

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Michael C. Burgess, M.D.**  
**Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade**  
**Hearing on “Oversight of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration”**  
**April 14, 2016**

*(As Prepared for Delivery)*

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration was established by Congress in 1970 to reduce deaths and injuries from motor vehicle accidents and to help make our nation’s roadways safer. The importance of the agency’s mission cannot be understated. With over 50 million vehicles recalled and a surge in traffic fatalities last year, it’s clear that the work of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has very real and immediate societal and economic implications that affect the lives of virtually every American.

The life-saving nature of NHTSA’s mission requires Congress and this Subcommittee in particular, to ensure absolute compliance with federal motor vehicle safety standards and processes. It also requires us to monitor the agency’s ability to keep pace with technology advancements in automotive systems that promise greater safety and mobility. As we’ve seen over the last few years, a failure to comply with safety standards or a misunderstanding of vehicle construction and design leads to delays in safety recalls, roadway fatalities and other preventable incidents.

Based on our focus on auto safety, we included many reforms in the safety title of the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act that was passed by Congress and signed into law last year. Among those reforms included direction to NHTSA to implement 17 recommendations issued by the Department of Transportation Office of Inspector General following a comprehensive audit of the agency’s internal processes. Those recommendations are intended to improve NHTSA’s collection of vehicle safety data so that safety defects can be identified earlier and faulty cars can be removed from the road faster. The recommendations are also intended to help NHTSA keep pace with complex vehicle technology and rapidly advancing automotive systems. NHTSA has pledged to implement all 17 recommendations by June 30th of this year. Following this hearing, I will send a request for a full breakdown of NHTSA’s progress toward implementing all 17 recommendations.

The FAST Act contains a number of other measures intended to protect the driving public, including: improving NHTSA’s safety recall processes, increasing the availability of vehicle defect information to consumers, and keeping Congress apprised of the agency’s activities through the submission of an annual agenda. Each of these reforms work together to ensure that the agency remains focused and dedicated to its mission of saving lives, and that the cars American motorists are driving are safe.

We also must ensure absolute compliance with motor vehicle safety standards and processes from vehicle manufacturers, suppliers, and new entrants into the automotive industry. Their role in advancing vehicle and roadway safety is just as critical to the goal of reducing traffic fatalities and increasing safety for all roadway travelers. To that end, the FAST Act contains provisions that strengthen remedy and repair obligations among automakers for vehicles under recall, and requires greater accountability from dealers and rental car companies to ensure that consumers driving away from those lots are in safe cars.

In addition to the implementation of the FAST Act, there is much more to consider today. I look forward to discussing the status of the ongoing Takata recalls. In my home state of Texas there

was another tragic fatality tied to the Takata airbags. NHTSA established a coordinated remedy program in 2015 to accelerate the replacement of defective Takata airbag inflators. Despite this program, the take rate, or percentage of people issued a recall that take their vehicle in for servicing, remains low. Is it time for NHTSA to do a Public Service campaign? I hope to hear about the coordinated remedy program and what additional action NHTSA is planning to solve this problem without further delay.

I also look forward to discussing how the agency is working with automakers to protect vehicles from cyber threats, and how the agency is preparing for the industry's future of crash-avoidance technology, vehicle-to-vehicle communications, autonomous cars, and beyond. We provided for a significant increase in resources for NHTSA in the FAST Act.

With so much on the table, I hope to hear how NHTSA is maximizing the use of these resources. We provided a significant increase in the FAST Act. I have no doubt that NHTSA would like more funds. But funds are scarce and practically speaking I am not sure how much more funding Congress can realistically find.

Administrator Rosekind, we welcome you to today's hearing and I look forward to continuing to work with you to make vehicles and roadways safer for our nation's motorists.

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