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Large Truck AEB Rulemaking Offers Secretary Buttigieg Legacy-Defining Opportunity to Address America's Truck Crash Crisis

Washington, DC – Opportunities to drastically reduce truck crash deaths and injuries are rare. Crash causality and prevention are dependent on a multitude of factors. What if low-cost technology existed that could prevent or drastically reduce the severity of half of all large truck front-end collisions?

This technology has existed for years in the form of Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB). It has been required on large trucks in Europe since 2013 and recommended by the National Transportation Safety Board since 2015.^{1 2} Recently, Congress finally required the US DOT (Department of Transportation) to minimally require this technology on all newly manufactured heavy trucks (26,000+ lbs.) in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). However, nothing prevents US DOT from using this opportunity to issue a rule that will require AEB on all Commercial Motor Vehicles (CMVs), including Medium-Duty Trucks (10,000+ lbs.).

US DOT has reportedly advanced a proposed rule that is under 90-day review at the Office of Management Budget.³ Truck Safety Coalition (TSC) Board President and truck crash victim, Tami Friedrich, hopes it meets the moment, "If Secretary Buttigieg is serious about making meaningful progress toward zero roadway fatalities, he does not have a choice. Allowing Medium-Duty Trucks to be exempt from AEB is nonsensical for an agency that touts safety as its top priority. "

¹ UN ECE Regulation No. 131.

² National Transportation Safety Board. 2015. The Use of Forward Collision Avoidance Systems to Prevent and Mitigate Rear-End Crashes. Special Investigation Report NTSB/SIR-15-01. Washington, DC.

³ <https://www.freightwaves.com/news/nhtsa-truck-brake-rule-under-review-at-omb>

Existing research supports an AEB requirement for all large trucks. A study conducted by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) in 2020 concluded that AEB would prove effective in 41% of Heavy-Duty Truck front to rear crashes and a 2022 special study published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) found that AEB would likely prove effective in 56% of relevant Medium-Duty Truck crashes.^{4 5} When one considers that 60% of all large truck crashes the initial point of impact is the front of the large truck, the life-saving impact of AEB is overwhelming. No other proven and available countermeasure exists capable of preventing thousands of crashes.

America is in the midst of a truck crash crisis. Since 2009, truck crash deaths have increased by 71% with 5,700 lives lost and nearly 155,000 injured in 2021 (the most recent year for which data is available).⁶ Fatalities to large truck occupants (largely truck drivers) surged past 1,000 for the first time in nearly 30 years. Driving a large truck has become nearly twice as deadly as wielding a firearm and protecting the public every day as a law enforcement officer.⁷ Failing to act is unacceptable and invites carnage, casualties, and incalculable suffering to continue unabated on our roads and highways.

"AEB is effective even when humans make poor choices, whether it be distraction, fatigue, drug use, or speeding. This is a slam dunk for public and truck driver safety. On behalf of our truck crash victim and survivor community, I urge Secretary Buttigieg to advance a rule that requires AEB on all CMVs," said TSC Executive Director, Zach Cahalan. This week, TSC launched its "[Brakes for Life's Sake](#)" Campaign and encourages interested stakeholders to learn more and support this lifesaving initiative.

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The Truck Safety Coalition (TSC) is a partnership between Citizens for Reliable and Safe Highways (CRASH), also known as The CRASH Foundation, and Parents Against Tired Truckers (P.A.T.T.). The Truck Safety Coalition is dedicated to reducing the number of deaths and injuries caused by truck-related crashes, providing compassionate support to truck crash survivors and families of truck crash victims, and educating the public, policymakers, and the media about truck safety issues. Visit our website at <https://trucksafety.org>

⁴ IIHS, Effectiveness of front crash prevention systems in reducing large truck crash rates, September 2020, Available at: <https://www.iihs.org/topics/bibliography/ref/2211>.

⁵ NHTSA, Medium-Truck Special Study, September 2022. DOT HS 813 371.

⁶ Overview of Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes in 2021, NHTSA, Apr. 2023, DOT HS 813 435.

⁷ <https://nleomf.org/memorial/facts-figures/officer-fatalities-by-state/latest-fatality-reports/>