



November 25, 2019

Mr. James Owens
Acting Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue S.E., West Building
Washington D.C. 20590-0001

Subject: Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM): Rear Seat Belt Use Warning Systems,
NHTSA Docket No. 2019-0093

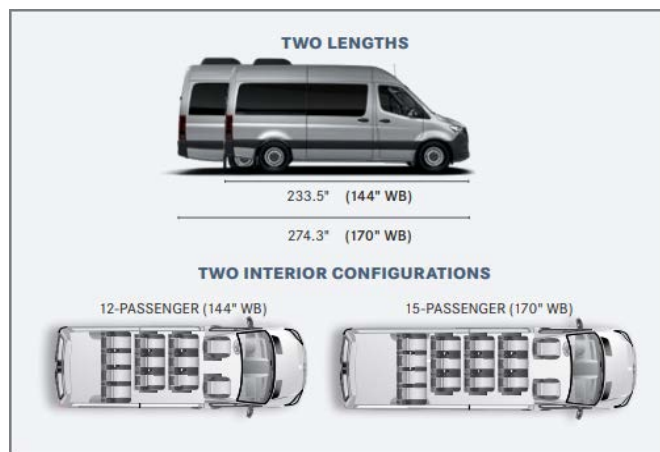
Dear Mr. Owens,

Mercedes-Benz USA, LLC, on behalf of both itself and its parent company Mercedes-Benz AG (hereinafter together, "MBUSA") is pleased to submit the following comments in response to the ANPRM published in the Federal Register on September 27, 2019. As a member of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers (the "Alliance"), we contributed to, and fully support the comments submitted by the Alliance to the dockets on the subject ANPRM. We offer the following comments in addition to those of the Alliance.

MBUSA believes that a regulatory approach to rear seat belt reminders (SBR) must harmonize with UN-R16/07 Suppl. 2, S8.4.4.

Exemption for Removable Seats

High-occupancy vans pose unique challenges regarding the implementation of rear seat belt reminders (SBR). Of particular interest for our company, the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter passenger van is available in two wheelbase configurations, and with varied and removable seating configurations can accommodate up to 13 rear passengers as depicted below:





The ANPRM states that “a rear-belt warning system may therefore present potential wiring complexities, particularly in vehicles with removable, folding, rotating, or stowable seats.” To enable seat belt reminders for all seating positions in the Sprinter, each vehicle configuration would require not only a significant re-design of the electrical architecture, but also the driver notification interface as well as the wire harness packaging/routing. While a feasible solution to these design challenges is possible, the complexity and timing associated with the development of such a robust system is particularly challenging. As noted in the comments submitted by the Alliance, S15.6 of UN-R16/07 Suppl. 2 allows an exemption from the rear SBR requirements for vehicles with removable rear seats. In acknowledgement of the technical challenges associated with removable seats, ECE R16 expressly states that a “safety-belt reminder is not compulsory on removable rear seats and on any seat in a row in which there is a suspension seat” for type approvals prior to Sept 1, 2022. Moreover, this exclusion permits existing vehicle architecture to defer implementation of rear seat belt reminders until the vehicle architecture is replaced.

In light of the significant technical challenges associated with this category of vehicles, MBUSA suggests that in the event that rear seat belt reminders are nevertheless mandated in an FMVSS, phase-in for high-occupancy van/bus vehicles should exempt existing architectures until the vehicles are updated (or replaced) with a new structural and electrical architecture.

Compliance Options

Within the RFC, NHTSA seeks comment on compliance options for the warning system requirements. Specifically, the agency questions whether occupant detection should be required for compliance, or whether other compliance options that do not require occupant detection should be allowed. MBUSA again refers to the requirements contained within ECE R16 in which vehicles may demonstrate compliance using either approach. We believe that it is important to allow manufacturers the flexibility to implement systems that fulfill customer expectations for a given vehicle design. Therefore, MBUSA urges the agency to harmonize with the compliance requirements allowed in ECE R16.

We appreciate this opportunity to comment and look forward to further collaboration with the Agency as it considers the issue discussed. If you have any questions or concerns regarding our response, please do not hesitate to contact Mark Gielow at mark.gielow@daimler.com.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Thomas Brunner", is located above the printed name.

R. Thomas Brunner
Senior Principal
Technical Compliance