

STATEMENT BY
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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
UNITED STATES SENATE

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OPENING STATEMENT

I am Alan S. Boyd, Under Secretary of Commerce for Transportation. I appear here in support of the Department's request for appropriations which are required to initiate the programs authorized under the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966, P.L. 89-563 and the Highway Safety Act of 1966, P.L. 89-564, recently signed into law by President Johnson.

Accompanying me today are Dr. William Haddon and Dr. Robert Brenner, special assistants in my office, who have assisted in developing these new programs. Dr. Haddon only recently was nominated by President Johnson to be Traffic Safety Administrator. These men are available to provide further explanations on details of these budget requests and to answer any questions on program plans.

My comments will be primarily directed to a brief explanation of the program needs and to the policies underlying our plans for the new coordinated national traffic safety program authorized by legislation. The overriding goal is to reverse the trend of the

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mounting national tragedy of traffic accidents that are now causing more than 9,000 casualties each day in our country, and annually 50,000 deaths and 10 billion dollars of monetary losses.

BROAD-GAUGED, BALANCED APPROACH

The two laws that the Department of Commerce is to administer are:

First: The Highway Safety Act of 1966, which supports a greatly expanded highway safety program by States and their political sub-divisions in activities such as driver education, training and licensing, enforcement and accident investigation, emergency medical care and transportation of the injured.

Second: The National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966, which has as its major objective assurance to the public of improved safety performance of the motor vehicles and related component equipment such as tires and brakes which are purchased in interstate commerce.

Together, these laws signal a new, broad-gauged attack on the traffic accident problem which the President described as ". . . a raging epidemic of highway death which has killed more of our youth than all other diseases combined . . ." The objectives of the new broad-gauged attack can be summarized very simply:

- a reduction in number of occurrences of traffic accidents.
- the increased survivability of victims of traffic accident crashes with minimization of the severity of injuries.
- the improvement in emergency medical care and transportation of the injured to increase the chances of an accident victim's opportunity to fully recover from his injuries.

These program elements emphasize that the legislation proposed by President Johnson is the most far-reaching and comprehensive highway safety approach in history.

GENERAL CATEGORIES OF ACTIVITIES

To assure rapid initiation in fiscal 1967 of this broad-gauged approach, we are requesting an appropriation of \$14 million in five general program areas which I shall briefly review:

Motor Vehicle Safety Performance Standards

Funds in the amount of \$7,000,000 are requested for this activity to achieve a substantial improvement in the safety performance characteristics of vehicles. Minimum standards of performance on such important safety vehicle properties as braking, crash-padding, windshield wiping are to be established.

The law requires that initial motor vehicle standards, based on

existing standards, be issued on or before January 31, 1967. Because of the short time remaining, work must begin at once on the development of these initial standards. This initial effort is particularly important since it will lay the groundwork for the more extensive work which must follow revising the initial standards and developing new standards.

New and revised standards are to be developed and issued on or before January 31, 1968. Even this represents a relatively short lead time for the Department. Accelerated laboratory tests and development work during this period will therefore be required if meaningful inputs are to be made in revisions of the initial standards and the development of new standards.

The new standards to be issued by January 31, 1968 will, in short, have to be based largely on a careful, detailed analysis of what is already known about the safety performance of vehicles; for we recognize that limited research can be completed in the available time. We are confident, nonetheless, that with the funds requested we shall be able to make a constructive start towards improved performance standards that provide additional safety yet are practicable and economically feasible.

Concurrently with this effort, we shall also initiate research programs that will produce needed information on which to base subsequent revisions or totally new standards. Much of this research will center on detailed field investigation of accidents, including careful examination of injury patterns in relation to vehicular damage produced in the crashes.

Tire Safety Standards

Because of the importance of tires to safety, the law specifically

singles out this item of motor vehicle equipment with a separate authorization for establishing its safety performance standards. In addition, the law directs the Secretary to prescribe a uniform quality grading system and labeling system for tires, in order to assist the consumer to make an informed choice in the purchase of tires.

We are requesting \$1.3 million for establishing tire safety standards and for starting work on the development of the uniform quality grading and labeling system.

Because of the shortness of time, it will be difficult to meet the deadline for initial standards. However, commencement of work immediately will assure that substantial progress can be realized so that new and revised standards can be issued in January 1968 which will produce marked improvements in safety performance of tires sold in interstate commerce.

Research and Test Facility Study

The Federal Government does not presently have research and test facilities to meet responsibilities which must be assumed under the new legislation, both with regard to the motor vehicle and tire safety standards work which I have just discussed as well as in regard to the development of the technical contact of workable State safety programs that I shall presently describe.

The law accordingly requires the Secretary, first, to make a complete investigation and study of the need for a facility or facilities to conduct research, development, and testing in traffic safety and, second, to report his findings to Congress not later than December 31, 1967.

The initial appropriation request includes \$700,000 out of the funds authorized for the purpose of undertaking the feasibility and planning studies which must be started immediately to provide answers to a number of complex, interrelated policy and technical questions that bear upon the construction and operation of any necessary facilities.

Traffic Safety Research and Development

Performance standards for the State and community safety programs must be based upon carefully documented scientific evidence, a requirement at sharp variance with present practices of basing almost all traffic safety programs on guesswork, and without any provisions for measuring their impact, favorable or otherwise.

The primary immediate objective of this program is, therefore, to generate sound, scientifically-obtained evidence and knowledge on which to base performance standards for State and community safety programs, and to develop sound cost/effectiveness comparisons among alternative practices in traffic safety.

Many other important aspects of State and community safety activities can be established reliably only upon completion of more comprehensive research on a programmatic, rather than project basis. Such programs do not exist today, but must be initiated as soon as possible because of the long lead time before they can produce the needed new knowledge.

Traffic safety manpower is in critically short supply. This

includes both research manpower and personnel for State and community safety programs, the latter including professionals for program management as well as technicians and service personnel. Immediate programs are required to produce adequate supplies of all of these types of manpower. But the primary effort in the first year will be directed toward technician and management personnel but not researchers.

Because of the urgency of assisting the States to place their safety programs on a sound basis as rapidly as possible, the major requested appropriation under this authorization is \$2,300,000 for developing performance standards for State safety programs.

Another major item is a request of \$1,200,000 for alcohol-safety research. The dominant role of alcohol in the traffic accident picture is now indisputably so much so that the Congress has specifically inserted in the law that we submit a report to it on the subject by July 1, 1967. A major effort must accordingly be started immediately.

Another important aspect of our program will be demonstration projects that focus on the translation into practice of research and newly discovered techniques.

The most important single demonstration project to be initiated in fiscal year 1967 will deal with emergency medical care and transportation of the injured, and such closely related aspects of the post-accident response as the investigation and documentation of the causes of the crash, removal of debris, and the restoration of normal traffic flow. In particular, techniques developed in Viet Nam and elsewhere for high-speed evacuation and treatment of the wounded will be adapted to the

handling of traffic casualties on congested streets and freeways.

The appropriation request includes \$5.0 million for all of these research, development, training, and demonstration activities.

State and Community Safety Programs

The law requires that each State shall have a highway safety program approved by the Secretary, and that such programs shall be in accordance with uniform standards promulgated by the Secretary and expressed in terms of performance criteria for a number of program areas such as . . . driver education . . . driver testing and licensing . . . effective accident record system . . . accident investigations . . . vehicle registration . . . operation . . . inspection . . . highway design and maintenance (including lighting, markings, and surface treatment) . . . traffic control . . . vehicle codes and laws . . . and emergency services.

The law authorizes funds for matching grants to the States and, through the States to local communities to assist in the implementation of approved statewide programs. These funds shall be subject to a deduction not to exceed 5 percent for the necessary costs of administering the provisions of the law, and the remainder shall be apportioned among the States.

Some States may have to overcome substantial budgetary and administrative limitations, shortages in trained personnel, and other problems in initiating the projected expansion of their highway safety activity. In some cases, new State legislation may be required either to provide

the needed matching funds or to meet program standards established by the Secretary.

Maximum flexibility will accordingly be allowed each State in the development of its comprehensive program, within the broad guidelines established by the Secretary. However, the program of every State will be required to meet defined levels of performance that the Secretary will specify. The Secretary will waive these minimum standards where special local conditions warrant such actions. An important consideration in granting these waivers will be evidence that a reasonable effort directed toward achievement of the minimum standard is well under way.

The law provides contract authorization of \$67 million for fiscal 1967 for grants to States and, through the States, to local subdivisions for implementing expanded safety programs. Initial exploratory discussions have already been held (upon enactment of the law) with State and local officials throughout the country on their respective cooperative roles.

The response has been one of overwhelming support and interest in the new Federal-aid safety program. Some concern was expressed, however, with regard to how rapidly some States could move toward providing matching funds.

We accordingly conducted a very brief survey of 12 States in the last few weeks, to provide a basis for estimating the extent to which States can match available Federal grants. More precise estimates will, of course, have to await more detailed interpretations of State laws and decisions on administrative arrangements.

Based upon this initial analysis and our best judgement, we are

requesting a \$12,000,000 appropriation for liquidation of contract authorization for this fiscal year.

ORGANIZATIONAL PLANS

I now would like to comment briefly on some of the operational aspects of implementing our projected activities during fiscal year 1967.

The Highway Safety Act of 1966 requires the creation of the National Highway Safety Agency (NHSA) within the Department of Commerce to carry out the provisions of the new legislation, and authorizes the President to carry out the provisions of the National Traffic Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966 through this agency.

When the Department of Transportation is established, the NHSA will be transferred to it, together with the authority and responsibility for providing the leadership and direction of the national program to prevent motor vehicle accidents and to reduce deaths and injuries that result from them.

The NHSA will be directed by an Administrator, to be appointed by the President with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Administrator will be assisted by a Deputy Administrator and a supporting staff of scientific, technical, and administrative specialists. The three major operating units will be:

1. The Motor Vehicle Safety Performance Service, which will have the primary tasks of developing safety performance standards for motor vehicle and motor vehicle equipment and assuring that they are implemented in accordance with

the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966.

2. The Highway Safety Programs Service, which will have the primary task of establishing performance standards for State and community highway safety programs and assisting the States to implement these standards.
3. The National Traffic Safety Institute, which will conduct and sponsor research, development, testing and evaluation programs, primarily those identified by the Motor Vehicle Safety Performance Service and the Highway Safety Programs Service as most urgently needed in support of their respective missions. The Institute will also establish and conduct education and training programs to increase the supply of traffic safety manpower that the States and their communities, as well as the NHTSA, will urgently need to man their safety programs.

The principal sub-units have been specified for the three major operating units and for the Administrator's technical and administrative staff. Each sub-unit will focus on one or more major aspects of the national traffic safety program. Together, these sub-units will constitute a coherent organization designed to meet the complex traffic safety program requirements mandated by the Congress in response to the President's request.

Some aspects of the program are of substantially greater urgency

than others, and accordingly require that the associated organizational sub-units be placed in operation more quickly than the others. The urgency stems both from the provisions of the law for specified actions by specified dates and from the mounting casualty totals.

The overall organization plan, accordingly, is to staff completely the highest priority organizational sub-units as quickly as possible. The other principal organizational sub-units will be started on a skeletal basis, in some cases with only a director and a secretary, to prepare detailed plans for phasing into full-scale operations in fiscal years 1968 and 1969. Thus, the approach will be initiated in its entirety immediately, following a comprehensive master plan tailored to meet both the immediate and long-range objectives of the legislation.

Because of the normal problem of organizational build-up, our requested limitation on administrative expense is based on an NHTSA staff of 440 scientific, technical, management and support personnel by the end of fiscal 1967. The average length of employment is estimated to be 3 months.

TIMING PROBLEMS

The law specifies a number of deadline dates for reports or other submissions to the Congress and for other activity completions. Because of the timing problems associated with meeting these dates while the new Agency is in the process of organizational build-up, most

of the work will be prepared by outside contractors, grants to universities, or other government agencies with appropriate transfer of funds.

However, all work will be programmed, planned, and fully monitored by the Agency staff.

INTERAGENCY AGREEMENTS

A number of other Federal agencies and departments have substantial capability and interest in traffic safety, as well as a history of successful accomplishment.

A primary working policy of the new Agency will therefore be to encourage continued activity in highway safety -- by these other Departments, and to stimulate new and expanded programs. The interest of the Agency is to assure that all aspects of the needed broad-gauged attack on the problem are handled by the most qualified groups.

Transfer of funds of NHTSA will accordingly be awarded to other Federal units on the basis of appropriate Interagency agreements. Such agreements will be prepared in terms of broad programs rather than isolated small projects to enable the involved units to plan properly.

Apart from development of strong working arrangements with other Federal units in its evolving new program, initial NHTSA planning has taken into account the on-going programs of other units insofar as they directly or indirectly relate to traffic safety.

I can state here that there is no substantial, if any, duplication between the projected NHTSA activities and those in any on-going programs

of other units. Moreover, we strongly believe that the NHSA program will directly benefit from much of the work now in progress, as results become available.

In this latter regard, I refer especially to the various on-going programs of the Bureau of Public Roads.

It is virtually impossible, if not entirely meaningless, to isolate safety from the totality of sound practice in highway and traffic engineering. Historically, safety has been inextricably interwoven into all facets of engineering designs. I am pleased to state that the Bureau of Public Roads has maintained this tradition, and you may be assured that I look to see this continue in the future, albeit with whatever re-programming turns out to be necessary in order for it to make the most effective contribution toward the success of the NHSA program.

Similarly, I look to the new Agency to contribute its advice and assistance to the Bureau's primary mission of planning, designing, and building of safe, efficient modern highways.

In short, I look to strong cooperative working relationship between the two primary units of the Department having safe and efficient vehicular transportation on highways as a major common interest.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, may I thank you for this opportunity to discuss our program with you today; it ushers in a new era of Federal responsibility

and concern for relieving the mounting tragedy of traffic accidents.

I recommend your favorable consideration of the entire amounts requested for these programs, and will be happy to answer any questions about them.