Statement of the National Safety Council
House of Representatives
Committee on Energy & Commerce
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection & Commerce
Hearing on
"Summer Driving Dangers: Exploring Ways to Protect Drivers and Their Families"
Thursday, May 23, 2019

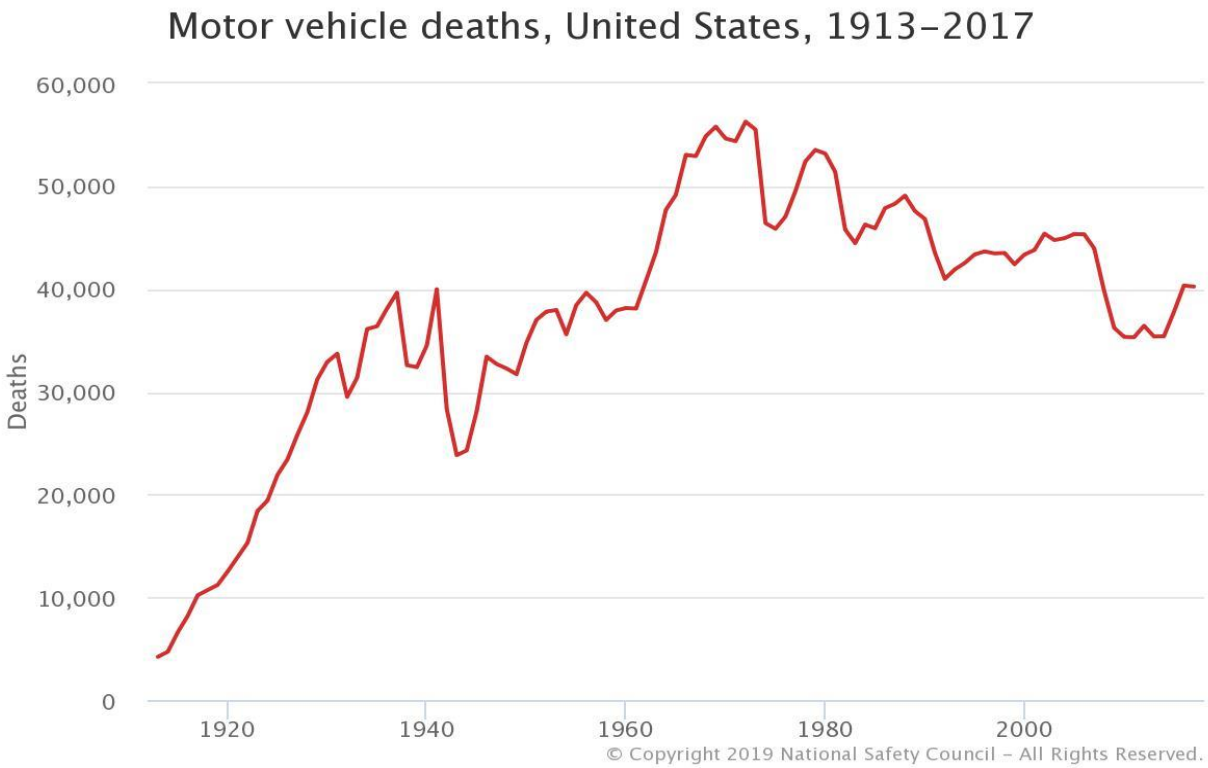
Thank you for allowing the National Safety Council (NSC) to submit this statement for the record. NSC is a 100-year-old nonprofit based in Itasca, IL, with a mission to end preventable deaths in our lifetime at work, in homes and communities and on the road through leadership, research, education and advocacy. Our more than 15,000 member companies represent employees at more than 50,000 U.S. worksites. These members are across the United States and are likely in each district represented on this Subcommittee.

The National Safety Council estimates that at least 40,000 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2018.[1] We also estimate a tragic beginning to summer with 380 people dying in motor vehicle crashes during the Memorial Day holiday weekend. Your timing for this hearing is critical.

Included here are the number of people killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2018 from the Chairs' and Ranking Members' states.

New Jersey	565
Illinois	1,048
Washington	541
Oregon	468

[1] https://www.nsc.org/in-the-newsroom/2018-marks-third-straight-year-that-motor-vehicle-deaths-are-estimated-to-have-reached-40-000



These are the lives of your constituents. These mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts and uncles contributed to the communities in which they lived. Yet, our national outrage at these losses is conspicuously absent, particularly when you compare to deaths in other forms of transportation, such as aviation. These crashes and deaths on our roadways not only have a human toll, but there is an annual cost to the American economy of over $433 billion.[2] The United States has consistently avoided the hard choices needed to save lives on the roadways, and NSC calls on Congress to act in a bipartisan manner to implement policies that will save lives. We know the solutions; we need the will to enact them.

Road to Zero

NSC is so committed to the goal of zero deaths on the roadways that we lead, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Road to Zero Coalition, a diverse group of over 900 members committed to eliminating roadway fatalities by 2050. Over the past two and a half years, the coalition has grown to include members from across the country representing transportation organizations, businesses, academia, safety advocates and others, the first time so many organizations have collaborated to put forth a plan to address fatalities on our roads.

The centerpiece of the coalition's work has been the creation of the Road to Zero report, a comprehensive roadmap of the strategies necessary to achieve our goal by 2050. In April 2018, the coalition issued our report with three primary recommendations.

1. Double down on what works through proven, evidence-based strategies
2. Accelerate advanced life-saving technology in vehicles and infrastructure

[2] https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/motor-vehicle/overview/introduction/

3. Prioritize safety by adopting a safe systems approach and creating a positive safety culture

The Lifesaving Potential of Advanced Technology

NSC believes advanced vehicle technology, up to and including fully automated vehicles, can provide many benefits to society. The most important contribution will be the potential to greatly reduce the number of fatal crashes on our roadways, which are increasing. Federal leadership on motor vehicle safety is necessary because there should only be one level of safety. Consumers need confidence in vehicles regardless of where they reside; manufacturers need certainty in order to invest in design and production, and states do not possess the expertise and the resources to replicate design, testing and reporting programs. Further, a patchwork of requirements will result in confusion for consumers and increased cost for manufacturers and operators attempting to comply with a myriad of requirements. Finally, the absence of a safe, workable standard will drive development, testing and deployment overseas, resulting in the flight of innovation and the jobs that accompany it to locations outside of the US.

To reach our goal of zero deaths, we need to encourage the development of innovations that address human errors and road design failures and, once proven, establish mandates for adoption of technologies that work. The potential safety benefits of automated vehicles could be incredible, however to be clear, it will be decades before we have meaningful fleet penetration on U.S. roadways of AVs.

In the meantime, there are significant technologies available in vehicles today. Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) can prevent or mitigate crashes. Consumer education about these new technologies is of utmost importance, and NSC is working to expand consumer education around these new technologies. NSC and the University of Iowa created the first and largest ADAS national campaign at, MyCarDoesWhat.org, to help. When a person visits MyCarDoesWhat.org, he or she learns about dozens of existing safety features such as lane departure warning, blind spot monitoring, backup cameras, automatic emergency braking and more. The purpose of MyCarDoesWhat is to educate the public about these assistive safety features in order to maximize their potential lifesaving benefits.

Another way to help consumer understanding is to standardize the nomenclature or taxonomy for advanced technologies. NSC recommends that, at the very least, systems that are not fully automated or Level 5 should not be described as such. ADAS, with emphasis on driver assist, represents the vehicles being sold today and requires drivers to remain fully engaged in the driving task. That fact is often lost in marketing, media reports and consumer expectations. Labeling a motor vehicle as “automated” or “autonomous” today, or even using terms such as “autopilot,” only confuse consumers and can contribute to losses of situational awareness around the driving task. By establishing standard nomenclature and establishing clear performance outcomes, consumers will better understand what they should expect from these technologies.

Additionally, the National Safety Council was a founding member of PAVE (Partners for Automated Vehicle Education), which launched in January of 2019. PAVE is a broad-based coalition that includes automotive and technology companies, safety and mobility advocates and community partners. PAVE members believe that in order to fully realize the benefits of self-driving technology, policymakers and the public need factual information about the present and future state of such technology. PAVE enhances public understanding through a variety of strategies including an educational website at PaveCampaign.org; “hands-on” demonstrations

allowing the public to see and experience driverless technology and workshops to help understand the technology. In the future, PAVE will produce educational toolkits for car dealers to help them communicate more effectively with customers about their vehicles' capabilities and limitations. PAVE is focusing on levels 4 and 5 vehicles.

Finally, the New Car Assessment Program (NCAP) program has operated for nearly 40 years with a goal of testing vehicle safety systems and educating consumers about them. Practically, it has created a mechanism to allow consumers to evaluate vehicles on safety systems. NSC supports NCAP, and expanding its role into ADAS safety, believing it is an important program to improve the safety of the motor vehicle fleet.

Prioritizing Safety

By prioritizing safety, we commit to changing our nation's safety culture. This means we have to accept that any life lost is one too many. Once we accept that one death is too many, we will begin thinking about how to take a "safe systems" approach to our roadways. Fully adopted by the aviation industry, this means building fail-safe features that anticipate human error and developing infrastructure with safety margins. When it comes to technology, the U.S. prioritized safety years ago by dedicating spectrum for safety purposes to prevent crashes. Today, other groups would like to take the spectrum for streaming services. I urge this committee to direct the U.S. DOT, the Federal Communications Commission, the Department of Commerce and others to maintain the spectrum for roadway safety purposes allowing vehicles to communicate with each other, infrastructure, pedestrians and others to prevent crashes. This spectrum provides a safety margin that we should not give away.

Some of these changes may include engineering greater safety into a design. For example, in the pictures below, a multi-lane intersection with a red light in Scottsdale, Arizona was replaced with a roundabout. With the intersection, there are 32 potential points of failure, but with a roundabout, those points of failure are engineered down to only eight. Speeds are decreased, and if crashes do occur, they occur at angles that are not as violent.

Infrastructure changes do not have to be expensive. Through the Road to Zero Coalition, NSC has awarded grants to groups across the country working in communities of all sizes. The biggest and hardest change is the shift to truly prioritize safety by changing safety culture on the roads. We cannot be complacent when it comes to losing so many people each and every day on our roads. We need leaders in this area, and I can think of none better than the members of this Committee and Subcommittee. We have changed safety culture in workplaces, around child passenger safety and in other areas. We can do it here too with your help.

Conclusion

Today, we have millions of drivers behind the wheel, spend millions of dollars on education and enforcement campaigns, and still recognize billions in economic loses as a result of crashes. In spite of safer vehicle designs and record-setting seat belt use rates across the nation, operating a motor vehicle remains one of the deadliest things we do on a daily basis. The integration of some of these technologies will likely be messy as we deal with a complex and ever-changing human-machine interface. There will be an evolution of the existing technologies and perhaps a revolution when it comes to new and different technologies. We need to be prepared for unanticipated consequences and new failure modes.

We cannot afford to ignore the carnage on our highways that is a national epidemic today. The U.S. trails other industrialized countries in addressing highway deaths. NSC appreciates this Committee's leadership on vehicle technology and safe roadway transportation. If safety for the traveling public is the ultimate goal, advanced technology provides the most promising opportunity to achieve that outcome, and will go a long way toward reaching the goal of eliminating preventable deaths in our lifetime.