

STATEMENT OF RAYMOND A. PECK, JR., ADMINISTRATOR, NATIONAL
HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION, DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION, BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE,
SCIENCE AND TRANSPORTATION, SURFACE TRANSPORTATION
SUBCOMMITTEE, CONCERNING PROPOSED HIGHWAY SAFETY LEGISLATION,
MAY 5, 1981

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Subcommittee,
I am pleased to be here to discuss the highway safety
legislative proposals of the Administration. With me today
is Charles Livingston, the Associate Administrator for
Traffic Safety Programs.

The Administration has proposed a comprehensive highway
bill, introduced in the Senate as S. 841. On Wednesday,
April 29th, Secretary Lewis testified before the Senate
Public Works Committee on the highway construction portions
of the bill. I will testify on the highway safety portions
contained in Title II of the bill.

The entire bill drafted by the Administration is predicated
on maintaining and improving the Nation's highways and highway
safety while practicing fiscal restraint. In this effort
NHTSA has reviewed the nature and extent of the Federal role
in State highway and highway safety programs. In the highway
safety area, the agency proposes to revise and simplify the
highway safety grant program under section 402 of title 23,
United States Code, and to direct aid under the program towards
areas with the most direct pay-off in terms of reduced
deaths and injuries on the highways, and towards safety
problems truly national in scope. These proposed revisions

in the program have enabled us to reduce our request for funding for the program with confidence that we are not sacrificing future gains in highway safety.

The revised highway safety program would in many ways be superior to the present program. First, highway safety funds would be targeted to program areas that will make or have made a verifiable, direct contribution to the reduction of traffic accidents, deaths, and injuries.

Second, States would no longer be required to maintain a number of categorical programs, such as driver education, as a condition of the grant of Section 402 funds.

Last, the revisions would improve the ability of NHTSA and the States to fulfill the original goals of the Section 402 program. From its inception, the Section 402 program has had the role of a start-up or "seed money" program. If a new program proved successful, a State was expected to continue it with State funds. The reformulated Section 402 program would enhance that concept by focusing its thrusts in a limited number of critical program areas and by turning back to the States those program activities which are truly their responsibility to operate.

After a review of all program areas funded under Section 402, we have found four successful program areas which should be considered eligible for continued Federal funding. We have

also identified a number of program areas which should no longer be eligible for continued Federal funding, either because they do not show results or because they no longer require Federal attention and should be funded by and at each State's option. The four eligible areas are:

- (1) Alcohol Safety, the highway safety problem that contributes to half of the deaths on the nation's highways and afflicts all communities;
- (2) Police Traffic Services, the cornerstone of almost any highway safety program;
- (3) Emergency Medical Services (EMS), a program initially established nationwide by the Section 402 program which needs to be maintained, with particular emphasis on training;
- (4) Traffic Records, the key to effective identification of safety problems and evaluation of safety projects. Traffic records are only useful if the accident data collected and filed is reliable and statistically useful.

Other program areas would be eligible for funding only if the Secretary is satisfied that they would be effective in reducing traffic deaths and injuries. We would not anticipate any significant need for such findings.

Program areas such as driver licensing, driver education, school bus driver training, motor vehicle inspection and registration, and highway safety planning and administration would no longer be eligible for federal funding, except as occasional components of other programs that meet the criteria I have outlined. The separate grant for 55 mph speed limit enforcement under §154 of Title 23 would be eliminated,

although each State would still have the option of using a portion of its basic highway safety funds for 55 mph enforcement. Despite the strictures on the use of Federal funds in most of these program areas, NHTSA will still offer each State technical assistance to improve projects in areas no longer eligible for § 402 funding.

As I have implied, the withdrawal of Federal aid in these areas would not mark the demise of projects in them. These areas represent traditional State responsibilities which were carried out by most States before the passage of the Highway Safety Act of 1966 and whose expense is still borne to a great extent by the States. It is important to keep the extent of the Federal Government's contribution to highway safety in perspective and not to inflate it. Even at the much higher funding levels of the past years, Federal Section 402 funds still constituted only 2%-3% of the total spent by the States for highway safety.

As for authorization levels, let me briefly summarize. This bill would repeal the existing fiscal year (FY)1982 authorization of \$200 million for the Section 402 program and substitute the amount of \$77 million for that fiscal year as well as each succeeding fiscal year through FY 1986. The existing \$50 million authorization for Section 403 Highway Research and Development in FY 1982 would be repealed and the amount of \$31 million substituted for that year and each year thereafter through FY 1986. In addition, the

separate authorization for 55 mph speed limit enforcement under Section 154 has been deleted.

Mr. Chairman, I have highlighted the salient points of our proposal in Title II of the Administration's highway bill. I urge the Subcommittee to report favorably on the Administration's bill.

I am grateful to the Subcommittee for the opportunity to present the Administration's position and I would be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.