highway Safety Act of 1966 authorizes DOT to fund "grants to state or local agencies, institutions and individuals for training or education of highway safety personnel" and "research fellowships in highway safety." According to the House Public Works Committee's report on the act, that language intends that "the support of fellowships will be an important programming element of the research and development program contemplated" by Congress under the law: "These fellowships are not funded separately since they will be considered an integral part in the overall development of a national competence in each of the major (standards) program areas"

Sections 106(a) and 106(b) of the companion National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966 authorize DOT to conduct "training . . . by making grants for the conduct of such research, testing, development and training to states, interstate agencies and nonprofit institutions."

Since passage of the 1966 acts, the NHTSA has pursued its mandate to undertake or assist manpower development programs by contracting for a number of studies into safety research manpower needs at all levels of government.

One, conducted by Booz-Allen & Hamilton, Inc., (FH-11-6496) recommended among other things that NHTSA "(1) provide planning guidance to the states, (2) assume responsibility for organizing training for college skill level jobs, and for the preparation of instructors at other skill levels, and (3) be prepared to provide direct assistance, including funding, to aid state and regional training efforts."

That study, costing \$310,000, was completed in the fall of 1968. Another, by Stanford Research Institute (FH-11-6917) completed in the fall of 1969 at a cost of \$170,721, found that NHTSA should "develop a manpower development program whose structure will be consistent with the capability and resources of (the agency) to manage, control and coordinate the program . . . consistent with reliable estimates of federal funding that may be made available for the establishment of safety manpower development centers and for ensuring their continuity."

With "the expectation that federally supported training centers will come into being," it added, DOT should assist other agencies who employ safety personnel to "further develop the proficiencies" of their present staffs.

The NHTSA has also substantially increased its appropriations requests and receipts for manpower development funds since passage of the act.

For fiscal year 1971 the NHTSA asked Congress for a total of \$1.2 million in these funds — \$600 million for general safety manpower development and an equal amount for manpower training and public education associated with alcohol-related safety programs. For fiscal year 1970 the request was for a total of \$825,000, of which \$95,000 was for alcohol-related manpower development and the rest for general safety.

Purpose of the fiscal year 1971 funds, DOT told Congress, was to help "plan and put into effect the research, training and demonstration efforts of the (safety administration) that are designed to provide knowledge and the personnel needed for effective state-community safety programs. "

NHTSA also has told Congress, in an April 1970 presentation to the House Appropriations Committee, that during the current fiscal year it will initiate "major new programs for training vitally needed safety manpower" such as "a graduate-level fellowship program for the training of selected categories of professional safety personnel," development grants to two universities to organize pilot "regional centers" for the development of safety manpower, and development and pilot testing of "new curriculum and course materials to meet the needs for entry-level and refresher training programs in various highway safety occupations. "

ADVISORY COUNCIL BACKS SENATE BUMPER BILL

The National Motor Vehicle Safety Advisory Council has voted support of a bill (S. 976) by Sen. Philip A. Hart (D-Mich.) to permit the Department of Transportation to set standards to reduce property damage in low speed crashes. (See Status Report, Vol. 6, No. 5, March 10, 1971.)

The council refused support, however, for provisions of the bill which would specifically require that cars sold after Jan. 1, 1975, have bumpers capable of withstanding a 5 mile per hour barrier crash with "minimum" damage. DOT already is working on a standard of this kind, the council said, and inclusion of such a provision in the bill would be "unduly detailed and restrictive. "

(In answer to a question by Sen. Hart, Dr. William Haddon Jr., president of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, testified at Senate Commerce Committee hearings in March that it would not be "the most desirable approach" to write specific bumper performance requirements into legislation. He said that such a provision "would tend to freeze technology.")

On other key provisions of the bill, the advisory council said:

- It "strongly urges" inclusion of language encouraging insurance companies to base their rates on the results of manufacturer testing and rating of cars for relative susceptibility to low speed crash damage, as required by the bill;
- It opposes any provision which would in effect establish a national standard of vehicle repair time and rates, on grounds that such rate-setting is anti-consumer because it would tend to reward quantity rather than quality of work, with an adverse effect on vehicle safety, and would tend to fix prices and reduce competition;
- It "strongly favors" requiring inspection of vehicles before sale and after repair following crashes, noting the inspection requirement would apply to the sale of new as well as used cars.

MARYLAND GETS BUMPER LAW

Maryland has become the second state to establish no-damage requirements for cars in low speed crashes. Out of 33 states considering such measures, Maryland is the first to enact a "bumper law" this year. Florida passed one last year.

The Maryland law requires that cars manufactured on and after Jan. 1, 1974, and sold in Maryland be able to withstand a five mile per hour barrier crash, both front and rear, without damage.

As originally introduced, the bill would have also required that by 1976 both front and rear bumpers be able to withstand a 10 mile per hour crash without damage. That provision was deleted.

The Maryland act stipulates that its provisions will be superceded only if subsequent federal bumper standards are more stringent.

STATE INCENTIVES, BETTER DATA URGED BY TASK FORCE

Six months after its issuance, the report of the President's Task Force on Highway Safety now has been printed and released for public distribution.

The 12-man task force was created in October 1969 by President Richard Nixon. Chairman was Franklin M. Kreml, vice president of planning and development at Northwestern University at the time.

Following its review of the current highway safety program of the federal government, the task force issued a wide range of recommendations, including calls for greater Presidential concern over highway safety and for increased staff and funding for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Some of the more novel approaches recommended by the group included:

1. Consideration of a means of providing an "incentive system that will relate federal aid to some overall measure of safety improvement." Under such a system a state would receive incentive payments from the Department of Transportation for reductions in deaths, injuries, accidents and property damage levels.

The task force said a standard method of data collection and reporting would have to be used and that incentive payments "should be considered as supplementing, not replacing, existing bases for federal payment that now require compliance with federal standards" under the Highway Safety Act of 1966.

"Such a system would require that further attention be given to the relative effectiveness of countermeasures available to the states in reducing deaths, injuries and property damage," the task force said.

2. A high priority for "acquiring the data necessary to evaluate the cost and effectiveness of accident countermeasures." Uniform and accurate state-by-state records gathering and reporting to a central bureau would be necessary. The task force said, "There are too few projects to demonstrate, test and evaluate the efficacy of various countermeasures."

It suggested that teams representing appropriate professional disciplines be established regionally to collect crash data — "without regard to determining criminal or civil liability." Also, "Additional exposure data should be gathered on the use of the highway system. Sampling techniques should be developed, tested and employed."

3. A greater role for private institutions in the safety program, including joint program planning and cooperation among major private funding sources.

"The federal government should encourage private-sector organizations to engage in innovation, research, development and the provision of training and similar services . . . ," the task force said.

4. Controlled experimentation with methods of sentencing in alcohol-related traffic violations cases. The task force said, "Penalties basing their effectiveness on severity only should be replaced by measures (including rehabilitation) that take into account the degree of the alcohol problem of the offender and that are intended to prevent recidivism."

Among other recommendations, the task force urged:

- That NHTSA's goals be expanded to cover reduction of vehicle damage as well as personal injury;
- That laws be enacted permitting police to administer breath tests to suspected drunk drivers before placing them under arrest;
- And that action be taken, "particularly by the federal and state governments, to stimulate rapid growth in education and training opportunities on highway safety . . . as well as to provide an opportunity for the research community and major educational institutions to play a more effective role."

The Task Force's report, published in a 58-page booklet, "Mobility Without Mayhem," is available (35 cents) from the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402. (GPO: 1970 0-404-376).

NTSB REPEATS RECOMMENDATIONS MADE IN 1968

For the second time in two years the National Transportation Safety Board has called for passenger restraints in buses and improved wrong-way warning devices along divided highways.

The safety board's latest recommendations grew out its study of a crash last June near Washington, D. C., that involved an airport passenger service bus and a wrong-way automobile. The crash resulted in the deaths of two persons.

Similar recommendations were made in 1968 following investigation of a car-bus crash in Baker, Calif., which resulted in 20 deaths. Absence of occupant restraints in both cases contributed to the severity of injuries experienced in the crashes, the safety board determined.

In the Washington, D.C., crash, the bus driver had a seat belt but was not using it. The safety board has asked the National Association of Motor Bus Owners to not only "urge its membership to install, without delay, driver seat belts in all buses," but also to make sure that drivers use them.

Federal safety standards now require that lap belts be installed as original equipment in buses, but only for the driver. Safety board reports in the Baker, Calif., crash, the more recent Washington, D. C., collision and another bus crash near Beaver Falls, Pa., last year urge that occupant restraints be provided for bus passengers as well as bus drivers.

Neither the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration nor the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety have acted on the recommendation. In a proposed amendment to the seat belt regulation governing buses issued in 1969, BMCS said that passenger seat belts were not being proposed "because of certain operational problems, the structural limitations of existing buses and studies currently being made."

In the most recent report, of the Washington, D. C., crash, the safety board said, "A decision to make available suitable restraints which would reduce injuries is not dependent upon a showing that all passengers would use them, nor should it

TOMS NOMINATED BY NIXON

President Nixon has announced the nomination of Douglas Toms as administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Toms served as the director of the National Highway Safety Bureau and has been serving as acting administrator of its successor, the NHTSA, since its creation in December 1970. The appointment must now be confirmed by Congress.

be limited by the fact that past bus passenger seat designs do not accommodate the lap belt type of restraint. The retention of passengers in their seats during the crash phase is clearly desirable, as indicated by this case and others, and making restraints available is a first step in obtaining their use."

Both the Washington, D. C., and Baker, Calif., crashes involved cars that were being driven in the wrong lane of a divided highway by drivers who, the board determined, were under the influence of alcohol. After investigating the 1968 crash the safety board urged the Federal Highway Administration to "continue its support . . . of research and application of remedial measures to avert or redirect wrong-way traffic movements" Following the more recent investigation, the safety board again urged that FHWA implement procedures "found to be most effective in preventing wrong-way traffic movements."

COMMENT TIME EXTENDED ON SPEED CONTROLS — At the request of the National Motor Vehicle Safety Advisory Council, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has extended until April 30, 1971, the time for comments on its proposed speed control and warning standard. (See Status Report, Vol. 5, No. 22, Dec. 15, 1970, and Vol. 6, No. 6, March 29, 1971.)

The council requested the time extension so it could "examine the proposal more carefully and . . . develop specific comments," according to the safety administration.

The council was established by the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966 to consult with and advise the Secretary of Transportation on matters related to motor vehicle safety.

The extended comment period also gives other interested parties additional time for comment on the proposal that has already drawn more public comment than any other standard proposed by the safety administration. Comments should be sent to the Docket Section, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 4223, 400 Seventh Street, S. W., Washington, D. C. 20591.

MOTORCYCLE BRAKE STANDARD PROPOSED — A standard to establish performance requirements for motorcycle brake systems has been proposed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Among other things motorcycles would be required to stop from given speeds within specified distances without locking wheels. During compliance tests the motorcycle must remain within a test lane six feet wide. The proposal would also require motorcycles to have either split service hydraulic brakes or two independent brake systems.

The full text of the proposal appears in the Federal Register, Vol. 36, No. 57, page 5516. Comments should be sent to the Docket Section, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 4223, 400 Seventh Street SW, Washington, D. C. 20591.

BURKHARDT JOINS IIHS — Berniece Burkhardt, former controller with the Center for Community Change, has joined the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety as controller.

Miss Burkhardt has 23 years' experience in financial operations of professional and trade associations and private organizations. She has held administrative and management positions with the American Association of School Administrators, the National Barrel and Drum Association and the National Electrical Contractors Association. She has studied at Texas Women's University, American University and the University of Maryland.

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