November 1, 2019

Mohammad Aminy, CHST, CESCO, STS-C

Sacramento, CA

U.S. Department of Transportation

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, West Building Ground Floor, Room W12-140,

Washington, DC 20590-0001

Re: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA),

Proposed Rule (49 CFR Part 571)

[Docket No. NHTSA–2019–0093]

This document has been created in response to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), request for public comment on the advanced notice of proposal rule on Federal Register / Vol. 84, No. 188 / on Friday, September 27, 2019. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) should be praised on their efforts to promote the requirement of seat belt use warning system for rear seats. The requirement of the seat belt use warning systems would significantly reduce fatality rates. Seat belts are effective in most types of crashes. “Research has found that seat belts greatly reduce the risk of fatal and non-fatal injuries compared to the risk faced by unrestrained occupants. Unbelted occupants are overrepresented in fatal crashes. For rear seat occupants, seat belts reduce the risk of fatality by 55 percent (for passenger cars) and 74 percent (for light trucks and vans)” (Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards: Occupant Crash Protection). As you can see from the quote above research has found that seat belts greatly reduce the risk of fatal and non-fatal injuries in comparison to unrestrained occupants. Seat belt warning systems are more needed for rear seats since rear seat belt use is less utilized compared to the front seats. I believe seat belt warning systems are essential for both front and rear seats.

The Executive Summary of the proposed rule states that The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act of 2012 (MAP-21) directs the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to initiate a rulemaking proceeding to amend Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) No. 208, “Occupant crash protection,” to require a seat belt use warning system for rear seats.” (Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards: Occupant Crash Protection). MAP 21 is an achievement for the U.S. economy and the Nation's surface transportation program. By changing the approach and automatic structure for ventures to manage the systems growth and advancement, MAP-21 makes a streamlined and execution-based surface transportation program and expands on many of the bike, transit, the highway, and pedestrian programs and guidelines built in 1991.

The Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS) No. 208 only requires driver seats to have seat belt warning systems no other seats within the vehicle. Many present vehicles also have seat belt warning systems for the passenger seat, even though it is not required. In 2019, some vehicle manufacturers offer vehicles with seat belt warning systems for rear seats. Ford, Toyota, Mazda, Jaguar, Volvo, and Land Rover offer cars for sale in the U.S. that is equipped with rear seat belt warning systems. Seat belt warning systems typically consist of visual and/or audible signals. Visual signals that is visible to the driver display which seat belts are in use.

On page 51077, The federal register (FR) states, “In 2012, Congress passed MAP–21. That law requires DOT to initiate a rulemaking proceeding to amend FMVSS No. 208 to provide a safety belt use warning system for designated seating positions in the rear seat.” Due to the MAP-21 being passed, NHTA started a rulemaking proceeding when it submitted for public comment a proposal to commence a study about the success of existing rear seat belt warning systems. The study showed positive results from drivers stating that the rear seat belt warning system increased the use of rear seat belts.

Over time NHTA, used a range of techniques to increase seat belt use, along with sponsoring national media campaigns, presenting help to states enacting seat belt use legal guidelines and high-visibility enforcement campaigns, and facilitating or requiring vehicle-based strategies. Some of these techniques are non-regulatory; some are regulatory. NHTSA has applied a variety of non-regulatory strategies to increase seat belt use, such as the annual Click It or Ticket mobilization, which consists of a country wide advertising marketing campaign backed up by using high-visibility local enforcement of state seat belt laws. Some states with obligatory rear seat belt laws encompass rear-seat specific messaging in their media campaigns.

The NHTSA seeks comment on a variety of issues related to amending FMVSS No. 208 to require a rear seat belt warning system. NHTSA is thinking about proposing a range of minimum necessities for a back-seat belt warning system. There is an assortment of parts of the conceivable proposed needs that NHTSA seeks comment on. NHTSA mainly looks for any information identified with these issues. The first question that NHTSA asks comment on is:

* Should the warning be visual-only, audible-only, or audio-visual?

I believe warnings should be audio-visual. In my opinion, the use of audible only or visual-only will not provide the necessary notification to alert the driver and or passenger that their seat belt is unbuckled. Before and during the drive, the warning systems should be audio-visual for both the drivers and passengers. Also, NHTSA research displays that audible warnings in combination with visual signals are generally more effective then icons or texts. The cost and benefits of these systems might initially be costly, but the end outcome will significantly benefit all car manufacturers and owners and will save many lives. Another issue that NHTSA seeks comment on is warning systems that utilize occupant detection.

Rear seat warning systems that include occupant detection have probable advantages over systems that do not use it. A warning system equipped with occupant detection can provide more informative warnings. The equipped system can determine whether the seats are occupied by an unbelted occupant, as opposed to merely informing the driver which or how many seat belts are fastened. These enhanced systems are also better able to target audible warnings or more extended period visual warnings accurately. An audible or longer period visual warning that activates for an unoccupied seat could be an irritation for the driver. It can either numb the occupants to the warning signal or make them avoid the system. In my view, occupant detection is essential because if the warning system is not equipped with occupant detection, then you will get false warnings even when placing a heavy bag on the seats of your vehicle. Also, another issue without an occupant detection system is the possible chance of passenger avoidance of seat belt warning systems by merely buckling the seat belt restraint behind him/her, and therefore shutting off the alarm without having obeyed the purpose of the warning alarm.

In summation, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) should be applauded on their efforts to encourage the requirement of the rear seat belt warning system. I believe the obligation of the rear seat belt warning systems would significantly reduce injury and fatality rates.

References

Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards: Occupant Crash Protection. (n.d.). Retrieved November 24, 2019, from <https://www.regulations.gov/document?D=NHTSA-2019-0093-0001>

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century. (n.d.). Retrieved from

https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/map21/.