

SHORT STATEMENT
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BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION OF THE
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS,
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
MAY 9, 2001

Good afternoon, Chairman Rogers and Members of the Subcommittee. I am honored to be invited to testify on behalf of the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA).

It has been just 16 months since FMCSA became an independent agency within the Department of Transportation. In this short time, we have made significant strides toward improving motor carrier safety. We have deployed more safety personnel in the field and

implemented a new organization. With our State safety partners, we have increased enforcement on motor carriers with poor safety performance. We set an ambitious goal for conducting compliance reviews, and we exceeded it. In February this year, we averaged 4.7 reviews per investigator. Since 1999, Federal compliance reviews have increased 130 percent, and enforcement cases have increased 75 percent. Since January 1 we have placed 64 carriers out-of-service when they refused to comply with safety regulations. Eighteen states are now participating in the Performance and Registration Information Systems Management (PRISM) program, and we expect 23 States to join by the end of FY 2002.

The 2002 budget proposed by President Bush

- 1) increases resources for State and Federal enforcement,
- 2) expands our long-term research and technology program,

- 3) enhances safety information and analysis systems,
- 4) improves commercial driver licensing, and
- 5) expands safety education programs.

Safety at the Southern Border

FMCSA is aggressively preparing for opening the Mexican border. I have just returned from my second visit to the Southern border and Mexico, where I met with State and Mexican enforcement representatives and Mexican carriers. Our primary focus is to ensure Mexican vehicles, drivers, and carriers comply with our safety regulations.

On May 3, we published proposed rules to establish application processes for operating authority that would assess Mexican carriers' safety compliance. Each Mexican carrier wishing to operate within or beyond the commercial zones must apply and receive authority, substantiating their knowledge of U.S. safety regulations and their intent to

comply with all requirements. Each application will be carefully reviewed and verified by FMCSA, and the safety performance of each carrier will be closely monitored.

Within the first 18 months of operation each carrier will be subjected to a safety review.

Working with our State partners, we will increase safety enforcement resources along the border. Currently, 60 full-time Federal inspectors and 178 full-time state personnel conduct inspections of commercial motor vehicles and drivers entering the U.S. from Mexico. Our budget request includes \$9.9 million to support the deployment of 80 additional Federal staff to the border and \$18 million to fund State personnel for an estimated combined enforcement staff of 496.

To provide for a safe opening of the U.S./ Mexico border, a total of \$31.9 million in increased program funds

is requested for both Federal and State activities. In addition, FHWA has requested that \$56.3 million be available in FY 2002 to build, improve, or upgrade State inspection facilities at ports of entry.

MCSAP & CDL

FMCSA is requesting \$160 million for MCSAP funding for States in FY 2002. This includes more than \$130 million for basic grants to States and more than \$11 million in incentive funds for States that show progress in reducing crashes and fatalities.

Driver error and driver-related factors are major contributors to commercial vehicle crashes. Improving commercial driver licensing and record keeping is one of the best ways to influence driver safety performance. This year FMCSA will award special grants to States to address specific CDL risks or challenges. In

FY 2002, a total of \$10 million in dedicated funding is requested to maintain the State CDL Improvement Program.

Last Friday, FMCSA issued the first of two notices of proposed rulemaking to implement changes in commercial driver licensing required by MCSIA. The proposed rules will disqualify commercial drivers for drug, alcohol, and other serious offenses committed while driving a passenger car.

Hours of Service

Last May FMCSA published a notice of proposed rulemaking to revise the limitations on commercial motor vehicle operators' hours of service. The proposed rule would put drivers on a 24-hour work-rest cycle and provide greater opportunity for drivers to obtain rest and restorative sleep. During the comment period FMCSA held 8 public

hearings and 3 two-day roundtables. We are now reviewing all comments and soon will decide the next steps in the process.

Commercial Passenger Carrier Safety

Recent tragedies in transporting students to special events are a great concern to FMCSA. We will initiate a new program of safety outreach to school districts and parent-teacher organizations to share information on selecting bus companies with good safety records for school trips. We will provide access to our data systems so they can identify which bus operators have the best safety records.

Motor Carrier Safety Research and Technology

To reach our ambitious goal for reducing fatalities and injuries, we need to develop and implement a strong research, development, and technology program. For 2002

we have asked for an increase of \$4 million for motor carrier safety research over the 2001 level of \$10 million.

FMCSA manages the commercial motor vehicle platform of the Intelligent Vehicle Initiative (IVI). We are currently developing technologies and testing their effectiveness for adoption by carriers across the country. Operational tests of warning systems for collisions, rollovers, hazardous locations, and lane departures are already underway. In 2002, we will begin tests of electronically controlled braking systems to reduce stopping distances and enhance stability, and tests of drowsy driver detection and warning devices.

FMCSA strives to be the performance benchmark for government agencies and we are proud of our achievements in our first year. I am proud of FMCSA's employees and their dedication to safety. They have worked hard to meet

Congressional directives in enforcement, standards, technology and safety education. Knowing we still have a long way to go, we have asked for the resources we need to make progress in the year ahead. I look forward to working with you Mr. Chairman, and the Subcommittee, and would be happy to answer any questions you may have.