

September 29, 2020

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

As leaders of organizations dedicated to ensuring the safety of all road users, we are writing to urge you to take serious and decisive action necessary to curb the rising number of pedestrian crash fatalities. In 2018, pedestrian fatalities reached their highest levels in approximately three decades. Additionally, nonoccupants including pedestrians and bicyclists represent approximately 40 percent of people killed in non-traffic motor vehicle crashes – such as those occurring off public trafficways, in parking facilities, or driveways. These needless losses are unacceptable, especially given recent advances in vehicle safety technology that can significantly reduce this toll.

While we commend your focus on pedestrian safety, including today's National Pedestrian Safety Month Kickoff, unfortunately public education and awareness campaigns historically have failed to deliver needed results. For this reason, we urge you to advance numerous improvements included in the Moving Forward Act (H.R. 2), which was passed earlier this year in a bipartisan vote by the U.S. House of Representatives. Our groups are united in supporting these essential steps and join together in calling on the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to implement them without delay.

- *Issuing a final rule by a date certain on advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS) including automatic emergency braking (AEB), lane departure warning, blind spot warning, and others.* There is perhaps no auto safety development in recent years that has shown more promise at helping motorists avoid crashes than ADAS. This tremendous potential has been demonstrated to reduce vehicle-to-vehicle collisions as well as crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists.
- *Reducing impaired driving through a rulemaking on advanced drunk driving prevention technology.* Systems that can detect or identify impairment may have the capability to save thousands of lives each year. In 2018, more than 1,100 pedestrians, cyclists, and others outside a vehicle were killed in crashes involving a drunk driver – amounting to more than ten percent of the total fatalities.
- *Establishing performance standards for the hood and bumper areas for vehicles to make them more forgiving in crashes involving pedestrians and bicyclists.* Vehicles can be manufactured, specifically the front end, with the ability to reduce the severity of collisions with people walking and biking, as is required in Europe and rated in many international New Car Assessment Programs.
- *Improving Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) 108 to enhance headlight performance and visibility.* The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) has found that while nighttime visibility is essential for safety, few vehicles are equipped with headlights that perform well.
- *Modernizing the U.S. New Car Assessment Program (NCAP) to improve crash tests and ratings, including those specifically for vulnerable road users.* By upgrading NCAP to incorporate crash avoidance and crashworthiness ratings for pedestrians and bicyclists, consumers would be empowered to make better purchasing decisions.

Many of these safety improvements have also been highlighted by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). Not only has adoption of ADAS been included on every recent iteration of the Most Wanted List of Transportation Safety Improvements since 2016, our nation's expert transportation investigative body has also issued a number of relevant recommendations as part of the *Pedestrian Safety, Special Investigation Report* released in 2018. Unfortunately, many of the recommendations, including to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), remain open and unaddressed for years.

The trend of increasing pedestrian fatalities and the early indications that more people may chose walking and biking as a means of personal transportation as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic bring a renewed sense of urgency to these necessary safety advances. While education and awareness can be part of an overall strategy, experience has proven that they are not sufficient to adequately bring down crash deaths. The magnitude of this problem demands a comprehensive and effective response by the U.S. DOT now.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase, President
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety

Joan Claybrook, Former Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Amy Cohen, Co-Founder
Families for Safe Streets

Janette Fennell, President and Founder
KidsAndCars.org

Jack Gillis, Executive Director
Consumer Federation of America

Sally Greenberg, Executive Director
National Consumers League

Stephen Hargarten, MD, MPH, Founding President
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Jason Levine, Executive Director
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Bill Nesper, Executive Director
League of American Bicyclists

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