

February 12, 2025

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman, Transportation and Infrastructure
1135 Longworth House Office Building
Washington DC 20510

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member, Transportation and Infrastructure
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen,

On behalf of the National Work Zone Safety Coalition (the coalition), thank you for making roadway safety a top, bipartisan priority for the committee. The coalition appreciates the valuable opportunity provided for stakeholder engagement during the hearing *"America Builds: A Review of Programs to Address Roadway Safety"*. Our coalition represents wide-ranging and diverse stakeholders in the road construction industry, including equipment manufacturers, project planning and design engineers, traffic safety experts, and road/bridge construction contractors. We all have a shared priority: get workers safely home to their families.

Sadly, over the past several years, fatalities and injuries in highway work zones have continued to increase. In 2022, 891 people lost their lives in work zones and an additional 37,000 were injured. Many of these injuries and fatalities can be attributed to, or exacerbated by, driver behavior, including driving under the influence, speeding, and aggressive or distracted driving. Congress has an opportunity during the next highway reauthorization to advance and support state Departments of Transportation (DOTs) and the road construction industry on this critical topic – enhancing work zone safety (WZS). For example, numerous states have initiated and adopted best practices and laws, such as "move over" legislation, which requires drivers to slow down and/or move over when they approach emergency and road construction vehicles. States have also seen better (work zone) safety outcomes by increasing enforcement of speeding and distracted / drunk driving. In addition to increased enforcement, education for new and young drivers can also help change driver behavior, long term. For example, last year Oklahoma became the first state to require specific work zone training for student drivers – and by the end of this calendar year, they will have trained over 100,000 students.

While different states work to implement many of the safety initiatives above, it is imperative that Congress supports those state efforts that help keep road construction workers and the motoring public safe. Below are several opportunities that the coalition believes will make work zones safer and ultimately save lives. We look toward Congress to support the initiatives below.

- 1). Create a federal work zone safety task group between state DOTs, Federal Highway Administration, law enforcement, road construction industry leaders, and traffic safety experts to provide recommendations to Congress and states on effective strategies, initiatives, and best practices to keep road workers safe.
- 2). Implement the federally allocated Work Zone Safety Contingency Funds (WZSCFs) in all 50 states. Currently, these funds have been adopted and used only in a handful of states, such as Texas, Michigan, and Washington. WZSCFs were established by a bipartisan provision in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act and were designed to cover cost escalation on road construction projects where unforeseen safety concerns were not identified prior to project award. These funds can be used for any additional safety measures, including police presence, traffic barriers, and signage, among others.

3). Prioritize educating the next generation of drivers by requiring or incentivizing all 50 states to implement work zone safety education in their driver education programs.

4). Incentivize states, when possible, to close roads during active construction. This provides the clearest and best working environment for highway workers and the motoring public, while also decreasing mobilization costs and speeding up project delivery.

Thank you for considering the above initiatives and we welcome further dialogue. Please feel free to utilize the National Work Zone Safety Coalition as a resource, as you draft the next highway reauthorization. If you have any questions or would like more information about any of the content above, please reach out to Mitch Baldwin <mbaldwin@asphaltpavement.org>, Director of Government Affairs at the National Asphalt Pavement Association (443-440-2044).

Sincerely,

National Asphalt Pavement Association

American Traffic Safety Services Association

Associated General Contractors

Portland Cement Association

National Sand, Stone and Gravel Association

National Ready Mixed Concrete Association

American Concrete Pavement Association

Associated Equipment Distributors

Association of Equipment Manufactures

American Society of Civil Engineers

Cc:

The Honorable David Rouzer, Chairman, Highways and Transit Subcommittee

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton, Ranking Member, Highways and Transit Subcommittee