



**Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives**

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SUMMARY OF SUBJECT MATTER

TO: Members, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
FROM: Staff, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit
RE: Subcommittee Hearing on “Improving the Effectiveness of the Federal Surface Transportation Safety Grant Programs”

PURPOSE

The Subcommittee on Highways and Transit will meet on Tuesday, January 28, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. in 2167 Rayburn House Office Building to receive testimony related to the federal surface transportation safety grant programs. The Subcommittee will hear from representatives of the National Transportation Safety Board; the American Traffic Safety Services Association; the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance; the Governors Highway Safety Association; and the Intelligent Transportation Society of America.

BACKGROUND

The Importance of the Federal Surface Transportation Safety Grant Programs

Since enactment of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU; P.L. 109-59), highway fatalities declined from 43,510 in 2005 to 33,561 in 2012. While many factors contributed to this historic 23 percent decline in highway fatalities, increased federal investment in surface transportation safety has played a significant role. As Congress begins work on reauthorizing the federal-aid surface transportation programs, it is important to build upon the gains made in the safety of America’s transportation infrastructure and the traveling public.

The federal surface transportation safety grant programs provide states with funding intended specifically for reducing fatalities and crashes on our Nation’s surface transportation system. These safety grant programs require states to identify their unique safety challenges and develop a safety plan that targets funding toward safety projects and activities that address those challenges. In addition, states are required to focus their funds on different aspects of surface

transportation safety such as; highway safety infrastructure; motor carrier safety; and driver behavioral safety.

Congress most recently reauthorized the federal surface transportation safety grant programs in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21; P.L. 112-141), which was enacted on July 6, 2012. MAP-21 made significant reforms to the following surface transportation safety grant programs:

The Highway Safety Improvement Program

MAP-21 continued the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP; 23 U.S.C. 148) as a core federal-aid highway program and doubled the funding level to \$2.17 billion in fiscal year 2013 and \$2.19 billion in fiscal year 2014. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) is responsible for administering the HSIP at the federal level. In each state, the HSIP is administered by the state department of transportation. The goal of the program is to achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads, including non-state-owned public roads and roads on tribal lands. The HSIP requires a data-driven, performance-based approach to improving highway safety on all public roads.

MAP-21 made the following changes to the HSIP:

- The FHWA is required to establish performance measures for the states to use in assessing the number and rate of fatalities and serious injuries;
- The Strategic Highway Safety Plans are now required to be updated and evaluated regularly by each state;
- States are required to obligate funds on High Risk Rural Roads if the fatality rate is increasing on those facilities; and
- The annual reports from the states will be posted on FHWA's website.

The Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program

MAP-21 continued the Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP; 49 U.S.C. 31102) and funded the program at \$215 million in fiscal year 2013 and \$218 million in fiscal year 2014. MCSAP is a federal grant program that provides financial assistance to states to reduce the number and severity of crashes and hazardous materials incidents involving commercial motor vehicles (CMV). The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is responsible for administering the MCSAP grants at the federal level. In each state, grants are administered by the designated motor carrier safety office. The goal of the MCSAP is to reduce CMV-involved crashes, fatalities, and injuries through consistent, uniform, and effective CMV safety programs. Investing grant monies in appropriate safety programs increases the likelihood that safety defects, driver deficiencies, and unsafe motor carrier practices are detected and corrected before they become contributing factors to crashes.

MAP-21 made the following changes to the MCSAP:

- The FMCSA is required to dedicate sufficient funds to ensure that motor carrier safety data collected is accurate, complete, and timely; and
- The New Entrant Grant set-aside, which provides funding for safety audits of new entrant interstate motor carriers, was raised to \$32 million for each of fiscal years 2013 and 2014.

State and Community Highway Safety Grants

MAP-21 continued the State and Community Highway Safety Grants (Section 402 Grants; 23 U.S.C. 402) at \$235 million in each of fiscal years 2013 and 2014. Section 402 Grants are used to support state and community programs that seek to reduce deaths and injuries on all public highways. In each state, grants are administered by the Governor's Representative for Highway Safety. Section 402 Grants can be used for a variety of safety initiatives including conducting data analyses, developing safety education programs, and conducting community-wide safety campaigns. Section 402 Grants are jointly administered by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and FHWA.

MAP-21 made the following changes to the Section 402 Grants:

- States are required to include performance measures and targets in their annual Highway Safety Plan;
- Teen traffic safety programs are eligible grant activities; and
- Section 402 and 405 grant application deadlines were consolidated and set at July 1 of each fiscal year.

MAP-21 is set to expire on September 30, 2014. As a result, reauthorization of the federal surface transportation safety grant programs is a priority for the 113th Congress.

WITNESS LIST

The Honorable Christopher A. Hart
Vice Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board

Mr. Douglas B. Danko
Chairman
American Traffic Safety Services Association

Sgt. Thomas Fuller
New York State Police
On behalf of the Commercial Vehicle Safety Alliance

Mr. Kendall Poole
Director
Tennessee Governor's Highway Safety Office
On behalf of the Governors Highway Safety Association

Dr. Peter Sweatman
Director
University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute
On behalf of the Intelligent Transportation Society of America