



U.S. Department
of Transportation

**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

December 10, 2018

The Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am writing to you pursuant to Section 24401 of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. This provision requires the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to publish on its website and file an annual plan for the following calendar year with the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. The FAST Act requires that NHTSA provide you with information on its upcoming priorities and initiatives, rulemakings, guidelines, organizational restructuring, and working group and advisory committee activities. I am pleased to provide an update on NHTSA's anticipated 2019 activities.

Priorities and Initiatives

NHTSA's mission is to save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce economic costs due to road traffic crashes through education, research, safety standards, and enforcement. NHTSA's priorities are structured around this mission while saving taxpayer dollars and reducing unnecessary burdens to industry and the American people.

For 2019, NHTSA remains committed to enhancing the vehicle recall management and defect identification processes. The Agency proactively engages with suppliers, manufacturers, and other stakeholders to encourage innovative and proactive strategies to quickly identify safety-related defects and enhance recall execution. Given the important safety impact, NHTSA will continue its efforts to raise public awareness about the importance of vehicle recalls using its media platforms and will continue improving its early warning reporting and data mining abilities, to identify and address issues as early as possible.

NHTSA also remains committed to the safe development and future deployment of automated driving systems (ADS). The Agency is encouraged by the significant potential of the technology to improve roadway safety. In 2019, NHTSA plans to continue its work on ADS topics by: facilitating discussions with stakeholders; researching safety performance measures and testing procedures for these technologies; soliciting comment on a voluntary pilot program for the safe

on-road testing and deployment of vehicles with high and full driving ADS; identifying barriers to safety innovation within existing standards and proposing translations of such requirements to ensure ADS safety.

As promising as ADS and other advanced technologies are, NHTSA will continue its efforts to improve safety here and now. The Agency has been exploring various approaches to refining the New Car Assessment Program, including how to best convey to consumers the safety potential of crash avoidance technologies in vehicle safety rating information. In October, NHTSA held a public meeting with interested stakeholders including vehicle manufacturers, suppliers, researchers, consumer advocates, and members of the public, and the Agency will consider comments submitted as it formulates next steps for the program.

NHTSA will also continue promoting proven countermeasures that improve the safety of road users inside and outside of vehicles, both through State grant programs and targeted partnerships with stakeholders such as law enforcement. Amid an opioid epidemic and States legalizing marijuana, NHTSA has launched an initiative to prevent drug-impaired driving, a concerning trend that poses serious risks to the safety of the traveling public. This includes raising public awareness, supporting law enforcement and emergency response professionals, and improving data collection. As part of this initiative, NHTSA recently released a new media safety campaign titled '*If you feel different, you drive different. Drive High, Get a DUI.*'¹

NHTSA will continue its efforts to strengthen America's 911 system and Emergency Medical Systems so more people can receive lifesaving help. In 2018, NHTSA finalized regulations for the 911 Grant Program², issued its 2018 Cost Estimate Report to Congress on Next Generation 911³, and issued a Notice of Funding Opportunity for 911 Grant Funding⁴. The Agency plans to review grant applications and award grants to qualifying States, territories, and tribes for the first time in 2019.

In addition, NHTSA will continue strategic investments in biomechanics, crash avoidance, and vehicle safety systems that will further support the agency's research and mission. The current request, as submitted to the Committee on Appropriations, can be found at: <https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/docs/mission/budget/304526/nhtsa-fy-2019congressionaljustificationfinal508compliant.pdf>.

Rulemakings

In addition to the above-mentioned regulatory actions to advance the development of ADS technologies and to reduce regulatory barriers to innovation, NHTSA's regulatory priorities for 2019 include several rulemakings and other actions to increase safety and reduce economic burden. Most prominently, NHTSA will explore removing existing regulatory barriers for vehicles with innovative or nostalgic designs, including finalizing a rule that allows adaptive driving beam headlamps and a rule that allows the small volume manufacturing of replica (or vintage) vehicles

¹ <https://www.nhtsa.gov/press-releases/us-department-transportation-launches-new-ad-campaign-stop-impaired-driving>

² <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2018/08/03/2018-16567/911-grant-program>

³ https://www.911.gov/pdf/Next_Generation_911_Cost_Estimate_Report_to_Congress_2018.pdf

⁴ <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/search-grants.html?keywords=911>

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in adherence to a statutory mandate. Additionally, the Agency intends to move forward with rulemaking on rear seat belt warning systems to increase seat belt usage and improve crash protection of back seat occupants. NHTSA also plans to standardize the electronic disclosure of odometer information, which for the first time will provide an opportunity for States to facilitate completely paperless transactions for vehicle registrations. Working with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, NHTSA also expects to finalize fuel efficiency standards for light vehicle model years 2021-2026. More information about these rules can be found in the U.S. Department of Transportation Unified Agenda, available at: <https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/eAgendaMain>. This information is updated each spring and fall.

Guidelines

In the pursuit of saving lives and reducing injuries on the Nation's roadways, NHTSA is committed to using all available tools. NHTSA, like other agencies, issues guidelines on many issues after careful research and collaboration. NHTSA routinely publishes Highway Safety Program Guidelines to assist State and local governments in managing their road safety programs, and plans to update several Highway Safety Program Guidelines in the year ahead. Newly-developed Human Factors Design Guidance for Automated Driving Concepts are also expected. Finally, NHTSA anticipates developing guidelines for Cybersecurity Response Plans.

Organizational Restructuring, Working Groups, and Advisory Committees

While the Department is exploring the viability of shared services for certain administrative functions, NHTSA does not anticipate changes to its operating structure in 2019.

As part of NHTSA's initiative to combat drug-impaired driving, the agency is soliciting the input of government and non-government entities to identify best practices related to both toxicology and criminal justice capacity. These working groups include representatives from law enforcement, emergency medical service, prosecution, judiciary, probation, toxicology and treatment to establish guidelines and assist States in addressing drug-impaired driving.

Similar letters have been sent to the Ranking Member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce; the Chairman and Ranking Member of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure; and to the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation.

Sincerely yours,



Heidi R. King
Deputy Administrator