

November 14, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

As we approach the second anniversary of the enactment of the bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA, Pub. L. 117-58), which was enacted on November 15, 2021, the undersigned urge the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to meet the deadlines mandated by Congress to issue comprehensive vehicle safety standards to help reduce the needless and tragic fatality and injury toll on our Nation's roads. We are writing to express our serious concerns that statutory deadlines may be missed despite mounting highway deaths and multiplying economic costs.

Since the IIJA was debated in Congress and signed into law by President Biden, an estimated nearly 88,000 people have died and 5.2 million more were injured on our roads and highways. In just a decade annual highway deaths have increased 30 percent.<sup>i</sup> Early projections for 2023 show traffic fatalities still remain historically high.<sup>ii</sup> Specific categories of road users experienced steep increases in deaths as well. For example, pedestrian fatalities increased 18 percent, bicyclist deaths were up 26 percent, and motorcyclist fatalities rose 20 percent from 2019 (pre-pandemic) to 2022.<sup>iii</sup> The IIJA includes a number of remedies to address these known problems.

The financial impact of motor vehicle crashes on our economy and on our families is staggering. Conservatively, the annual economic cost of motor vehicle crashes is approximately \$340 billion (2019 dollars).<sup>iv</sup> This means that every person living in the U.S. essentially pays an annual "crash tax" of over \$1,000. Moreover, the total value of societal harm from motor vehicle crashes in 2019 was nearly \$1.4 trillion.<sup>v</sup>

Requiring safety technologies that meet minimum performance standards has been shown to be effective in saving lives and saving money.<sup>vi</sup> For example, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has estimated that between 1960 and 2012, over 600,000 lives have been saved by motor vehicle safety technologies.<sup>vii</sup>

The IIJA required U.S. DOT to issue several Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) that are essential to improving public safety with proven and cost-effective technologies. These include requiring automatic emergency braking (AEB) on light and heavy vehicles, advanced drunk and impaired driving prevention technology, and systems to protect children from horrific "hot car" deaths, among others.<sup>viii</sup> To achieve maximum safety benefits and successfully eradicate these targeted safety problems, comprehensive standards, some of which must exceed the directives in the law, must be issued. For example, the AEB rules should respond to

vulnerable road users (VRUs) when possible and the “hot car” rule must include a detection and alert system for the entire interior compartment of new vehicles.

The statutory deadlines for completing these key rulemakings are fast approaching, including some on this anniversary. For those lacking requirements for issuance of a Final Rule by a date certain, this Administration bringing them over the finish line is even more critical. We urge you to ensure that the U.S. DOT under your leadership implement all these directives expeditiously. Delayed and deferred rulemakings will deny families the protection they need and deserve.

Sincerely,

Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety  
Allstate Insurance Company  
American Public Health Association (APHA)  
Amica Mutual Insurance Company  
Center for Auto Safety  
Joan Claybrook, former Administrator, NHTSA  
Consumer Federation of America  
Emergency Nurses Association  
Kids and Car Safety  
Liberty Mutual Insurance Company  
National Association of Mutual Insurance Companies (NAMIC)  
Nationwide Mutual Insurance Company  
R. David Pittle, former Commissioner, Consumer Product Safety Commission  
Selective Insurance Company of America  
Society for the Advancement of Violence and Injury Research  
State Farm Insurance Companies  
Trauma Foundation

cc: Ann Carlson, Acting Administrator, NHTSA  
Robin Hutcherson, Administrator, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)

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- <sup>i</sup> Traffic Safety Facts 2020: A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Crash Data, NHTSA, Oct. 2022, DOT HS 813 375, (Annual Report 2020); Traffic Safety Facts: Early Estimates of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities And Fatality Rate by Sub-Categories in 2022, NHTSA, Apr. 2023, DOT HS 813 448; Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats: Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities For The First Half (January – June) of 2023, NHTSA, Sep. 2023, DOT HS 813 514; [comparing 2013 to 2022].
- <sup>ii</sup> Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats: Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities For The First Half (January – June) of 2023, NHTSA, Sep. 2023, DOT HS 813 514
- <sup>iii</sup> Traffic Safety Facts: Early Estimates of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities And Fatality Rate by Sub-Categories in 2022, NHTSA, Apr. 2023, DOT HS 813 448, Traffic Safety Facts: Research note, Overview of Motor Vehicle Crashes in 2019, NHTSA, Dec. 2020, DOT HS 813 060.
- <sup>iv</sup> The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, NHTSA, Dec. 2022, DOT HS 813 403. (Economic and Societal Impact 2019).
- <sup>v</sup> Economic and Societal Impact 2019.
- <sup>vi</sup> Cost Per Life Saved by the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, Dec. 2004, DOT HS 809 835.
- <sup>vii</sup> Lives Saved by Vehicle Safety Technologies and Associated Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards, 1960 to

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2012, DOT HS 812 069 (NHTSA, 2015); See also, NHTSA AV Policy, Executive Summary, p. 5 endnote 1.  
Note: NHTSA should update this data.

viii Pub. L. 117-58 (2021); § 24208 (Light Vehicle AEB); § 23010 Due: Nov. 2023 (Heavy Vehicle AEB); § 24220  
Due: Nov. 2024 (Advanced Impaired Driving Technology); § 24222, Due Nov. 2023 (Rear Designated Seating  
Position Alert (Hot Cars)).