

# NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

WASHINGTON, D.C.

ISSUED: May 3, 1978

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Forwarded to:

Honorable Karl S. Bowers  
Acting Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration  
Washington, D.C. 20590

SAFETY RECOMMENDATION(S)

H-78-20

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The National Transportation Safety Board has recently completed a safety effectiveness evaluation of the National Accident Sampling System (NASS). <sup>1/</sup> This evaluation was requested by the Subcommittee on Transportation and Related Agencies of the Senate Appropriations Committee. It was performed under specific authority contained in the Independent Safety Board Act of 1974.

As proposed, NASS is designed "to produce nationally representative accident data with sufficient accuracy and detail to provide an objective means of setting and evaluating many motor vehicle and highway safety standards." Should these general objectives be fulfilled, the Safety Board believes NASS will benefit highway safety. In fact, the lack of definitive, reliable, nationally representative data in the highway mode is one of the most critical problems that exists today in transportation safety.

The Safety Board evaluation has discovered that the NASS program, as planned for the next 5 or more years, falls short of its publicly stated objectives. Specifically, the program emphasizes motor vehicle crashworthiness and excludes for the most part data that would contribute to accident prevention research and countermeasure development. Especially conspicuous is the lack of data on important problem areas in the highway environment.

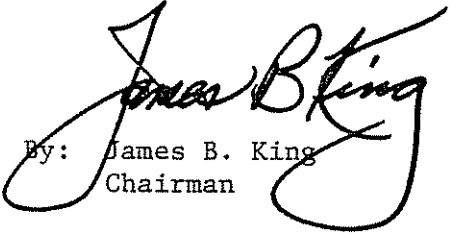
<sup>1/</sup> "Safety Effectiveness Evaluation of the National Accident Sampling System" (Report No. NTSB-SEE-78-1, adopted March 2, 1978).

The need for highway-related data was illustrated in 1977. The FHWA, in its proposed rulemaking for "Design Standards for Highways" stated that "...good conclusive data is just not available on the safety sensitivity of individual or interacting geometric design elements." The Board recognizes that FHWA is aware of some important data needs. It is unaware, however, of any comprehensive study in existence or underway to identify problem areas and data needed to adequately research, design, and evaluate countermeasures. Both NHTSA and FHWA need the results of such a comprehensive study.

Therefore, the National Transportation Safety Board recommends that the Federal Highway Administration:

Conduct a comprehensive study to identify highway safety accident problem factors for which data must be collected to identify the problem magnitude, and support research and countermeasure formulation. Such problem factors should include elements such as geometric design factors, roadway surface skid resistance qualities, traffic control devices, traffic barrier systems, roadside hazards, and other factors related to highway operational safety. This study should be designed to support both the NHTSA NASS program as well as the activities of FHWA and State and local agencies involved in highway safety. (H-78-20)  
(Class II, Priority Action)

KING, Chairman, McADAMS, HOGUE, and DRIVER, Members, concurred in the above recommendation.

  
By: James B. King  
Chairman