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BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, TREASURY AND INDEPENDENT AGENCIES
OF THE
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UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I welcome this opportunity to appear once again before the Committee to testify about the Nation's highway and motor vehicle safety priorities, and to present the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) budget request for fiscal year (FY) 2005.

The President has made his top priority the safety and security of the American people. Likewise, Secretary Mineta has made transportation safety his top priority in our Department. We at NHTSA have a constant sense of urgency to reduce fatalities and injuries on our Nation's streets and highways, and we appreciate the support you and your staff give our agency to help us attack these problems.

Highway safety continues to be a major public health problem in the United States. Motor vehicle crashes account for 95 percent of U.S. transportation deaths and 99 percent of the transportation injuries. Even with the significant progress that is being made, motor vehicle crashes continue to be the leading cause of death for the children in America and for adults through age 34.

Mr. Chairman, today in the hearing I want to report to you on the status of traffic safety, and describe the progress being made, as well as the challenges ahead. I will also lay out NHTSA's priorities for FY 2005, and discuss the resources we need to address these challenges.

We have seen tremendous progress in several areas this past year, but many challenges remain. The traffic fatality rate declined slightly to 1.5 deaths per 100 million miles of vehicle travel (VMT), even as the number of Americans killed approaches 43,000, a number that is totally unacceptable. In 2002, the latest year for which NHTSA has final information, there were 38,309 fatal crashes in the U.S. resulting in 42,815 deaths, an increase of approximately 1.5 percent over 2001. It is important to note that non-fatal injuries dropped below 3 million for the first time since they have been counted, decreasing from 3.03 million in 2001 to 2.93 million in 2002.

We made great progress in 2003 with safety belt usage, which was 79 percent last June, an unprecedented high. It is important to emphasize that if States can sustain this 79 percent usage rate, then 1,000 people who would have been killed in crashes this year will live as a result.

The Secretary has mandated an ambitious Department-wide goal – to reduce the traffic fatality rate to no more than 1.0 fatality per 100 million VMT by the end of 2008. We are making great progress toward that goal in vehicles where safety belts matter -- passenger cars and light trucks. We must also focus on the problem areas that are driving up fatalities and represent major impediments to forcing the fatality rate down -- alcohol impairment, vehicle rollover, motorcycle crashes and vehicle compatibility. If we fail to drive down the overall fatality rate, even if it remains at the 2002 rate of 1.50 per hundred million VMT, we will have 50,000 deaths a year by the end of this decade. Simply put, we cannot be satisfied with our current progress.

Traffic crashes produce harsh economic consequences for the Nation. The cost to the economy in 2000 was \$230.6 billion, or 2.3 percent of U.S. gross domestic product. The economic cost included \$32.6 billion in medical expenses, over \$50 billion related to impaired driving, and \$20 billion (in 2003) for failure to wear safety belts. Only 25% of overall crash costs were paid by those involved in the crash.

To address this enormous public health issue, NHTSA is requesting \$689.3 million for FY 2005, a net increase of \$18 million over FY 2004. This is needed to fund a balanced program of vehicle and human factors safety. The NHTSA budget is performance-based; our programs and funding are linked to clear, measurable safety goals. Our budget reflects our program priorities, and funds the countermeasures that will have the greatest yield in lives saved and injuries prevented.

The FY 2005 budget will fully implement the Administration's reauthorization proposal, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA). SAFETEA would efficiently consolidate several different State grant programs under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). SAFETEA offers a unified, streamlined and efficient program that would get the grant money to the States to be used according to each State's needs, as supported by their own data and traffic records.

SAFETEA would instill program accountability. Beyond the consolidated Section 402 formula highway safety grants, which SAFETEA would keep intact, there are additional grant monies that will be tied to safety performance. Qualifying for these grants would be tied to major safety payoffs such as increasing safety belt use, and cutting motor vehicle fatality rates and alcohol-related fatality rates. SAFETEA would give State program managers the flexibility they need to direct grants to safety problems where they will have the maximum impact. States would also be free to redirect incentive grants to boost areas where safety performance is lagging.

As I testified in last year's hearing, my agency has identified five priorities for special emphasis, and these will continue in FY 2005: *Safety Belts; Impaired Driving; Vehicle Rollover; Vehicle Compatibility; and Traffic Records and Data Improvements*. We established internal Integrated Project Teams (IPTs) for each of the five priority areas to examine safety issues and recommend strategies to improve safety. The first four teams concluded their work in 2003, and their recommendations are already being implemented. The fifth team on *Traffic Records and Data Improvements* has completed their work, and they will publish their recommendations soon. Recently, I met with the Administrators of the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration to formulate a strategy to address speeding across the United States. I anticipate our defining *Reducing Speeding-Related Crashes* as an interagency priority area this year.

Mr. Chairman, the balance of my statement will describe the initiatives planned for all of NHTSA's program areas in FY 2005, including the strategies we are implementing in each of our priority safety areas.

Safety Belt and Child Restraint Use

The FY 2005 budget proposal for occupant protection is \$11.6 million. The effectiveness of occupant restraints is well established. Wearing a safety belt cuts the risk of death in a crash by half. Our program for FY 2005 continues support for evidence-based strategies to achieve higher safety belt and child safety seat usage.

The National Occupant Protection Usage Survey (NOPUS) conducted in June 2003 recorded an unprecedented 79 percent safety belt use rate, an increase of 4 percentage points over 2002. In terms of conversion rate – the percent of non-users converted to users – this was the greatest single-year increase recorded since the NOPUS was first conducted in 1994.

The reason for the unprecedented increase in 2003 is clear. *Click It or Ticket*, NHTSA's priority safety belt campaign, reached new levels of national implementation. *Click It or Ticket* is not public education "in a vacuum." Our data show that current non-users are unlikely to respond to public education alone, but will respond if they perceive a likelihood of a traffic citation. *Click It or Ticket* works because it is high visibility law enforcement activity combined with public awareness. Awareness surveys showed very high market penetration, due to the use of paid advertising and earned news media during a nationally coordinated mobilization period. In 2003, 47 States followed the *Click It or Ticket* model, with law enforcement officers writing more than 600,000 belt use citations during a two-week period beginning May 19 and ending on June 1. In addition, using funds provided by the Congress, NHTSA purchased \$8 million of national advertising to supplement State purchases made with Section 157 funds, for a total of about \$25 million in enforcement-related advertising during the mobilization period.

As a result, observed front seat belt use in passenger vehicles increased in 40 States, compared with the same period in 2002. Four of these states, Alaska, Arizona, Massachusetts and Indiana, gained 10 or

more percentage points. NHTSA estimates that the 2003 belt use increase will save more than 1,000 lives and about \$3.2 billion annually if the gains can be sustained.

While we celebrate the 2003 gains and congratulate the States for their accomplishments, NHTSA recognizes that further gains will be increasingly difficult. Individuals who were easily convinced to become users have already done so. The remaining group of non-users is more reluctant to change habits, and this reluctance becomes more pronounced as the number of non-users decreases. Further gains will require even more effort than we generated in 2003.

Our data shows that a State's enforcement success is strongly related to the presence of a primary safety belt law. As of March 2004, twenty States, plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico have primary belt laws, which allow police to cite occupants solely for failing to buckle up. The remaining States (except New Hampshire which continues to have no adult law) have secondary laws, which allow belt law citations only if police first stop motorists for another traffic infraction. States with primary laws can expect use rates 11 percentage points higher than those with secondary laws. Therefore, the continuing success of enforcement driving use rates upward is dependent on the enactment of more primary safety belt laws. We have thus revised our safety belt goal to reflect this reality, basing the goal on the proportion of the population covered by primary belt laws (based on VMT). We set a sliding target rate of 80 to 85 percent usage by 2005, depending upon primary belt laws covering additional States and a higher percentage of the total national VMT.

If all States enacted primary laws, NHTSA estimates about 1,400 additional lives would be saved annually. To further this goal, SAFETEA includes a number of provisions to drive belt usage upward, including a grant program offering States substantial benefits for enactment of primary laws or achieving usage rates of 90%. To ensure that States devote sufficient resources to sustain their gains, a separate program offers incentive grants for modestly increasing belt use. States receiving these incentives would have significant flexibility to apply the funds to any highway safety purpose, including infrastructure projects, according to their needs as defined within their Strategic Highway Safety Plan.

If the U.S. were to achieve 90 percent belt use (which is commonplace in other industrialized nations), almost 4,000 additional lives would be saved each year. A 90 percent rate for the U.S. is entirely

possible, although unlikely to occur without most States adopting primary belt laws. In 2003, Washington State achieved 94.8 percent use, Hawaii achieved 91.8 percent, California reached 91.2 percent usage, and Oregon hit 90.4 percent usage. Only three States, Arizona, Utah, and Vermont, were able to achieve a usage rate over 80 percent with a secondary law.

In 2005, NHTSA will continue to support the national *Click It or Ticket* campaign. The agency anticipates that in 2004, 47 States, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico will qualify for grants to fund their *Click It or Ticket* campaigns. For the second year, Congress appropriated funds in FY 2004 for NHTSA to purchase national advertising to support State and local enforcement campaigns. In addition, the 2004 Appropriations Act provided the agency authority to distribute Section 157 innovative grants before awarding the incentive grants, thus providing States with funding for the May enforcement mobilization. We appreciate the flexibility granted by Congress to ensure funding for the mobilization.

The occupant protection program also includes demonstrations of new approaches for increasing belt use among high-risk, low-use groups, such as pickup truck drivers, teens and other high-risk populations. NHTSA will use the results of these demonstrations to create specialized strategies, programs and materials for use across the Nation.

Working with the many others in the automotive and safety communities, NHTSA has been successful in getting more child passengers restrained. Restraint use by young children rose to unprecedented levels in 2002. The 2002 NOPUS survey reported 99 percent restraint use for infants (under 12 months), 94 percent for toddlers (1-3 years), and 83 percent for children ages 4-7. Fatalities among children ages 0-7 years continued to decline, reaching another historic low, decreasing 28 percent from 1996 to 2002. The agency's child restraint goal has been expanded to include children through age seven, and the target for 2005 is 91 percent restraint use. Unfortunately, there has been an increase in highway deaths for children 8-15 years, with the number of occupant fatalities for children in this age range rising in 2002 by almost eight percent over 2001.

To comply with the Transportation Recall Enhancement, Accountability, and Documentation (TREAD) Act's goal of reducing deaths and injuries by 25 percent among 4- to 8-year-olds by 2006, NHTSA developed a five-year strategic plan. The plan stresses improved consumer awareness of booster seat

benefits, enforcement of booster seat laws, and a study of booster seat effectiveness. NHTSA issued a final rule in November 2002 to establish a consumer information program to rate child restraints on ease-of-use. The agency also announced its intent to conduct two pilot programs to address whether a dynamic child restraint rating based on FMVSS No. 213, or a vehicle rating based on the performance of child seats in the rear seat of vehicles undergoing frontal NCAP tests, would contain useful information for consumers. The agency expects to publish this notice in the fourth quarter of 2004, and requests funding for FY 2005 to continue efforts in this area.

Impaired Driving

The FY 2005 budget proposal for impaired driving is \$9.9 million. The number of alcohol-related fatalities has held steady over the past decade. Demographic changes since the early 1990s, specifically a greater proportion of the overall population in age groups most at risk for alcohol-related crashes, have been a major challenge to progress. DOT's target is to reduce the rate of impaired driving fatalities from 0.61 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in 2002 to 0.53 per 100 million VMT by 2005.

In 2003, NHTSA assigned an Integrated Project Team (IPT) to develop a strategic plan for reducing the national impaired driving problem. The agency reviewed data on alcohol-related fatalities, analyzed information regarding program effectiveness, and consulted with a range of national impaired driving experts before developing the IPT Report on Impaired Driving. The report outlines a comprehensive approach to the problem, including public education, law enforcement, adjudication, legislation, as well as vehicle and roadway based technologies.

In 2004 and 2005, NHTSA is focusing efforts on three key areas described in the IPT Report. One of these priorities, highly visible driving while intoxicated (DWI) law enforcement, will support State efforts to conduct highly publicized DWI enforcement on a regular basis and secure their participation in a coordinated national enforcement mobilization crackdown, under the current theme of *You Drink & Drive. You Lose*. This effort is aimed toward encouraging people to make the choice to designate a sober driver or to drink less before driving or not at all.

The second priority area is to enhance State and local DWI prosecution and adjudication. Those who have not responded to the social norm of sober driving or responded to highly visible enforcement, require attention by the courts, which often do not deal effectively with DWI offenders. NHTSA's effort will include support for the use of designated Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutors, who will provide technical assistance to new and/or less experienced prosecutors in prosecuting DWI cases. The agency will also promote and facilitate widespread adoption of DWI Courts for repeat offenders. DWI Courts follow the Drug Court treatment model, using offender assessments to identify appropriate sentencing and treatment, and enhanced supervision and monitoring to reduce recidivism. In addition, a pilot program utilizing Judicial Outreach Liaisons to improve linkages between judges and State traffic safety professionals will be continued. Finally, NHTSA will continue efforts to offer training and education to judges on the complexity of DWI cases and DWI sentencing.

NHTSA is working with health care professionals across the Nation in implementing the third impaired driving priority, medical screening and brief intervention for alcohol abuse problems. NHTSA proposes that screening and brief intervention be practiced by physicians, nurses, and other health care professionals across the country in order to identify problem drinkers and direct them to appropriate treatment before they cause a traffic injury or death.

NHTSA launched the nationwide *You Drink and Drive. You Lose.* crackdown in July 2003. This campaign included almost \$25 million of combined Federal and State paid media. Congress provided \$11 million in funding for NHTSA to purchase advertising to support the crackdown. NHTSA spent \$5.5 million on airing a national advertisement, \$5 million on additional purchases in 13 Strategic Evaluation States (SES), and \$500,000 on producing and placing the national ad and 13 state ads.

NHTSA research has shown that the use of paid advertisements was clearly effective in raising awareness of the *You Drink and Drive. You Lose* impaired driving crackdown. Over 30 percent of drivers saw the advertisement and over 50 percent heard or saw the *You Drink and Drive. You Lose* slogan. The advertising was targeted at age 18–34 males, and our surveys showed higher awareness in this target group than in any other age group, and even higher than among age 18–34 females.

NHTSA will continue working closely with 13 Strategic Evaluation States. These States, all of which

have high alcohol-related fatality numbers or rates, received special assistance with program design, evaluation, and media support for the 2003 *You Drink & Drive. You Lose* law enforcement crackdowns. These States will continue to be the focus for the 2004 and 2005 crackdowns scheduled for the Labor Day holiday periods.

NHTSA is supporting the Labor Day 2004 *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* law enforcement crackdown through the use of \$14 million in national paid media as specified by this Committee. The message and media buy will focus on those who are at highest risk, the 18-34 year old males.

SAFETEA provides a new impaired driving grant program that directs \$50 million each year to up to 10 States for critical impaired driving system upgrades. The grant program will allow States with the highest rates or numbers of impaired driving fatalities to assess their comprehensive system needs and implement appropriate countermeasures. The extent and specific nature of the impaired driving problem varies widely across States. Intensive work with those States with the most severe problems, using a flexible approach that can respond to their specific needs, is the most effective way to influence national impaired driving trends. Using funds provided by this Committee, the agency will pilot this intensive assistance process with a single State in 2004.

NHTSA will expand demonstration of a comprehensive statewide repeat offender tracking system. This data system will facilitate tracking by allowing immediate transfer and access of information among relevant State agencies, including law enforcement, the court system, and the motor vehicle departments. Four States began implementing such systems in 2002. One or two additional States will begin implementation in 2004.

The agency will continue demonstration projects to develop innovative strategies for reaching high-risk and hard-to-reach populations, especially 21-34 year old males. Approaches such as responsible serving practices, behavior modification through social norming, and safe ride programs will be evaluated in a range of environments.

NHTSA will continue to support strong State impaired driving legislation. The agency will publicize research on the effectiveness of laws that affect driving while impaired, such as graduated licensing,

primary safety belt, repeat offender, and blood alcohol testing. Forty-seven States, Washington, DC and Puerto Rico have now enacted .08 BAC laws, and every State and DC have a zero tolerance law for underage drinking. In addition, 40 States have Administrative License Revocation laws.

NHTSA will provide technical assistance to all States, conducting detailed program assessments, facilitating law enforcement participation, assisting with development and placement of enforcement-focused advertisements, and conducting program evaluations.

Speeding Management

The FY 2005 budget request for the Enforcement and Justice Services Division, which directs the agency's speed management and other law enforcement programs, is \$2.2 million, which includes \$550 thousand for speed management. In addition, \$300 thousand will be spent on speed-related issues in the highway safety research budget. Over the past several years, NHTSA has focused significant resources and attention on addressing the two leading factors in motor vehicle fatalities and injuries – occupant protection usage and impaired driving. We are now beginning to focus increased attention and effort on the third major factor in crash-related fatalities and injuries – speeding. Speeding continues to be cited as a factor in approximately one-third of all crash-related fatalities and is estimated to extract \$40 billion in societal costs annually. Data analysis tells us that the major safety problem with speeding does not occur on interstate highways, but on local roadways and collector roads.

The Department has an interdisciplinary Speeding Management Team, comprised of members representing NHTSA, FHWA and FMCSA. The Administrators of the three sponsoring agencies have asked the Team to develop specific objectives for addressing speeding -- working with and at the local, community level. The focus of these efforts will be a multi-disciplinary approach addressing engineering, enforcement, and education. The agency will work with communities to establish a process to set rational speed limits, advertise that those limits will be strictly enforced, and then enforce them. This process will include assessing factors such as 85th percentile speeds, public attitudes, driver behavior, roadway characteristics, enforcement strategies, court sanctions, and speed zoning. The agency will also provide technical assistance and guidance to states in ensuring that speed enforcement technology meets stringent performance standards and operational policies.

Motorcycle Safety

The budget proposal for FY 2005 is \$669,000. Even as the agency makes progress in reducing crash fatalities in passenger cars and light trucks, due in part to increased safety belt usage, there has been a yearly rise in motorcyclist deaths since 1997. Our program will be guided by recommendations contained in the *National Agenda for Motorcycle Safety*. Information about impaired riding, training and licensure, and motorist awareness of riders will be disseminated to the States. NHTSA will continue to work with national motorcyclist organizations to implement the recommendations in the *National Agenda*. Programs will be implemented based on research into riding habits, training, and licensing, and protective equipment to reduce motorcyclist death and injury.

Despite our efforts, the agency faces a daunting task to reduce motorcycle crash fatalities and injuries in the face of continuing State actions to repeal motorcycle helmet laws. Riders who fail to wear approved helmets are 40 percent more likely to suffer a fatal head injury in a crash and three times more likely to suffer a brain injury than those wearing a helmet. The 1998 repeal of the universal helmet law in Kentucky and the 1999 helmet law repeal in Louisiana produced similar effects. Observed helmet use dropped from nearly full compliance under the usage law to the 50 percent range without the law. Motorcyclist fatalities increased in the near term by sizeable amounts – by over 50 percent in Kentucky and over 100 percent in Louisiana. Injuries also increased substantially in both States. The rates of fatalities and injuries per registered motorcycle increased in both States following the helmet law repeals, indicating that the increases in motorcyclists killed and injured are not explainable solely by more motorcycles on the road.

Driver Licensing

The budget proposal for FY 2005 is \$2.6 million. In FY 2005 NHTSA will continue to evaluate the Congressionally directed digital watermarking technology pilot program. This program will demonstrate the ability to provide covert, machine-readable authentication capabilities in driver licenses to enable law enforcement, for example, to authenticate state-issued IDs used for operating motor vehicles. This project will assist in improving national security by preventing persons from obtaining fraudulent licenses used for identification. This would be accomplished through the implementation of a

digital image exchange among all 50 States and DC, which will help facilitate the full deployment of online verification of birth and death records in all State driver-licensing agencies.

NHTSA is currently conducting research on a new model driver education curriculum and effective methods of instructor training with the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators (AAMVA) and the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA) to be integrated with the model Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) program for novice drivers. Finally, NHTSA will continue to provide guidance and support to States in the implementation of GDL laws and to enhance driver education programs to reduce the tragic loss of young drivers in motor vehicle crashes.

Emergency Medical Services

The FY 2005 budget proposal of \$2.271 million will support State Emergency Medical Services (EMS) through the development of voluntary standards and a national EMS database, and facilitation of the adoption of wireless E9-1-1 nationwide. The Highway Traffic Safety grants budget for FY 2005 proposes \$10 million in EMS grants to State EMS offices to assist States in developing comprehensive wireless emergency access and response systems. The grants will also help States to improve overall EMS capability to respond to emergency needs by focusing on improvements to infrastructure, including communications, equipment and training.

The provision of prompt, high quality emergency medical care to persons injured in motor vehicle crashes is a critical injury control component resulting in a reduction of motor vehicle fatalities and in lessening of injury complications. Since the early 1970's, NHTSA has played a prominent role in improving the Nation's emergency medical services system including the development of national standards for the education of Emergency Medical Technicians. The consensus-based *EMS Agenda for the Future*, developed and being implemented by NHTSA, is guiding the EMS development efforts of Federal, State and local agencies and national organizations.

Wireless Enhanced 9-1-1 will improve system performance in caring for injured and ill patients, including faster, more precise EMS response to vehicle crash victims. Nationwide implementation of a modern wireless enhanced 9-1-1 system will help provide more coordinated incident management,

improve the timely sharing of essential public safety information among all responding agencies and contribute substantially to the reduction of non-recurring traffic congestion.

Highway Traffic Safety Grants

The budget request will provide funding to fully implement SAFETEA, the Administration's proposal for reauthorizing and restructuring highway safety grants provided to States to address their most critical traffic safety problems. The FY 2005 budget request reflects the SAFETEA provision that would consolidate State grant programs that were fragmented under TEA-21 (\$456 million). This includes \$222 million in Section 157 and Section 163 grants that were formerly appropriated within the Federal Highway Administration budget. NHTSA has administered these grants since their inception, and for FY 2005, the agency requests that the same funds be appropriated directly to NHTSA. SAFETEA offers States a unified, streamlined grants process that gets funds to the States to be used according to each State's unique safety and programmatic needs.

The grant award process under TEA-21 was not efficient and it contained features that proved complex and burdensome for the States. The process consumed administrative resources, which might otherwise have been redirected to the State's pressing safety needs and programs. TEA-21 contained eight programs, each with separate qualifications and administrative regimens. SAFETEA includes provisions to rectify this problem. SAFETEA emphasizes accountability. Beyond the basic formula grants, which remain intact, SAFETEA would permit NHTSA to tie additional grants to each States' safety performance, such as increasing safety belt use, reducing overall fatality rates and reducing alcohol-related fatalities. SAFETEA also would allow States to direct grants where they may have the greatest safety impact, and to redirect incentive grants received in one area to another safety area lagging in performance.

Vehicle Safety Priorities

The agency's vehicle safety efforts in FY 2005 will be guided by the *NHTSA Vehicle Safety Rulemaking and Supporting Research Plan, 2003-2006*, published in July 2003, which identifies the research and rulemaking actions that offer the greatest potential for saving lives and preventing injury. In the vehicle

safety area, rollover and vehicle compatibility are our top priorities. The initiatives in the plan were defined through extensive discussions within the agency, taking into account the views we have heard via public meetings and comments submitted to the agency on rulemaking notices and Requests for Comment. We consider this a living document. We will assess safety problems, vehicle fleet changes, and developments in vehicle technologies and periodically update the plan. Vehicle Safety priorities also include Enforcement program efforts to improve the identification of potential safety-related problems.

Vehicle Rollover

In 2002, 10,666 people died in the United States in rollover crashes, up 5.0 percent from 10,157 in 2001. Rollover crashes account for less than three percent of all police-reported passenger vehicle crashes, but result in one-third of passenger vehicle occupant deaths. Light trucks (particularly pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles) have a rollover rate significantly higher than passenger cars because light trucks have a higher center of gravity. Fatalities in rollover crashes involving pickup trucks and sport utility vehicles accounted for 63 percent of the increase of 619 highway fatalities for 2002. Since light trucks account for an increasing portion of total light vehicle sales, deaths and injuries in rollover crashes will become a greater safety problem unless something changes.

In 2001, we began rating the propensity of new light vehicles to rollover in our New Car Assessment Program (NCAP), by the vehicle's static stability factor (SSF), which is based on the height of the vehicle's center of gravity and its track width. Following completion of dynamic rollover test development, NHTSA published a Policy Statement in October 2003, indicating that it would begin using combined rollover resistance ratings for the 2004 model year, based on SSF measurements and performance in a dynamic test. In February 2004, NHTSA issued its first press release of the 2004 rollover test results using the new rating system. We believe this combined rollover rating will give the American public important safety information when choosing a new vehicle and will continue to influence manufacturers to design vehicles that have increased rollover resistance. In fact, since 2001 when the SSF ratings were first used, we see vehicle designs that are more rollover resistant. This demonstrates that regulatory action is not always needed and that consumer preference and healthy competition can help drive vehicle safety.

In those areas where change is best determined through the regulatory arena, NHTSA has already taken action. Among rulemaking actions currently underway and intended to reduce fatalities and injuries arising from rollover crashes are: upgrades of door lock requirements and the roof crush standard and research and rulemaking development to mitigate occupant ejection through windows during crashes.

Door ejections are a significant part of the rollover problem (the second leading source of ejection) resulting in over 1,600 fatalities and nearly 2,000 serious injuries each year. Despite enormous improvements in motor vehicle occupant restraint use over the past 20 years, the ejection rate of fatally injured passenger vehicle occupants is essentially unchanged. To address the ejection safety problem, NHTSA plans to issue a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) to upgrade the door lock standard by Summer 2004 and the final rule by Summer 2005. The U.S. also is leading the development of a global technical regulation (GTR) on door locks and door components.

Roof crush is one part of the rollover safety problem and on average, 6,500 persons annually have at least one serious or fatal injury due to roof contact where some amount of roof intrusion is present. Over half (3,450) of these seriously or fatally injured persons are injured despite being restrained. NHTSA plans to address the roof crush safety problem by issuing an NPRM to upgrade the roof crush standard this year.

The agency continues to point out that the first step to improving safety in rollovers is one that requires no changes to vehicles, the use of a safety belt. Most people killed in rollovers are totally or partially ejected from the vehicle. Safety belts can prevent nearly all of these ejections. Safety belts are 80 percent effective in preventing deaths in rollovers involving light trucks and 74 percent effective in rollovers involving passenger cars.

Vehicle Compatibility

The vehicle fleet has changed dramatically in the last 20 years, and these changes have given rise to an unprecedented problem relating to vehicle mismatch in vehicle-to-vehicle crashes. Of course, vehicle compatibility has been a concern for longer than the past 20 years, but the earlier concerns about

compatibility among different vehicles on the road were primarily related to differences between large and small cars, and the primary difference was simply the mass of the vehicles. However, more recently, the rising popularity of light trucks, vans, and SUVs has made the problem substantially more complex. Now, in addition to differences in vehicle mass, we must address inherent design differences, including disparities in vehicle height, geometry, and vehicle stiffness. The fleet average weight of light passenger vehicles that was approximately 3,000 pounds in 1990 is almost 4,000 pounds today. Similar changes are occurring in front-end heights and stiffness. The average initial stiffness of light trucks is about twice that of passenger cars. This increases the risk of death and injury to occupants in certain passenger vehicles when they interact with the more aggressive ones.

While light trucks and vans (LTVs) account for 36 percent of all registered vehicles, they are involved in approximately half of all fatal two-vehicle crashes involving passenger cars. In these collisions, nearly 80 percent of the fatalities are passenger car occupants. We need to address this problem now since LTVs constitute half of all new vehicle sales.

We have identified ways in which the safety features of a struck vehicle may be improved to better protect the occupants in a crash with a more aggressive vehicle and measures to reduce the aggressiveness of striking vehicles. The safety problems associated with vehicle compatibility are complex. We have aggressive research programs underway to develop suitable test procedures and aggressivity metrics that will bring about necessary changes in vehicle design.

The greatest problem in vehicle compatibility occurs when an LTV strikes a passenger car in the side. In collisions between small passenger vehicles and light trucks or vans, including sport utility vehicles, passengers in the small passenger vehicles are more likely to be seriously injured or killed. To address this problem, on June 12, 2003, the agency published its Integrated Project Team plan to address the issue of compatibility. As the first step in our effort, the agency expects to publish in the next few months an NPRM to upgrade the side impact protection standard that includes measures to improve vehicle self-protection in side impact crashes. In addition, the agency is also pursuing research to support the crashworthiness partner-protection initiatives outlined in the plan.

The agency is not alone in searching for solutions to this issue. Several manufacturers have joined with the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety to form a technical working group to address this issue. They recently published their plan, which includes the voluntary addition of side air bags and the promise for improved geometric alignment and passenger car safety. We welcome the industry efforts to address vehicle compatibility and their recent voluntary commitments.

Other governments also share our concern with incompatibility, and we have taken steps to work in cooperation. Japan has signed a memorandum of cooperation with NHTSA in this area. We expect such cooperation among governments to enhance our understanding and approach to vehicle compatibility.

Crash Avoidance Initiatives

The *NHTSA Vehicle Safety Rulemaking and Supporting Research Plan, 2003-2006*, recognizes that the most significant vehicle-based initiatives will rest on advanced technologies that will help drivers avoid crashes, and also reduce severity when crashes do occur. Many such new technologies are coming to vehicles that are introduced voluntarily by manufacturers. We believe that many of these have the potential to improve safety. Some of these include such systems as electronic stability control, crash warning systems, pre-crash sensing systems, adaptive cruise control systems and driver assistance systems. These advanced technologies present a research challenge for the agency, in that the agency must develop proper test and evaluation procedures in order to establish their safety benefits and possible unintended consequences. This will require new, dedicated effort and allocation of resources. Accordingly, the agency is requesting \$5 million to support a major new crash avoidance initiative.

In the future, manufacturers will launch new approaches to safety without strictly compartmentalizing according to crash avoidance or crashworthiness countermeasures. This would treat safety engineering as a continuum, first to prevent crashes, then to reduce severity of injury when crash avoidance fails, and finally incorporating post-crash management, such as Automatic Crash Notification through E911 systems. The agency is currently developing a strategic approach to address these issues.

Vehicle Safety Enforcement

The Defects Investigation budget proposal is \$10.5 million. Since 1995, recalls for safety-related defects have been at record highs, with over 87 million vehicles recalled as a direct result of the Defects Investigation program. With the routine submission of additional manufacturer data pursuant to the requirements of the TREAD Act, NHTSA now has access to a substantially increased amount of early warning data that it is analyzing to detect the existence of safety-related problems.

The new ARTEMIS system will be fully operational in FY 2004. System components include a new data management system to house the enormous amount of data that will be submitted under the Early Warning Reporting (EWR) rule and the tools needed to analyze the data. Manufacturers are required to submit aggregate counts of production, warranty claims, consumer complaints, property damage claims, and field reports. Additionally, manufacturers must submit fatality and injury claims and notices, lists of substantially similar vehicles, foreign campaign information, and copies of non-dealer field reports. The system provides a secure, web-based environment that allows manufacturers to submit their data electronically, Intranet applications for NHTSA staff to monitor incoming data submissions, Intranet and Internet applications for data entry and query, and standard reports. One of the reports enables NHTSA to quickly identify manufacturers that fail to submit complete and timely EWR data. ARTEMIS also provides the ability to run many different types of reports for analyses of EWR data, and a feature that will allow the public to search and browse certain EWR data via a public website. EWR data played a supporting role in identifying a safety defect trend that led to a recent tire recall. The FY 2005 budget request supports the on-going system operation.

The Vehicle Safety Compliance program proposes funding of \$7.7 million to ensure that new motor vehicles and motor vehicle equipment comply with the performance requirements of Federal motor vehicle safety standards and provide the safety benefits intended. The FY 2005 budget request includes support for the agency's compliance test program, including advanced air bag testing and support of our tire testing facility; development of new test procedures for fuel system integrity, side impact, head restraints and tires; and crash test dummy maintenance, for dummies used in crash testing.

Fuel Economy Program

The Fuel Economy program budget request is \$1.3 million. In 2003, NHTSA set new corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards for model year 2005-2007 light trucks that will result in a savings of over 3.6 billion gallons of gasoline. The new standards marked the first increase in fuel economy standards since Congress froze CAFE standards for six years through a provision in DOT's annual appropriations acts. The increase in the fuel economy standards is the largest in 20 years. These standards will improve vehicle fuel economy without detrimental impacts on passenger safety or American jobs.

Beginning in 2004 and moving into 2005, NHTSA plans to consider reforms to the CAFE program. Created as a result of the energy crisis in the 1970's, the CAFE program has not changed significantly in over 30 years. A recent National Academy of Sciences (NAS) report included several findings and recommendations pertaining to the need to reform CAFE. Principal among the reasons the NAS committee recommended reforming CAFE were concerns regarding safety and economic effects. An alternative CAFE system may allow more energy savings without negative effects on safety and jobs. On December 29, 2003, NHTSA published an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that outlines potential reforms that can be made to the CAFE program. The purpose of this document is to encourage discussion and debate regarding the advantages and disadvantages of potential reforms, not to advocate specific reforms. It is NHTSA's intention to gather data and comments and then decide what reforms within the agency's current statutory authority, if any, can make the program better.

Crash Injury Data Collection

To reach DOT's goal of no more than 1.0 fatality per 100 million vehicle miles traveled by 2008, or any future goal, it is absolutely essential that the traffic safety community has better data and makes better use of these data. We must understand the causes of the fatalities, injuries and property damage costs that are occurring now.

Accordingly, NHTSA has identified *Traffic Records and Data Improvements* as one of its five priority programs. Last year, NHTSA formed an integrated project team with staff from NHTSA, FHWA,

FMCSA, and BTS to recommend to the agency how traffic safety data must be improved to make sense of the increasing complexity of traffic safety and vehicle issues. It is expected that the Data IPT's recommendations will enhance the ability of States to improve both the national data sets at NHTSA and the State traffic safety data resources on which they depend.

Improving the Federal data, for example, FARS, NASS-GES, and State Data System, is dependent on improving State data. Therefore, NHTSA has requested \$50 million for the new Traffic Records/Data Improvement program in FY 2005, consistent with the Administration's reauthorization proposal. The new initiative will provide incentive grants to States to improve their traffic safety data to make them more timely, accurate, complete, uniform, integrated and accessible.

The FY 2005 budget proposes \$10 million to complete data collection and processing for a nationally representative Crash Causation Study, which will provide detailed information urgently needed to identify the research needs for crash avoidance. This study is critical to understanding the complex events that cause and contribute to highway crashes, the last one having been performed in the 1970s.

NHTSA's FY 2005 budget request also includes a \$1 million increase in the FARS program to implement new methodologies and procedures directed to obtaining more timely and reliable fatality estimates that support important decision-making on important highway safety initiatives. While the existing FARS infrastructure provides fatality data and information, it does so with an inherent lag time. This new initiative is critical because it will speed NHTSA's ability to identify and address important safety issues. Funding for the "Fast FARS" initiative will thus improve the transmission of data from paper to electronic form, thereby improving both quality and timeliness. Improved data quality and timeliness from this initiative support the Departmental and NHTSA Performance Goals and the President's Management Agenda.

Mr. Chairman, this concludes my statement. I would like to thank the Committee for its continued support of our safety programs. I look forward to working with you in developing an effective, results-oriented budget that will provide national leadership to solve the major problems of traffic safety. I would be pleased to answer any questions.