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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20590

STATEMENT OF THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION, ALAN S. BOYD,
ON SAFETY OVERSIGHT, BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE
NOVEMBER 21, 1967

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I am pleased to appear before you today to report on the first full year of our efforts to implement President Johnson's appeal to replace "suicide with sanity" on America's highways.

We come to you with a sense of accomplishment based on a record rare in Government. The National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Act and its companion, the National Highway Safety Act, were passed little more than one year ago.

In that time, the National Highway Safety Bureau has adopted and enforced the first automobile safety standards in the long motoring history of this country.

In that time, more than half of the States have taken steps to participate in the National Highway Safety Act, even though no State is required to implement the Federal standards for another year.

In that time, some 3,300,000 automobiles have been recalled for correction of defects which, in 137 instances, our staff believed represented potential hazards to motorists.

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And in that time, we have begun 76 separate research projects all designed to make motoring in America safer.

This is a record which fully justifies the feeling of the President and the Congress that automobile and highway safety are today matters of national concern.

It is a record in which Dr. Haddon and his associates and all of us in the Department of Transportation are proud.

When funds were first made available for these programs eleven months ago, our first task was to build the necessary specialized staff and begin the research required to meet the statutory deadlines.

On January 31 of this year, we issued twenty motor vehicle safety performance standards which will become effective for all vehicles manufactured for sale in this country after December 31.

These standards set minimum levels of performance in such sub-systems and equipment as braking, safety belts, energy absorbing steering assemblies, interior crash padding, laminated windshields, windshield washing, wiping and defrosting, lighting, rear-view mirrors, control location, fuel tanks, gear shift sequence, and door locks.

As you are aware, Federal procedures require that we issue proposals so that interested parties may comment and participate in the shaping of final standards. Domestic and foreign automobile manufacturers, individuals, trade associations, and other interested parties responded with a total of some 4,500 pages of comments and recommendations relative to the first set of twenty standards. This will give you a measure of the work involved in developing motor vehicle standards and moving them through the required procedures.

The Act also requires that a second group of new and revised standards be issued by the end of next January. In preparation for meeting that deadline, we have six proposed standards now in various stages of the formal rule-making procedure. All of these are expected to be issued as standards within the next few weeks.

In addition, on October 13 we issued Advance Notices of Proposed Rule-Making inviting comments on 47 more proposals. We expect that ten of these proposals will form a basis for new standards to become effective January 1, 1969. Eight of the proposals either amend or broaden the

verage of existing standards, also to be effective on January 1, 1969. The remaining 29 proposals would have effective dates after January 1, 1969.

These 47 new proposals would affect brakes, tires, lights, child protection, impact protection, occupant protection, pedestrian protection, speed control, locks and latches, energy absorbing features, fuel tanks and lines, fire retardant interiors, and other areas. I am sure that Federal Highway Administrator Bridwell and Dr. Haddon of the National Highway Safety Bureau will go into these matters in greater detail.

The Act also requires manufacturers to certify after January 1, 1968 that their product conforms to all applicable Federal standards. On November 1 we issued a Notice outlining the requirements for such certification, and asking manufacturers to provide the National Highway Safety Bureau with certain information as to how they will meet these requirements.

Another of our responsibilities under the Act is to assure that vehicle manufacturers promptly notify dealers and purchasers of vehicles of any known defects and take steps to have them corrected. Under this program, more than 137 defect recall campaigns had been conducted between the effective date of the Act on September 9, 1966 and October 27 of this year. These 137 campaigns involved a total of more than 3.3 million vehicles. These figures are the best evidence that this program was needed. They also measure its effectiveness in the first year of operation.

This defects and recall program has elicited great public interest. In an effort to make the information submitted by manufacturers more available to the public in a condensed form, we have published a one-year summary of the safety defect recall campaigns conducted between September 9, 1966 and September 9 of this year.

The Act pays special attention to the subject of Tire Safety. In that regard, we issued Notices of Proposed Rule Making for passenger car tires and rims on July 17. After consideration of the comments received and holding a series of technical meetings and discussions, these two standards were issued November 10 of this year. Standard 109 on new tires will be effective for all tires manufactured after December 31, of this year. Standard 110 affecting tires and rims on new cars, will be effective on all cars manufactured for sale after March 31, 1968.

The Act also contains certain prohibitions against the sale of regrooved tires on the one hand, but also grants the Secretary authority to approve the sale of such tires which he finds are designed and constructed in a manner consistent with the purposes of the Act. In order to meet these

responsibilities, we have taken several related measures. First, we have entered into a research contract with the National Bureau of Standards to determine the safety of regrooved tires under actual road conditions. Results of that research are not yet available. Second, on August 3 we issued a Notice asking tire manufacturers and other affected parties to show why we should not seek an injunction to prevent the sale of regrooved tires. In the same Notice, interested parties were also asked to submit any pertinent information or data which will assist in determining under what conditions, if any, the sale of regrooved tires ought to be permitted within the discretionary authority of the Act.

Third, the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety, on August 24, announced its intention to amend its regulations governing use of regrooved tires on Commercial vehicles. Comments on these various actions are now being evaluated.

The Act also authorizes the National Highway Safety Bureau to carry out an extensive research program. By September 1 of this year, it had awarded 76 research contracts at a total value of \$8.7 million to provide information needed to carry out its programs. Thirty of these contracts are in the area of motor vehicle safety and are designed to provide some of the hard, scientific data we need in order to write future vehicle performance standards. These contracts involve such areas as occupant restraint systems, occupant protection, crashworthiness of the vehicle, vehicle handling properties, tire systems, and braking systems.

I would like to take this opportunity, while we are discussing vehicle standards and research, to emphasize that we are not issuing these performance standards frivolously. Our mandate is to work for the reduction of highway deaths, injuries, and property damage. It is not an objective to be taken lightly. We are, therefore, making every effort to develop sound, scientifically based standards which will provide maximum safety for motorists and their passengers. I make this point because of certain criticisms which were heard as a result of a recent study on torso belts undertaken by the National Highway Safety Bureau. As you probably know, one of the new vehicle standards to be effective after January 1 requires safety belts in all passenger positions -- that is, belts of the familiar lap design. The standard also requires an upper torso belt or shoulder harness in the two outboard positions in the front seat.

As a result of some information received through our own research, and information volunteered by a major automobile manufacturer as a result of its research, the Federal Highway Administration undertook a study to

reexamine the requirement for upper torso belts. Other Government agencies, automobile manufacturers, and research people at home and abroad were requested to contribute any new data, information, or conclusions relative to such belts.

The seven week study reconfirmed the safety benefits of the shoulder belts and we reaffirmed the standard previously issued. I mention this to make the point that if we are to do a responsible job of promulgating vehicle performance standards, we will necessarily have to examine and reexamine standards periodically in the light of new research findings. This review process is essential to the development and maintenance of effective performance standards.

We are greatly encouraged already by the indications that our programs are having some effect. Medical and engineering research workers studying actual crashes are estimating that the likelihood of given injuries and deaths among those impacting the new energy absorbing steering assemblies and the newer type of laminated windshields is being reduced approximately 70 to 80 percent compared to those in vehicles without these features.

If current information available is any criteria, we should expect further reductions in deaths and injuries from the wider use of the combination lap and upper torso safety belts and the other safety requirements on new cars.

It may yet be too early to draw any valid conclusions, but the fact is that figures for the most recent months show a break in the years-long rise in highway death rates. We hope, and we have reason to believe, this is not just a statistical aberration.

In our view, these highway safety efforts are part of the Administration's and the Congress' larger concern with protection of the American consumer. We believe that the consumer -- in this case the man or woman who buys and operates an automobile -- is entitled to every assurance that the car he buys is as safe as it can be made in the present state of the art. We are confident that the record shows we have made substantial progress in reaching that goal in our first year of operation. Thank you.

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