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TESTIMONY OF THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION
ALAN S. BOYD, ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE
NATIONAL TRAFFIC AND MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY ACT
OF 1966 -- PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BEFORE THE
SENATE COMMERCE COMMITTEE AT 10:00 A. M.,
APRIL 25, 1968, ROOM 1202, NEW SENATE OFFICE BUILDING

It is a pleasure to appear before you to report, in broad terms, the progress we have made in our efforts to alleviate fatalities and ameliorate injuries and property damage resulting from highway crashes.

You will recall that, when these hearings were originally scheduled last fall, we submitted extensive testimony to the Committee in anticipation of that appearance. This morning, I would like to briefly summarize and update the previously submitted material. The Director of the National Highway Safety Bureau, Dr. William Haddon, Jr., and his Deputy Director, Dr. Robert Brenner, are here with me. At the end of my prepared statement, they will be happy to respond to your specific questions.

In my statement submitted to the Committee last November, I pointed to a record of accomplishment which I felt was notable. Today -- 18 months since the creation of the National Highway Safety Bureau, and during the anniversary month of the establishment of the Department of Transportation -- I have every reason to reaffirm my evaluation of what has been accomplished.

For the Bureau, as for the Department, this has been a period of learning, of organizing, of establishing policies, of recruiting personnel, of coordinating our activities with other Federal departments and agencies -- in short, a period of growing into the job.

In the process, to be candid, there also has been some slippage and delay. In some cases, some reports have been delayed; in others, correspondence has not been answered as promptly as hoped. Nonetheless, considering the limited resources available, the pressures of time on the new program -- some of them imposed by the Act itself, and the progress towards the Bureau's goals, I believe that the delay and slippage have been reasonably minimal.

Let me review with you the goals which we set for ourselves in this first phase of the administration of the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966. Our energies and resources were directed towards three major targets: (1) the building of an effective organization, (2) the development and implementation of initial programs, and (3) the commencement of broad-scale planning and development projects which would produce advanced programs in future years.

Now I would like to bring your attention to some of our achievements in each of these three areas:

1. Building an Organization:

We have attempted to build an organization capable of generating effective programs and responsive to major safety problems. As discussed more thoroughly in our Annual Report on the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966, which the President will send to the Congress shortly, the Federal motor vehicle safety effort has been organized functionally to reflect a systems approach to the crash sequence. This, we feel, will most vividly identify the components of the problem and their relationships, which will, in turn, permit us to develop sound counter measures.

In addition, an organizational flexibility has been maintained to allow further response to specific aspects of program development. For example, in response to great concern for school bus safety, we have established a Division of School Bus Safety in the National Highway Safety Bureau and are completing plans to appoint a special school bus safety advisory group.

We continue to be concerned with the lead-time problems involved in putting vehicle safety standards into effect and the need to identify more precisely the product cost implications of safety. In response to this, we have announced our plans to create, within the Bureau, a new "Office of Product Cost and Lead Time Analysis." This Office will provide us with the knowledge to weigh the economic consequences of particular new safety performance requirements.

A major task in our organization building has been the coordination of various governmental safety activities into a new program and prudent allocation of program resources. Within the Federal Highway Administration, mechanisms have been developed for coordinating and integrating the safety research and operational programs of the National Highway Safety Bureau, the Bureau of Public Roads, and the Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety. Liaison and communication has been sought with other Federal departments and agencies with related responsibilities. Recently, we instituted procedures which will establish individual program priorities and assist in the allocation of money and manpower between the various activities.

Finally, we have the job of finding expert and qualified personnel to actuate this organization. Our staff recruiting efforts are moving at a healthy pace, with the Bureau now at 65% of its authorized ceiling. We have obtained people highly qualified in the diversity and depth of talents required by our motor vehicle and highway safety program. They come from business and industry, from universities, from non-profit agencies, both Federal and State. They are developing a highway safety program capability, the magnitude of which has never been available before. We are hopeful we can find others of similar competence to fill out the remainder of our staff.

At this point, I would like to acknowledge the valuable guidance and support provided by the National Motor Vehicle Safety Advisory Council. I have received a summary report on the first year of activities of the Council, copies of which have been supplied to the Committee. The Council, under the Chairmanship of Dr. Thomas Malone, met 13 times during the year, and provided wise direction in the formulation of vehicle safety standards.

On March 27, we announced the appointment of 11 new Council members -- six to fill expired terms, and the rest to expand the Council membership from 17 to 22. With your permission, I will submit a list of current Council membership for the record.

We are very proud of the composition of this group and the talented and busy people who have agreed to serve. We look forward to additional assistance and advice from the Council in the next year.

2. Development and Implementation of Initial Programs:

The second of our three goals was to quickly develop and implement rapid pay-off programs. Existing technology, industry practices, and present safety standards were utilized to develop an initial series of programs which would substantially affect the motor vehicle crash problem. Our role was to inventory the existing state of the art and translate it into

immediate activities, which could be expanded and improved through a longer-term program resulting from an extensive research effort.

Towards this end, we have issued a total of 22 initial and revised motor vehicle safety standards, which are now in effect and which incorporate well over one hundred specific safety requirements. In addition, there are -- in various steps of the legal process we must follow in setting vehicle standards -- a total of 23 amendments to existing standards and 24 proposed new standards.

These pending legal actions concern fire retardant interiors, child protection, speed control, impact protection, occupant protection, locks and latches, energy absorbing features, brakes, tires, fuel tanks and fittings, and other areas, including some already affected by the standards now in force.

There is in the hearing room, behind me, an exhibit which shows in graphic terms the effect of the vehicle standards issued so far.

This exhibit was on display in the recent New York Automobile Show, where some 30,000 copies of an accompanying booklet explaining our highway safety efforts were distributed to the public. The exhibit has been brought here for these hearings, and will be dismantled later

today to be sent to the Pittsburgh "Motorama '68" Auto Show opening tomorrow. We invite members of the Committee to examine it more closely and hear the recorded narration that explains the visual material.

The National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act required vehicle manufacturers to promptly notify dealers, and purchasers of vehicles, of any safety defects discovered in their vehicles. From the inception of the program in September 1966 through the end of March, more than 4.8 million vehicles have been recalled by manufacturers in a total of 227 recall campaigns. These figures are the best evidence we can provide that this program is needed, and has had a major impact.

These recall campaigns have important and valuable side effects. They focus new attention on safety and quality control in the manufacturing process. They will themselves result in a more reliable and safer product for the consumer. The notification campaigns also call attention to the fact that there are many varied and complex ways in which vehicle malfunctions can contribute to crashes.

The safety defects involved in these campaigns also call attention to problems that must be dealt with by safety standards. In fact, one of our pending standard's actions came about precisely in this way. Further, the recall provisions of the Act prompt companies to pay more attention to information they receive from warranty claims and customer complaints.

Another facet of the vehicle safety standards program -- an extremely important one -- is compliance. Under the requirements of a legal notice issued by us last December, 481 manufacturers have submitted information as to the location of their compliance labeling on their new vehicles and equipment, along with copies of the labels themselves.

The Department does not yet have the resources to conduct the depth and scope of testing necessary to assure compliance with the standards. However, we feel very strongly that no delay can be tolerated in the establishment of an effective compliance checking program.

As a result, we have asked competent private research and testing firms, and universities to submit proposals and cost estimates for such a program. We expect in the next few weeks to award contracts to a number of bidders who demonstrate capability to do the work.

The Bureau will purchase and select the vehicles and equipment to be tested for compliance, on a random basis, and will supply them to the testing laboratories. By using independent firms already equipped and capable of performing the necessary testing, our compliance checking program should be well in progress before mid-summer.

The Act devotes special attention to the subject of tire safety. Our progress in this area began last year with the issuance of two standards, now in effect, dealing with passenger car rims and tires -- both original equipment and new replacement tires. Last week, the Bureau announced amendment of the tire standards to broaden them to include new tire sizes, and tire and rim combinations, introduced by manufacturers subsequent to issuance of the original standards.

The Act also contains certain prohibitions against the sale of regrooved tires, although we are granted the authority to allow the sale of such tires under certain conditions. The Texas Transportation Institute of Texas A&M, at our request, has been testing and analyzing the performance of regrooved tires in operational situations. A report on that study is due to be issued by the Institute next month.

Soon afterwards, we will be publishing the results of our current rule making proceedings dealing with the use of regrooved tires on commercial trucks and buses, and with the sale of regrooved tires.

In the near future, we will take the first of a series of regulatory steps that will lead to a requirement that manufacturers supply purchasers or prospective purchasers of their vehicles with specific information concerning safety capabilities of competing makes and models. We also intend to collect and publish this information so that consumers will be able to judge these factors under specific operating conditions.

3. The Commencement of a Planning and Development Program:

The third, and potentially most important, of our goals has been to initiate an effort to advance the technology of motor vehicle safety. Our programs can progress only as fast as we can answer presently unanswered questions, scientifically substantiate common-sense reasoning, and promote technological and administrative innovations. During the past 18 months, we have initiated research and development which we hope will mature into life-saving programs of future months and years.

To date, the Bureau has awarded a total of 106 contracts, at a value of \$13,999,258. As you may recall, some months ago you were furnished

a booklet, entitled "Contracts in Progress -- National Highway Safety Bureau", which described the broad scope of this preliminary phase of the research program.

Possibly the most basic outside contract work involves intensive investigations by teams of physicians and engineers of vehicle crashes and the resulting injury patterns. These investigations are of vital importance to the entire motor vehicle and highway safety effort, since the needed fundamental understanding of traffic death and injuries in vehicle crashes can be obtained only by getting trained scientists to the scene of at least some crashes.

To initiate this nationwide program, we asked scientists of the University of California at Los Angeles to train medical-engineering teams from Baylor, Tulane, University of Rochester, Boston University and Georgia Tech. These groups are now conducting crash investigations in their own regions generally according to the techniques developed at UCLA.

In illustration of how this program is working, we recently learned of a tragic bus accident in California in which 19 people died. Within a matter of hours the Department had on the scene investigators

from its Bureau of Motor Carrier Safety, the National Transportation Safety Board, and the National Highway Safety Bureau. Several hours later the Coast Guard flew the UCLA medical-engineering team to the scene for intensive examination of the wreckage, for detailed interviews of the survivors, and for clinical examination of the injury patterns. The information now being analyzed might provide direction for future development of safer bus designs. We have programmed a substantial expansion of such intensive investigations.

I would like to call your attention to two or three new research projects of particular interest. One, announced in January, involving the Bureau and the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, calls for a study of the crash experience of at least 27 makes of passenger cars. Specific data will be gathered on five model years of at least 13 domestic makes and 14 foreign makes of passenger cars. Highway crashes in New York State will be analyzed to provide us with data on the relationship of vehicle design variables to the frequency and severity of crashes and injuries.

A series of three contracts, announced in March, signifies the beginning phase of our program to develop and obtain experimental safety vehicles to demonstrate the safety -- especially in terms of crash protection -- that can and must be built into tomorrow's cars. The

objective of these phase-one contracts is to secure comprehensive plans for an experimental car program. Phase two, to begin later this year, will be for the actual design and construction of experimental vehicles. Rather than production prototypes, these will be rolling laboratories which will enable us to develop and test new safety designed, equipment, and sub-systems, and to evaluate their practicability and effectiveness.

Earlier, I had mentioned our concern about school bus safety. We have an intensive research program underway in this area. We recently awarded a contract for a statistical study of school bus crash data. The project will investigate data from 13 States and 8 large cities, seeking detailed information about school bus crashes. We also have the National Education Association working to document and evaluate current school bus operational practices.

Essential to and inherent in each of these three goals, which I have just reviewed, is the Bureau's effort to expand and emphasize the involvement of the general public, as well as directly affected groups and organizations, in its programs. Not only do we feel that we have a responsibility to inform the public, but we feel that the success of our programs will depend, in large part, on the degree to which the public and interested parties understand, participate in, and support them.

Previously I referred to the display behind me and the accompanying booklet, copies of which we have provided to the Committee. The Federal Highway Administration has just completed separate arrangements with the National Automobile Dealer's Association and American Motors Corporation for widescale distribution of this publication to the car-buying public.

The Association will use selected dealers of representative domestic and foreign makes of cars, balanced geographically across the Nation, to put upwards of 100,000 copies of the booklet into the hands of automobile buyers during the remainder of this calendar year. American Motors will include a copy of the booklet in the glove compartment literature made available to each of its new car purchasers. The participation of both American Motors and NADA in this educational effort is, to my mind, a highly commendable demonstration of private industry support for soundly-based highway safety efforts.

We made available to the public, a few weeks ago, an updated booklet summarizing the safety defect recall campaigns conducted between September 1966 and last December 31. We are providing the Committee with informational copies.

Also, the Bureau has completed arrangements with the Clearinghouse for Federal Scientific and Technical Information to make available to the public the Bureau's research findings and reports. Announcement of publication of the first of these final research reports has been made within the past week, and additional reports will become available through the Clearinghouse as they are processed in final form.

Through press releases and staff member speeches, the story of the national safety program is being told across the country. Also, we have scheduled many special meetings and seminars in an effort to inform specific segments of the industry of our programs and requirements.

It is encouraging to be able to report that some evidence is at hand indicating that the current level of attention to highway safety activities is already paying off. As you are probably aware, the death rate from highway crashes showed no increase last year, in contrast to the trend of previous years. While statistics for one year are not an adequate basis for firm conclusions as to effectiveness of safety efforts, they are bolstered by the growing scientific evidence presented by research workers that the public already receives positive benefit from particular vehicle safety features now required by our standards --

particularly the energy absorbing steering assemblies and the newer laminated windshields now required on all new vehicles.

While we draw encouragement from such reports, we continue to be appalled at the awesome totals of deaths, injury, disability, property damage, and economic loss suffered daily on our streets and highways. Our initial successes must reinforce our determination to achieve, under the mandate of the Congress, a dramatic and permanent reduction in deaths and injuries on our road network. I hope you agree that we have made a promising beginning -- but it is only a beginning.