

# TRANSPORTATION—Are We There Yet?

## Reducing Highway Fatalities by Half

America should implement an aggressive highway safety program to achieve a national goal of reducing highway fatalities by half in the next two decades.

Every year America suffers over 35,000 fatalities with over 3 million more sustaining disabling injuries due to roadway crashes. This huge loss of life not only affects families but also has a devastating effect on our economy, with crashes costing about \$300 billion in societal impacts. These safety costs include medical, emergency and police services, property damage, and lost productivity.

Although we have made significant improvements to our national highway safety profile, the sad fact remains that nearly 100 people die on America's roadways everyday. In 2006, Congress significantly increased funding for safety programs, created a new highway safety improvement program, and required all states to develop an fact-based strategic highway safety plan. Much more needs to be done at the national, state and local levels if we are to meet the goal of dramatically reducing highway fatalities.

### National Agenda on Highway Safety

Congress should adopt the goal of reducing highway fatalities by half over two decades; provide \$500,000 to fund a National Summit on Highway Safety to include the US DOT, members of Congress, state transportation and safety officials, and safety advocates; and fund a joint an AASHTO–Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) Safety Center of Excellence at \$3 million per year.

### Highway Safety Funding

AASHTO recommends that Congress:

- Increase the level of funding for all safety programs commensurate with increases in other core programs funding in order to meet the national safety goal.

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- Increase the flexibility provided with these funds so states can apply resources to their most pressing safety needs as identified in their Strategic Highway Safety Plans.
- Consolidate NHTSA funding and streamline the grant application process.
- Continue the current funding level for the High Risk Rural Road Program. Update the Safe Routes to School Program to increase its focus on pedestrian safety and to coordinate it with the State's Strategic Highway Safety Plans. Eliminate the requirement to report the top five percent of locations in each state which exhibit the most severe highway safety needs.

### Strategic Highway Safety Plan Continuation

States should continue to develop and implement strategic highway safety plans. Each State must update their plans at least once during the authorization cycle and establish an aggressive fatality reduction goal to help achieve the proposed new national goal of halving fatalities in two decades. Each state should host a peer review with adjacent states.

### Highway Safety Data Collection and Sharing

To ensure that the best strategies are applied to making safety improvements, highway safety data is essential. AASHTO recommends that the NHTSA State Data System include traffic and roadway characteristics, and injury outcome information from all states. Congress should provide \$20 million per year to enhance the NHTSA State Data System, and ensure that the collection of data

needed to support safety analysis for all public roads is eligible for FHWA and NHTSA safety funding. Statutory changes are needed to protect individual privacy while providing for the disclosure of information related to crashes. \$500,000 should be provided to AASHTO and GHSA to develop guidance for states implementing a data-collection-analysis system.

## Highway Safety Laws and Adjudication

NHTSA should provide \$750,000 per year for a national effort to develop model statutes and best practices to drive down fatalities, including rigorous enforcement and adjudication of those laws.

## Highway Safety Improvement in Vehicles

Federal incentives and regulatory and research initiatives should be developed to incorporate safety improvements in vehicles more expeditiously. General Fund assistance through tax credits or cost sharing should be provided to early adopters of auto and truck vehicle advanced safety systems.

## Highway Safety Research, Development and Technology

Funding for safety research should be increased as follows:

- Increase the overall FHWA research program to \$200 million per year.

- Support SHRP 2 implementation funding, including the safety program, at \$75 million per year and as a takedown from federal-aid apportionments.
- Increase the overall NHTSA research program to \$20 million per year.
- Increase the overall FMCSA research program to \$15 million per year.
- Provide \$1 million to FHWA to quantify and qualify the benefits of the safety aspects of other modes (transit, non-motorized)
- Provide \$1 million to NHTSA to study certain vehicle and behavioral safety issues

Safety research designations that have not been identified as part of the National Agenda on Highway Safety should be eliminated.

## Safety Improvements in Drivers

Congress should provide \$10 million to complete modernization of the Commercial Driver Licensing Information System (CDLIS) to fully implement “One Driver—One Record.” \$14 million should be provided by the Department of Homeland Security for the final phase of the program called the “National Driver Register,” a vital tool in support of NHTSA’s mission by providing a credible source of vehicle driver records for use by state motor vehicle administrators and by the maritime, airline, railroad industries and businesses. This information is important for security background checks. The system is currently overloaded. Without assistance this mission cannot be accomplished satisfactorily.



Figure 1. Fatalities and Fatality Rate per 100M VMT by Year.

