

Testimony of
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Subcommittee on Digital Commerce and Consumer Protection
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives

“Oversight of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration”
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Good morning Chairman Latta, Ranking Member Schakowsky, and Members of the Subcommittee. I am truly honored to testify before you today. I am proud to have served the Members of this Committee through the 112th session of Congress.

Today, I am excited to tell you about how NHTSA is acting on its mission of saving lives, preventing injuries, and reducing economic costs. As the automotive transportation landscape is changing at a rapid pace, NHTSA is adapting our mission execution to assure safety while remaining in step with changing technology, addressing new and emerging risks, and encouraging industry innovation.

Safety is the Department of Transportation’s top priority.

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37,461 lives were lost in motor vehicle crashes in 2016. Combined with an increase the year prior, this represents the largest proportionate increase in highway fatalities in my lifetime. The loss of life is unacceptable.

This rise in fatalities has occurred during a time of great change in our transportation landscape. More Americans are choosing to bicycle, to walk, and to rideshare. Both our vehicles and our roadways, and the way we interact with them, are evolving at a rapid pace.

As the average lifespan of motor vehicles increases, Americans are keeping older cars more than ever before, although we know that newer cars are safer: an occupant of a newer car is much more likely to survive a crash than an occupant of an older car. This underscores why it is so incredibly important to ensure that all Americans have access to safe, affordable, fuel-efficient vehicles.

Adapting to changes in how Americans travel, NHTSA will continue to employ risk management best practices across all of our activities to identify, assess, mitigate and continuously improve our management of highway safety risks.

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One of the emerging risks that NHTSA is fully committed to mitigating is the problem of drug-impaired driving.

We know that many people switch between alcohol and drugs, or consume them together, and we need to consider both drugs and alcohol in addressing the very serious problem of impaired driving.

To that end, NHTSA has announced an initiative to strengthen the strategies necessary to reduce drug-impaired driving on our nation's roads. Next month, NHTSA will launch the national dialogue in a 'Call to Action' – a national summit that will bring together experts and stakeholders to share best practices and identify near term and longer term strategies to save lives.

This is intended to build upon the previous work of the Agency and complement the efforts of our state and local partners.

I have heard from many members of this Subcommittee that you share our concern and have offered support for this initiative. I am tremendously grateful for your partnership on this endeavor.

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In addition to changing consumer preferences and emerging DUID risk, NHTSA is committed to assuring safety while also encouraging advances in innovation, automation, and changing automotive technology.

Last September, Secretary Elaine L. Chao released *A Vision for Safety 2.0*, our new voluntary guidance to encourage the safe introduction of emerging automated technologies onto our public roadways. *A Vision for Safety* paves the way for the safe testing and deployment of Automated Driving Systems by encouraging best practices for manufacturers and state and local governments, and by fostering open communication between the public, industry, and the various stakeholders.

Secretary Chao has announced that the Department of Transportation will release updated guidance – version 3.0 – later this year, which will further facilitate the adoption of automated transportation systems through a holistic, multi-modal framework. We are excited by the benefits automated technologies can bring to safety, mobility, and the efficiency of our transportation networks, and we look forward to hearing from the public, Members of Congress, and industry in the coming months on how we can further reduce barriers to accelerate the safe deployment of potentially life-saving technologies.

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As technology changes, consumer choices evolve, and social trends continue, you have the commitment of each member of the NHTSA team that we will prioritize our mission in all that we do: To save lives, prevent injuries and to reduce the economic costs of traffic crashes.

Thank you, and I look forward to your questions.