

Revival of the Town Meeting



The RSV car was a popular display item at the Town Meeting sites.

In the early days of our nation, all taxpayers were invited to a Town Meeting to air their views on proposed laws that would affect their households or the community. These meetings were well attended for each taxpayer knew that by this method he could have some influence on how his community was run.

Today, National Highway Traffic Safety Administrator Joan Claybrook has put new meaning into this age-old method of communication by inviting consumers throughout the country to bring their problems about automobiles to a Town Meeting.

And she is there to listen.

"Last year alone, some 47,000 Americans lost their lives in motor vehicle crashes, and among our young people the problem is of epidemic

proportions," Ms. Claybrook declared.

"It is imperative that we gain first-hand knowledge of citizen views in order to help us be responsive. In short, we are asking America to speak out on a personal basis."

And the people came ... over 100 in Denver; 150 attended the Houston meeting; while the one at Hartford, Connecticut, boasted a crowd of 250. And the Town Meetings are gaining momentum.

Jeannette Feldman, PACP, has been working to coordinate all aspects of the Town Meetings. Others deeply involved with the project are Karen Dyson, OCC; Joe Young, AD; Bob Doherty, Exec. Sec.; and Joe Bolos, AD.

Regional Administrators Robert O'Connell (Region VIII); Robert Anderson (Region VI) and James
(See Town Meeting on page 2.)

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Editor M. J. Noll

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Town Meetings (from page 1)

Williamson (Region I); and their staffs also were of invaluable assistance. Among these were Art Fletcher and Jim Ryan of Region I; Alex Calaluca, Gayle Rensink and Elaine Scott of Region VI; and Emil Wolff and Brad Marks of Region VIII.

Congressman Bob Eckhardt of Texas sat on the panel at both Texas Town Meetings.

So far, five Town Meetings have been held in three regions. The first two in Colorado were at Denver and Boulder; the Texas sites were Houston and Galena Park; and the last was in East Hartford. More are planned for the fall.

Several months before the Town Meetings, the planning began. Contacts were made with consumer groups, State highway officials and the media. But most importantly, the public had to be informed, since the meetings, after all, were to hear their views.

Various means were used

to get the word to the people: Letters of invitation, flyers, contacts with various citizen and community groups, posters, T.V. and radio shows, and newspaper articles.

In addition, since the safety of automobiles was one of the topics for discussion at the meetings, an air bag car was displayed at shopping centers a week before the event to promote the Town Meeting.

The meetings went something like this:

First there was a three-minute film on air bags, followed by the moderator's (usually a well known local personality, such as a radio or T.V. commentator) opening remarks.

Then a few remarks were given by Ms. Claybrook, representatives from the Federal Trade Commission, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Next, presentations were made by several community representatives

generally knowledgeable about one of the subjects to be considered at the meeting--a member of the Police Department, a doctor who had treated accident victims, a crash victim, and an auto repair expert.

Then the floor was opened for comments and questions from the audience.

The stated topics for discussion at these meetings were in five areas: Automobile safety; auto repairs and maintenance; fuel economy; defects; and emissions. However, the bulk of the problems voiced by consumers centered on defects and repairs. In Houston, one man even showed up with his car wheel in hand.

Everyone who attended had the opportunity to have his say--either orally or, if he chose, in writing. Cards were passed out for this purpose and, also, as a quick means for attendees to request additional information.

On display outside the Hall were a research safety vehicle, an air bag demo car, an air bag crash car, and a VW Rabbit with a passive belt system.

Also a Hotline booth was set up. Those who had car problems could give the details on a "Hotline" card, which was then turned over to the Office of Defects Investigation.

Those in attendance were clearly impressed that the government actually came to them, and gave them the opportunity to be heard.

A Law To Live By

The following appeared in the June 1978 issue of the Texas Traffic Safety Report.

THOU SHALT NOT KILL

"Thou shalt not kill" with gun or knife,
'Tis sin to take another's life.
'Tis also sin, you will agree,
To murder with a Mercury.
I think it would offend the Lord,
To kill a fellow with a Ford.

The same applies, I think you'll say,
To slaying with a Chevrolet.
'Twould prove that love to man you lack,
To hit him with your Pontiac.

So drive with common sense and care
Your Tempest, Falcon or Corvair.
This instruction includes all
The foreign makes, however small.

It's a sin to murder with a car,
Fiat, Rolls-Royce, or Jaguar.
Thou shalt not hot rod, drag or peel
While sitting at thy steering wheel.

Excessive speeds thou shalt avoid,
Lest thou and others be destroyed.
And when thou meetest in the night
Another car, dim thou thy light.

Driving 55 Makes a Difference

You believe in the 55 mph speed limit as a life saver and conservator of energy, but what about those skeptical friends of yours?

Suggest that they grab a pencil and take the following quiz. We think they'll be surprised at the difference that driving 55 makes.

TRUE OR FALSE?

- ___ 1. As a result of the 55 mph speed limit we are saving about 50 thousand gallons of gas a year.
- ___ 2. Most safety experts agree that the lower speed limit has been responsible for an annual savings of about 50 percent of our total fatality and injury reduction.
- ___ 3. The American Medical Association (AMA) received a report that paralyzing spinal cord injuries are down as a result of reduced speed.
- ___ 4. Trucks operate more efficiently at speeds over 55 mph.
- ___ 5. Most people in the United States feel the benefits of driving 55 mph are insignificant.
- ___ 6. By driving 55 mph the public is saving about \$100,000 a year in gasoline costs.
- ___ 7. Most automobiles get about 20 percent more miles per gallon on the highway at 55 mph than they do at 70 mph.
- ___ 8. The probability of a fatality in a crash roughly doubles as traveling speed increases from 45 to 60 mph and doubles again as the speed goes to 70 mph.

(See page 4 "Answers")

Whether thou drivest night or day

The traffic laws thou shalt obey.

Thou shalt not pass on curve or hill.

This is the law: "Thou shalt not kill.

--Anonymous

Thought Provokers

A stale article, if you dip it in a good, warm, sunny smile, will go off better than a fresh one that you've scowled upon.

--Nathaniel Hawthorne

Those who complain about the way the ball bounces are often the ones who dropped it.

--Anonymous

Job Openings

For complete details on these job openings, see the official vacancy announcements. Vacancy announcements are posted on the NHTSA Bulletin Boards at both the Nassif and Transpoint Buildings. They are also distributed to each Office Director.

Program Analyst, GS-345-13 (2 positions) Region IV and Region VII (one position in each region). Opens: 7-3-78, Closes: 7-24.

Supervisory Mechanical Engineer, GS-830-13, RD, Vehicle Research & Test Center, San Angelo, Texas. Opens: 7-17, Closes: 8-4.



An air bag crash car was also shown at each Town Meeting location.

Check 55 MPH Quiz Answers

1. False. Department of Transportation estimates show that the 55 mph speed limit is saving the country about 4 million gallons of gas a day or almost 1.5 billion gallons a year.

2. True. According to the Department studies, the 55 mph speed limit has been responsible for an annual savings of about 4,500 lives or 50 percent of our total fatality and injury reduction.

3. True. After the 55 mph speed limit went into effect, Dr. Simon Horenstein, neurologist and professor at the St. Louis School of Medicine, reported to the AMA that paralyzing spinal cord injuries are down 60 percent and motor vehicle collisions are no longer the number one cause of spinal injuries in the United States.

4. False. Department of Transportation evidence from extensive road tests reveals that most trucks have diminished efficiency at speeds over 40 mph. Results from General Motors tests show that the most economical speed for trucks is 30 to 35 mph.

5. False. Eight independent public opinion surveys conducted early in 1977 revealed that a majority of the American public favors the 55 mph speed limit.

6. False. The public is saving about \$900 million a year in gasoline costs by observing the national speed limit.

NHTSA Does It Again!



NHTSA has once again achieved its annual goal of 150 pints of blood, thanks to the many conscientious employees who support this program.

Two of NHTSA's outstanding area recruiters and donora are shown above. Seated from left to right are Gloria Beale, area recruiter for TSP, and James Auten, area recruiter for Administration. Standing near by is Earleen Hughes, OPM, chief recruiter for the NHTSA blood program.

7. True. The Federal Energy Administration estimates that driving consistently at 55 mph results in about 20 percent better mileage than driving at 70 mph and an annual savings in fuel of about \$157.

8. True. Results of studies indicate that speed increases both the risk of injury and the severity of injuries sustained.

Remember:

For NHTSA Job Information call 202-755-4953

Personnel

'Bye and Good Luck

Mattie Johnson, Program Assistant, RD, 5-14.

Mary Jean Mungenast, Math. Statistician, RD, 5-20.

Stuart A. Liner, HSMS, TSP, 5-19.

Congrats on Promotion

Kathleen A. Hasse, Committee Program Coordinator, Exec. Sec., 5-21.