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BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION,
HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

HEARING ON
FY 2016 BUDGET
March 19, 2015

Good morning Chairman Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member Price, and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the President's fiscal year (FY) 2016 Budget request of \$908 million for the Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

As anyone at NHTSA can tell you by heart, 32,719 people lost their lives in motor vehicle crashes in 2013. Every one of those deaths was preventable—from not wearing a seat belt, to driving aggressively, drunk, drugged, or distracted—those 32,719 lives were needlessly lost. That's unacceptable.

NHTSA is committed to using every tool available – including our regulatory and enforcement authority, our groundbreaking public awareness campaigns, our research programs, and our partnership with the States – to save lives. The President's 2016 budget request supports the Administration's GROW AMERICA Act, NHTSA's mission, and our Agency's top three priorities. These include:

- Strengthening how NHTSA identifies and recalls vehicles with safety defects;
- Bolstering our core safety programs; and,
- Emphasizing and supporting safety-related technology innovations.

Defects-Recalls System

We must strengthen how NHTSA identifies and recalls vehicles and equipment with safety-related defects. To this end, the President's request includes significant increases in people and technologies from the FY 2015 request for our vehicle defect safety programs. 2014 was a record year for vehicle recalls with nearly 64 million vehicles recalled. NHTSA collected \$126 million in civil penalties, more than in the previous 43 years combined.

Our request would provide additional funding and personnel, and target those resources at areas we know require improvement. We propose to triple the defects investigation budget from \$10 million to \$31 million in FY 2016. We propose creating two new divisions in our Office of Defects Investigation: the Trend Analysis Division to better identify defect trends in available data and the Field Investigation and Testing Division to investigate vehicle crashes that may be connected to safety defects.

It is NHTSA's responsibility to do everything in our power to prevent deaths and injuries related to defects. The American people expect that of us. We're committed to getting it done.

Core Safety Programs

Another priority is to strengthen NHTSA's core safety programs. The Agency has some well-established and highly successful campaigns that are household names, such as 'Click It or Ticket,' 'Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over,' and more recently, 'U Text. U Drive. U Pay.' These campaigns are changing attitudes, changing how Americans drive for the better, and saving lives.

The Agency's grants to states and local governments are a foundation for our safety work across the nation. The \$577 million request for the Highway Safety Grants program will allow us to provide resources to states to enforce laws against drunk and distracted driving, to continue vital occupant protection countermeasure activities, to fund high-visibility enforcement of traffic safety laws, and provide technical assistance on graduated licensing and other emerging safety issues, and to support a wide range of activities that save lives.

The \$152 million requested for Highway Safety Research and Development represents a 10% increase over FY 2015. Among other things, this funding will go towards studying pedestrian and bicycle safety, as well as driver fatigue.

The Budget Request includes \$14 million for the New Car Assessment Program (NCAP), known to most Americans as NHTSA's Five Star Safety Ratings. The ratings are a vital tool that drives greater innovation into the automotive fleet and offers consumers an easily identifiable and memorable way to shop for safer vehicles. More Stars. Safer Cars. This money will be used to maintain test coverage of 85 percent of the new model year vehicle fleet, as well as expand the program to include new crash avoidance technologies and other updates in the program.

We are requesting \$41.7 million for crash data collection and data modernization. Funding will be used to continue establishing two new data systems, the Crash Report Sampling System (CRSS) and the Crash Investigation Sampling System (CISS) that leverage technology for data collection and coding, as well as our legacy systems Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), State Data Systems (SDS), and Special Crash Investigations (SCI).

Vehicle Safety

Our third priority is strengthening our commitment to advancing innovations that deliver safety to the American consumer. The budget requests \$179 million for Vehicle Safety initiatives, a 38 percent increase from FY 2015. This includes \$4.1 million for the Vehicle Electronics and Emerging Technologies program, which will build upon NHTSA's ongoing research to identify and mitigate issues that may arise from the increasing use of electronics and electronic control systems in the design of modern automobiles, including cybersecurity.

The budget request would also add 111 more employees: 24 positions in Highway Safety Research and Development, 13 positions in Highway Safety Grants, and 74 positions in Vehicle Safety, of which 57 would go to the Office of Defect Investigations, more than doubling the personnel available to investigate safety defects.

The request will also provide additional resources for our behavioral research efforts, and our work to modernize our data systems. These two priorities are essential for NHTSA to understand what's

going on out on our roads. Better understanding of driving behaviors and enhancing our ability to collect and analyze traffic safety data are essential to achieving our lifesaving mission.

Transportation touches each and every one of our lives, every day. We share the responsibility to make our transportation system safe. Together, we can deliver on the promise of safety for all Americans whether they drive, walk or ride. We have a lot to do, and I am asking for your help and the resources that will allow NHTSA to better accomplish its safety mission.

Thank you and I look forward to taking your questions.