



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

June 1, 2023

The Honorable Greg Abbott
Governor of Texas
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 12428
Austin, Texas 78711-2428

Dear Governor Abbott:

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) is an alliance of consumer, safety, law enforcement, medical and public health groups, and insurance companies and agents working to advance laws proven to prevent crashes, deaths and injuries on our roads and contain related costs. We urge you to sign into law House Bill (HB) 1885 to allow the Texas Transportation Commission to establish variable speed limit (VSL) programs to improve safety and reduce roadway congestion.

Traffic crashes are a serious and costly issue in Texas. Estimates find that 4,496 people were killed on Texas roads in 2022 according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).ⁱ The NHTSA reports speeding related crashes killed 1,568 people on Texas roadways in 2021, the most recent year for which this data is available.ⁱⁱ Excess speed is a major cause of crash fatalities in the state, accounting for 35 percent of all traffic fatalities in 2021.ⁱⁱⁱ The annual economic costs of all crashes in Texas are nearly \$29 billion.^{iv} Clearly traffic crashes are a deadly and costly issue in need of proven solutions.

VSL programs are effective in ensuring the speed is appropriate for roadway conditions. They reduce congestion and mitigate congestion-related safety issues including stop and start traffic, hard braking, speeding, and aggressive driving resulting in collisions. VSL programs also seek to improve safety by decreasing the risks associated with traveling at speeds which are higher than appropriate for the conditions. This includes decreasing speeds due to changes in traffic volume, roadway surface conditions, roadway repair and construction, and weather, among other factors to maintain a safe and efficient roadway.

Research found that VSLs can reduce crashes on freeways up to 34 percent for total crashes, 65 percent for rear-end crashes and 51 percent for fatal and injury crashes.^v According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), VSLs are a proven countermeasure and important to the Safe System Approach of which safe speeds are a key element. We urge you to sign HB 1885 into law and permit this effective tool to be implemented on Texas roads.

Sincerely,

Catherine Chase
President

ⁱ National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2023, April). Early estimate of motor vehicle traffic fatalities in 2022 (Crash•Stats Brief Statistical Summary. Report No. DOT HS 813 428). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

ⁱⁱ NHTSA Traffic Safety Facts Texas 2017-2021, State Traffic Safety Info at <https://cdan.nhtsa.gov/SASStoredProcess/guest>

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^{iv} Blincoe, L., Miller, T., Wang, J.-S., Swedler, D., Coughlin, T., Lawrence, B., Guo, F., Klauer, S., & Dingus, T. (2022, December). The economic and societal impact of motor vehicle crashes, 2019 (Report No. DOT HS 813 403). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

^v Avelar et al. Developing Crash Modification Factors for Variable Speed Limit, FHWA (2020).