

JENNIFER HOMENDY
ORAL STATEMENT
HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT SUBCOMMITTEE
APRIL 9, 2019

Good morning Chairwoman Norton, Ranking Member Davis, Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for inviting the NTSB to testify today.

The NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating major transportation disasters. We determine the probable cause of crashes, and issue safety recommendations to federal, state, and local agencies and organizations to prevent future tragedies and injuries and save lives. We are not a regulatory agency in the conventional sense – we do not adopt or enforce safety standards.

Since 1967, the NTSB has issued nearly 15,000 safety recommendations, about 2,500 of which are aimed at improving highway safety. Overall, more than 80% of those have been adopted, including recommendations that ensure airbags are safer, child restraint fitting stations are available nationwide, and the design and construction of school buses are improved.

Every two years we release a Most Wanted List of Transportation Safety Improvements to highlight issues that we believe are the greatest risk to safety. Our most recent list identifies 10 priorities, 7 of which affect highway safety. Today, I want to focus on speeding, impaired driving, and pedestrian safety.

Speeding is one of the most common factors in motor vehicle crashes. In 2016, more than 10,000 people were killed in speeding-related crashes, about the same number of people killed in alcohol-impaired driving crashes. Yet our attitude towards speeding is much different; it's seen as more socially acceptable. Together, we need to change that mindset.

In July 2017, we issued a study focused on reducing speeding-related crashes, and we found that:

1. We need to change how we set speed limits in this country. Federal guidance to states is leading to ever increasing speed limits and, as a result, deaths on our nation's roadways. From 2012 to 2016, we went from 32 states with maximum speed limits at or above 70 mph to 41; 7 of those states are at or above 80.
2. We need to increase enforcement through the use of technologies like automated speed enforcement and point-to-point enforcement.
3. We need in-vehicle technologies to address speeding, like speed limiters, and we need NHTSA to issue performance standards for such technologies.
4. We need national leadership to address speeding, which should include a campaign like *Click it or Ticket* to change driver behavior, and incentive grants to states to encourage them to implement programs to combat speeding.

Impairment

We also need to better address impairment in transportation; 29 people die on our nation's roads daily due to alcohol-impaired driving crashes; that's 1 every 48 minutes.

1. We recommend reducing the BAC limit to .05 or lower, and that NHTSA provide incentive grants to states to do so. *[Utah was the first state to make that change this past December; Utah was also the first state to reduce BAC limits from .10 to .08, followed by Oregon in 1983.]*
2. We recommend requiring ignition interlocks for all convicted DWI offenders.
3. And we want NHTSA to accelerate widespread implementation of technology to enable vehicles to detect driver impairment *[such as the Driver Alcohol Detection System for Safety, or DADSS].*

Finally, pedestrian safety; over the last 10 years, pedestrian fatalities have increased by 27 percent while overall highway fatalities have decreased by 12 percent.

In 2016, the NTSB began investigating a series of highway crashes and issued a study that included 11 recommendations to DOT focused on improving pedestrian safety.

1. We recommend strengthening federal standards on vehicle headlights; improving vehicle designs to reduce pedestrian fatalities and injuries; and ensuring collision avoidance technologies like pedestrian detection systems and automatic emergency braking are standard on all vehicles.
2. We need better street designs. Traditional planning is geared toward motor vehicle traffic, so we recommend that states [and MPO's] implement pedestrian safety action plans, and that FHWA provide more resources for state and local pedestrian safety projects.
3. Finally, we need better data to support the decision-making process. For example, in 2015, Portland, Oregon, identified 30 high-crash streets and intersections that accounted for 57% of deadly crashes. By analyzing injury and crash data, Portland was able to determine where best to invest resources.

In closing, let me emphasize that more than 100 people die on our highways every day. In our view, 1 is too many. We must change a culture that is willing to accept these losses and we need Congress' help to implement proven solutions.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I'm happy to answer any questions.