



ADVOCATES
FOR HIGHWAY
& AUTO SAFETY

December 12, 2023

The Honorable Rick Crawford, Chair
The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton, Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Crawford and Ranking Member Holmes Norton:

Thank you for holding tomorrow's hearing, "Oversight of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act: Modal Perspectives." With deaths and injuries on our Nation's roads at historically high levels, the safety advances included in the law by this Subcommittee must be implemented by the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) in a comprehensive and expeditious manner. Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) respectfully requests this letter be included in the hearing record.

Motor Vehicle Crashes are a Public Health Crisis Which Demand Immediate Action

On average, 118 people were killed every day on roads in the U.S. in 2021,¹ totaling nearly 43,000 fatalities for the year. An additional 2.5 million people were injured.² This represents a 27 percent increase in deaths in just a decade.³ Early projections for 2022 traffic fatalities remain high,⁴ as do estimates for the first six months of 2023.⁵ In addition to vehicle occupants, other road users experienced upturns in deaths as well. Pedestrian fatalities grew by 13 percent, and bicyclist deaths were up two percent from 2020 to 2021.⁶ While pedestrian fatalities are estimated to have decreased one percent in 2022, bicyclist fatalities spiked by 11 percent.⁷

In 2021, 5,788 people were killed and nearly 155,000 people were injured in crashes involving large trucks.⁸ Since 2009, the number of fatalities in large truck crashes has increased by 71

¹ Overview of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes in 2021, NHTSA, Apr. 2023, DOT HS 813 435. (Overview 2021).

² Overview 2021.

³ Traffic Safety Facts 2020: A Compilation of Motor Vehicle Crash Data, NHTSA, Oct. 2022, DOT HS 813 375, (Annual Report 2020); and Overview 2021; [comparing 2012 to 2021].

⁴ Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats, Early Estimate of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities in 2022, NHTSA, Apr. 2023, DOT HS 813 428. (Early Estimates 2022).

⁵ National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2023, September). Early estimate of motor vehicle traffic fatalities for the first half of 2023 (Crash•Stats Brief Statistical Summary. Report No. DOT HS 813 514). NHTSA.

⁶ Overview 2021.

⁷ Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats, Early Estimates of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities And Fatality Rate by Sub-Categories in 2022, NHTSA, Apr. 2023, DOT HS 813 448.

⁸ Overview of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes in 2021, NHTSA, Apr. 2023, DOT HS 813 435.

percent.⁹ In that same timespan, the number of people injured in crashes involving large trucks increased by 109 percent.¹⁰ Early estimates indicate that in 2022, traffic fatalities in crashes involving at least one large truck were up another two percent; 5,887 people were killed.¹¹ In fatal two-vehicle crashes between a large truck and a passenger motor vehicle, 97 percent of the fatalities were occupants of the passenger vehicle.¹²

Conservatively, the annual economic cost of motor vehicle crashes is approximately \$340 billion (2019 dollars).¹³ 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.¹⁴ The cost to society from crashes involving large trucks and buses was estimated to be \$143 billion in 2020, the latest year for which data is available.¹⁵ When adjusted solely for inflation, this figure amounts to over \$166 billion.¹⁶

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Must be Implemented Promptly

Fortunately, commonsense solutions were advanced by this Subcommittee during the consideration of the IIJA.¹⁷ The Safe System Approach is incorporated in the IIJA and undertakes a holistic method to improve safety in the roadway environment. In addition, the IIJA authorizes safety upgrades to the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) that will help to protect vulnerable road users, such as infrastructure features that calm traffic and reduce vehicle speeds. The ripple effect of these crash reductions is wide-ranging and includes less damage to infrastructure, less congestion caused by crashes, and less expenditure of first responder resources, among others. Additional provisions included by the Subcommittee such as addressing impaired driving, improving the safety of vulnerable road users, expanding the safe routes to schools program and mitigating underride crashes will help to improve safety on our Nation’s roads.

⁹ *Id.* and Traffic Safety Facts 2020: A Compilations of Motor Vehicle Crash Data, NHTSA, Oct. 2022, DOT HS 813 375. Note, the 71 percent figure represents the overall change in the number of fatalities in large truck involved crashes from 2009 to 2021. However, between 2015 and 2016 there was a change in data collection at U.S. DOT that could affect this calculation. From 2009 to 2015 the number of fatalities in truck-involved crashes increased by 21 percent, and between 2016 to 2019, it increased by 7.6 percent, and between 2020 and 2021, it increased by 17 percent.

¹⁰ Traffic Safety Facts 2021 Data: large Trucks, NHTSA, Jun 2023 (Revised), DOT HS 813 452; Traffic Safety Facts 2020, NHTSA, Oct. 2022, DOT HS 813 375. Note, the 109 percent figure represents the overall change in the number of people injured in large truck involved crashes from 2009 to 2021. However, between 2015 and 2016 there was a change in data collection at U.S. DOT that could affect this calculation. From 2009 to 2015 the number of people injured in truck-involved crashes increased by 59 percent, and between 2016 to 2019, it increased by 18 percent, and between 2020 and 2021, it increased by 5 percent.

¹¹ Traffic Safety Facts: Crash Stats; Early Estimates of Motor Vehicle Traffic Fatalities and Fatality Rate by Sub-Categories in 2022, NHTSA, Apr. 2023, DOT HS 813 448.

¹² Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS), Large Trucks. See: <https://www.iihs.org/topics/fatality-statistics/detail/large-trucks>.

¹³ The Economic and Societal Impact of Motor Vehicle Crashes, 2019, NHTSA, Dec. 2022, DOT HS 813 403. (Economic and Societal Impact 2019).

¹⁴ Economic and Societal Impact 2019

¹⁵ 2022 Pocket Guide to Large Truck and Bus Statistics, FMCSA, Dec. 2022, RRA-22-007.

¹⁶ CPI Inflation Calculator, BLS, Jan. 2020 to Jan. 2023.

¹⁷ Pub. L. 117-58 (2021).

Advocates remains deeply concerned about DOT's backlog of overdue rulemakings as well as its ability to meet the deadlines mandated in the IIJA. In fact, last week DOT released the Fall 2023 regulatory agenda which indicates that DOT will fail to meet the dates required by Congress for some of the most critical safety rulemakings.¹⁸ It is incumbent upon this Subcommittee to ensure that U.S. DOT meets the directives of the IIJA to issue critical safety rulemakings or lives will be needlessly lost.

We laud the Committee for holding this oversight hearing to ensure that DOT implements the safety advances of the IIJA in a timely manner. We look forward to continuing to work with you to improve safety on our Nation's roadways.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Catherine Chase", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Catherine Chase, President

cc: Members of the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit

¹⁸ Agency Rule List - Fall 2023, U.S. Department of Transportation, available at: https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/eAgendaMain?operation=OPERATION_GET_AGENCY_RULE_LIST¤tPub=true&agencyCode=&showStage=active&agencyCd=2100