

February 6, 2019

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio, Chairman  
The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves:

As you prepare for tomorrow's hearing, "The Cost of Doing Nothing: Why Investing in Our Nation's Infrastructure Cannot Wait," we urge you to prioritize safety as you consider the needs of America's roads and highways. Each day on average, over 100 people are killed and 8,500 more are injured in motor vehicle crashes. This preventable toll also comes with a serious financial burden. Annually, crashes impose comprehensive costs of over \$800 billion on society, \$242 billion of which are economic costs – amounting to a "crash tax" of \$784 per person each year. Yet, available solutions to the problems that perpetuate crashes continue to languish. Moreover, year after year proposals are considered to weaken or repeal the minimal safety protections that do exist. We respectfully request your consideration of our positions during the hearing and that this letter be included in the hearing record.

This hearing is well-timed considering that just this week the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) released the 2019 – 2020 Most Wanted List of safety improvements. The Most Wanted List calls attention to several areas that are directly relevant to issues that will likely come before the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee this Congress including: distraction; fatigue; alcohol and drug impairment; collision avoidance technologies in highway vehicles; speed; medical fitness, specifically obstructive sleep apnea; and, occupant protection. We look forward to working with you to improve safety on the nation's roads and to advance the improvements outlined by the NTSB.

**Truck crashes deaths continue to rise.** In 2017, 4,761 people were killed in crashes involving a large truck. This was a nine percent increase from the previous year and a staggering 41 percent increase since a low in 2009. Additionally, in 2016, the latest year for which full data are available, 145,000 people were injured in crashes involving a large truck. Commercial motor vehicle (CMV) crashes amounted to \$134 billion in costs that same year. These grim statistics are unacceptable and more must be done to prevent this needless carnage.

Proven countermeasures that would bring about safer conditions for both truck drivers and those with whom they share the road must be implemented. Technologies including speed limiting devices, automatic emergency braking (AEB), and comprehensive underride guards could be saving lives now if they were fully deployed. Similarly, a required minimum number of behind the wheel hours should be established as part of entry level driver training. We urge Congress to take swift action on legislation requiring these crucial upgrades.

We ask the Committee to also oppose efforts that would weaken or repeal existing truck safety rules. In the last few years, special interests have been relentless in their attempts to increase

truck driver hours of service and evade compliance with the electronic logging device (ELD) rule, despite the known dangers associated with “tired truckers.” It is also alarming that efforts have been underway to allow for “teen truckers” by lowering the age to obtain an interstate commercial driver’s license (CDL) from 21 to 18. This ill-conceived concept is especially egregious because truck drivers under the age of 21 are anywhere from 4 to 6 times more likely to be in a fatal crash, according to studies of intrastate truck drivers. These dangerous proposals pose a direct threat to the safety of all road users and should be resoundingly rejected.

**Bigger, heavier trucks would endanger all motorists and our infrastructure.** Congress should oppose all attempts to further degrade safety by increasing truck size and weight limits. According to the 2017 Infrastructure Report Card from the American Society of Civil Engineers, America’s roads receive a grade of “D” and our bridges were given a “C+”. Nearly 40 percent of our 615,000 bridges in the National Bridge Inventory are 50 years or older and one out of 11 is structurally deficient. The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Comprehensive Truck Size and Weight Study found that introducing double 33-foot trailer trucks, known as “Double 33s,” would be projected to result in 2,478 bridges requiring strengthening or replacement at an estimated one-time cost of \$1.1 billion. This figure does not even account for the additional, subsequent maintenance costs which will result from longer, heavier trucks. In fact, increasing the weight of a heavy truck by only 10 percent increases bridge damage by 33 percent. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) estimates that the investment backlog for bridges, to address all cost-beneficial bridge needs, is \$123.1 billion. The U.S. would need to increase annual funding for bridges by 20 percent over current spending levels to eliminate the bridge backlog by 2032.

Longer trucks also come with operational difficulties such as requiring more time to pass, having larger blind spots, crossing into adjacent lanes, swinging into opposing lanes on curves and turns, and taking a longer distance to adequately brake. And, not surprisingly, trucks heavier than 80,000 pounds have a greater number of brake violations, which are a major reason for out-of-service violations. According to a North Carolina study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), trucks with out-of-service violations are 362 percent more likely to be involved in a crash. This is also troubling considering that tractor-trailers moving at 60 mph are required to stop in 310 feet – the length of a football field – once the brakes are applied. Actual stopping distances are often much longer due to driver response time before braking and the common problem that truck brakes are often not in adequate working condition.

There is overwhelming opposition to any increases to truck size and weight limits. The public, local government officials, safety, consumer and public health groups, law enforcement and first responders, truck drivers and labor representatives, families of truck crash victims and survivors, and even Congress have all rejected attempts to increase truck size and weight. It is clear that increasing truck size and weight will exacerbate safety and infrastructure problems, negate potential benefits from investments in roads and bridges, and divert rail traffic from privately owned freight railroads to our already overburdened public highways. Also, despite claims to the contrary, bigger trucks will not result in fewer trucks. Following every past increase to federal truck size and weight, the number of trucks are on our roads has gone up. Since 1982, when Congress last increased the gross vehicle weight limit, truck registrations have more than

doubled. The U.S. DOT study also addressed this meritless assertion and found that any potential mileage efficiencies from the use of heavier trucks would be offset in just one year.

**Motor vehicle crash deaths have stagnated despite available, proven technology.**

Tremendous focus has been placed on the future potential of autonomous vehicles (AVs), also known as driverless cars, to eliminate crashes. While it is claimed that AVs may someday make meaningful reductions in deaths and injuries, this promise is still likely decades away. Further, at least three people have already been killed in crashes involving vehicles equipped with self-driving technologies. The real risks posed by experimental driverless cars must be addressed through a strong federal government role – including safety standards and oversight – before AVs are deployed on a large scale. However, a number of proven technologies such as automatic emergency braking, lane departure warning and blind spot detection should be made standard equipment on all new vehicles now. We urge Congress to require the U.S. DOT to establish minimum performance requirements for these lifesaving technologies and require that all new vehicles be equipped with them.

**Infrastructure upgrades will be critical as driverless cars are deployed.** As AVs are tested and eventually commercialized on our nation's roads, it will be vital that infrastructure improvements be made to ensure their safe operation. For example, research shows that driverless vehicles can easily be confused by poor infrastructure conditions leading to dangerous errors. In one experiment a standard stop sign with only a few alterations was interpreted by a driverless car as a 45 mph speed limit sign. The potential consequences of these types of mistakes could be catastrophic. Substantial investments in our infrastructure that benefit human drivers now and help to prepare our roads for self-driving cars should occur before driverless vehicles are ubiquitous on our streets. Additionally, despite claims that driverless technology will improve our congested roads, transportation experts have already found that the proliferation of mobility services like Lyft and Uber (precursors for mass deployment of driverless vehicles) have instead increased congestion and reduced mass transit use. In addition, a recent study predicted that AVs could exacerbate clogged arteries by constantly traveling at low speeds instead of parking while waiting for their next trip. These, and numerous other, issues must be comprehensively addressed before driverless vehicles are deployed on a large scale. In order to realize the full potential of AVs to be a catalyst for positive change, protections must be put in place to ensure the safety of all road users.

As the title of this hearing aptly states, “The Cost of Doing Nothing” and complacency with the status quo of high crash fatalities, injuries and costs from crashes is unacceptable. Effective solutions are readily available to save lives now. We look forward to working with the Committee this Congress on passing important legislation that will advance safety for everyone using our surface transportation systems.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President  
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

Georges C. Benjamin, MD, Executive Director  
American Public Health Association

Harry Adler, Executive Director  
Truck Safety Coalition

Jason Levine, Executive Director  
Center for Auto Safety

Daphne Izer  
Co-Founder, Parents Against Tired Truckers  
(PATT)

Janette Fennell, Founder and President  
KidsAndCars.org

Dawn King  
Davisburg, MI  
President, Truck Safety Coalition  
Board Member, CRASH  
Daughter of Bill Badger  
Killed in truck crash 12/23/04

Jane Mathis  
St. Augustine, FL  
Vice President, TSC  
Board Member, PATT  
Mother of David Mathis  
Mother-in-Law of Mary Kathryn Mathis  
Killed in a truck crash 3/25/04

Peter Malarczyk  
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Injured in a truck crash 12/29/15  
Son of Ryszard and Anita Malarczyk  
Killed in a truck crash 12/29/15

Santiago Calderon  
Arcata, CA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Injured in a truck crash 4/10/14

Joan Claybrook, Chair  
Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways  
(CRASH) and Former Administrator,  
National Highway Traffic Safety  
Administration

Jack Gillis, Executive Director  
Consumer Federation of America

Steve Owings, Co-Founder and President  
Road Safe America

Stephen W. Hargarten, M.D., MPH  
Society for the Advancement of Violence and  
Injury Research

Sally Greenberg, Executive Director  
National Consumers League

Rosemary Shahan, President  
Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety

Andrew McGuire, Executive Director  
Trauma Foundation

Jennifer Tierney, Board Member  
Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways  
(CRASH) Foundation

Ron Wood  
Washington, D.C.  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Son of Betsy Wood, Brother of Lisa Wood  
Martin, Uncle of Chance, Brock, and Reid  
Martin  
Killed in a truck crash 9/20/04

Kate Brown  
Gurnee, IL  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Mother of Graham Brown  
Injured in a truck crash 5/2/05

Michelle Lemus  
Los Angeles, CA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Injured in a truck crash 4/10/14

Tami Friedrich Trakh  
Corona, CA  
Board Member, CRASH  
Sister of Kris Mercurio, Sister-in-Law of Alan  
Mercurio, Aunt of Brandie Rooker & Anthony  
Mercurio  
Killed in a truck crash 12/27/89

Monica Malarczyk  
Hastings-on-Hudson, NY  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Injured in a truck crash 12/29/15  
Son of Ryszard and Anita Malarczyk  
Killed in a truck crash 12/29/15

Beth Badger  
Columbus, GA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Daughter of Bill Badger  
Killed in truck crash 12/23/04

Paul Badger  
Davidson, NC  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Son of Bill Badger  
Killed in truck crash 12/23/04

Gary Wilburn  
Weatherford, OK  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Father of Orbie Wilburn  
Killed in a truck crash 9/2/02

Jackie Novak  
Hendersonville, NC  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Mother of Charles "Chuck" Novak  
Killed in a truck crash 10/24/10

Laurie Higginbotham  
Memphis, TN  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Mother of Michael Higginbotham  
Killed in a truck crash, 11/18/14

Vickie Johnson  
Hartwell, GA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Wife of Curt Johnson, Step-mother of Crystal  
Johnson  
Killed in a truck crash 10/1/2009

Debra Cruz  
Harlingen, TX  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Injured in a truck crash 8/8/2008

Linda Wilburn  
Weatherford, OK  
Board Member, PATT  
Mother of Orbie Wilburn  
Killed in a truck crash 9/2/02

Vincent Laubach  
Reno, NV  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Truck Crash Survivor

Larry Liberatore  
Severn, MD  
Board Member, PATT  
Father of Nick Liberatore  
Killed in a truck crash 6/9/97

Christina Mahaney  
Jackman, ME  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Injured in a truck crash 7/19/2011  
Mother of Liam Mahaney  
Killed in a truck crash 7/19/2011

Tina Silva  
Ontario, CA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Sister of Kris Mercurio, Sister-in-Law of Alan Mercurio, Aunt of Brandie Rooker & Anthony Mercurio  
Killed in a truck crash 12/27/89

Kathleen Laubach  
Reno, NV  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Truck Crash Survivor

Bruce King  
Davisburg, MI  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Son-in-law of Bill Badger  
Killed in truck crash 12/23/04

Kim Telep  
Harrisburg, PA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Wife of Bradley Telep  
Killed in a truck crash 8/29/12

Cindy Southern  
Cleveland, TN  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Wife of James Whitaker, sister-in-law Anthony Hixon and aunt of Amber Hixon  
Killed in a truck crash 9/18/09

Marc Johnson  
Hartwell, GA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Brother of Curt Johnson  
Killed in truck crash 10/1/2009

Morgan Lake  
Sunderland, MD  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Injured in a truck crash 7/19/13

Steve Izer  
Lisbon, ME  
Board Member, PATT  
Father of Jeff Izer  
Killed in a truck crash 10/10/93

Sandra Lance  
Chesterfield, VA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Mother of Kristen Belair  
Killed in a truck crash 8/26/2009

Bernadette Fox  
Davis, CA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Best friend of Daniel McGuire  
Killed in a truck crash 7/10/2014

Julie Branon Magnan  
South Burlington, VT  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Injured in a truck crash 01/31/02  
Wife of David Magnan  
Killed in a truck crash 01/31/02

Amy Fletcher  
Perrysburg, OH  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Wife of John Fletcher  
Killed in a truck crash 1/24/12

Alan Dana  
Plattsburgh, NY  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Son of Janet Dana, Uncle of Caitlyn & Lauryn Dana, Brother-in-law of Laurie Dana  
Killed in a truck crash 7/19/12

Nancy Meuleners  
Bloomington, MN  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Injured in a truck crash 12/19/89

Ashley McMillan  
Memphis, TN  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Girlfriend of Michael Higginbotham  
Killed in a truck crash, 11/18/14

Marchelle Wood  
Falls Church, VA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Mother of Dana Wood  
Killed in a truck crash 10/15/02

Melissa Gouge  
Washington, D.C.  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Cousin of Amy Corbin  
Killed in a truck crash 8/18/97

Randall Higginbotham  
Memphis, TN  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Father of Michael Higginbotham  
Killed in a truck crash, 11/18/14

Frank Wood  
Falls Church, VA  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Father of Dana Wood  
Killed in a truck crash 10/15/02

Michelle Novak  
Delevan, NY  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Aunt of Charles "Chuck" Novak  
Killed in a truck crash 10/24/10

Ed Slattery  
Lutherville, MD  
Board Member, PATT  
Volunteer, Truck Safety Coalition  
Husband of Susan Slattery  
Killed in a truck crash 8/16/10  
Sons Matthew & Peter Slattery critically  
injured

cc: Members of the U.S. House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure