



Saving lives through research and education

August 12, 2009

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama,

We're writing to you about a public health issue of great importance for all Americans, one that has long been under-appreciated and one that cries out for new Federal leadership. This is a problem that has taken the lives of over one million Americans over the past quarter century and remains today the leading cause of death for Americans between 1 and 34 years of age. That problem is the disease of mobility and the countless number of injuries and deaths associated with motor vehicle crashes.

Historically, Federal transportation leaders have consistently declared "safety" as their top priority, but concrete actions have rarely matched the rhetoric. Moreover, motorists, key transportation stakeholders and society, in general, are very complacent regarding this problem, and essentially accept these injuries and deaths as costs we must pay to achieve the mobility we enjoy. Most frustratingly, the overwhelming reality is that most of this carnage could be reduced or eliminated if we had the political courage to allocate significant resources for traffic safety research and the adoption of proven solutions.

Recently, we convened the first ever *National Rural Summit on Traffic Safety Culture* to examine these issues, seek ways to reduce the complacency and devise strategies to realize enduring, significant improvements in traffic safety. As part of those discussions, the participants of the summit adopted the enclosed "resolution" asking that you should convene a *White House Conference on Highway Safety*. We recognize that your Administration's plate is already quite full, but we most sincerely hope that you will accept this recommendation and work with the highway safety community to convene such an event. A primary responsibility of any government is to protect the health and lives of the population it serves, and traffic safety is one of the most important and ignored public health issues we face today. A White House conference would provide incalculable benefits to those of us who are striving to deal with these problems.

As traffic safety professionals, one death is unacceptable, but one death every thirteen minutes (the current statistical average for traffic deaths) is an outrage, and demands "new emphasis." We hope you agree!

Therefore, on behalf of the traffic safety community, we most respectfully request your consideration of this request, and urge your administration to place a higher priority of highway safety. We look forward to working with you and your Administration to make this a reality.

Yours truly,



J. Peter Kissinger
President and CEO
AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety



Steve Albert
Director
Western Transportation Institute

Cc: Ray LaHood
United States Secretary of Transportation

National Rural Summit on Traffic Safety Culture
Resolution
June 22, 2009

Whereas, a cross-section of the transportation community has gathered at the first National Rural Summit on Traffic Safety Culture,

Whereas, over one million men, women and children have been killed in motor vehicle crashes over the past quarter century,

Whereas, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for Americans between 1 and 34 years of age,

Whereas, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death from accidental injury for Americans of all ages,

Whereas, the annual socioeconomic loss associated with motor vehicle crashes is estimated to be more than \$300 billion,

Whereas, despite substantial reductions in motor vehicle fatalities the past two years, the scope and magnitude of the highway safety problem represents a major public health crisis,

Whereas, public attention and investments in highway safety pale in comparison to other public health issues,

Whereas, effective countermeasures are known and yet have not been implemented widely due to lack of funding and political will,

Whereas, we know dramatic crash reductions are possible from the experience in other countries

Now, therefore be it resolved, that President Obama should convene a White House Conference (National Summit) on Highway Safety to develop a national highway safety plan that will result in fewer crashes, injuries and deaths, and huge cost savings, and an enhanced traffic safety culture throughout the country.