

September 18, 2020

The Honorable Terry Canales  
Texas House of Representatives  
Mr. Chairman and Members of the House Transportation Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to address the committee on Interim Charge 2 – transportation and road safety efforts to end traffic deaths in Texas by 2050. AAA Texas, a.k.a., the auto club, is a 116-year-old member service organization created soon after the horseless carriage came on the scene. From the beginning, traffic safety has been a fundamental part of AAA's mission to make driving safer for everyone. In 1947, the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety (AAA Foundation) was founded to develop research and education with the goal of saving lives by preventing traffic crashes and reducing injuries when crashes occur.

**By the numbers...** Distracted driving kills an average of 9 people and injures more than 1,000 every day in the US and the biggest single distracted driving problem is the cellphone. Last year in Texas, distracted driving was involved in 17.4% of all crashes, (97,853). And, of those crashes, more than 2,800 resulted serious injury or death.

**The danger...** An AAA Foundation study, "Crash Risk of Cellphone Use While Driving," found that drivers' odds of crash involvement nearly doubled when they were engaging in all forms of visual-manual cell phone tasks taken together and more than doubled when they were texting, compared with when the same drivers were under similar traffic and environmental conditions without engaging in any visible non-driving tasks. The effect of visual-manual cell phone interactions on drivers' odds of crash involvement was greatest for types of crashes in which the driver played a clear active role. This resulted in triple the drivers' odds of involvement in a road departure crash. And, it also increased drivers' odds of rear-ending the vehicle ahead by more than a multiple of seven.

**Driver Survey Results...** The AAA Foundation's "2019 Traffic Safety Culture Index" findings

- **Do as I say, not as I do...** While a majority of drivers view typing (96.2%), reading (94.3%), and talking (79.7%) on a hand-held cellphone while driving to be very or extremely dangerous. Nevertheless, 43.2% drivers report having driven while talking on a hand-held cellphone at least once in the past 30 days.
- **Support for legislation...** A majority of drivers support laws against distracted driving, with over 76% of drivers supporting a law against holding and talking on a cellphone.

While AAA Texas and other traffic safety organizations provide educational efforts to prevent cellphone use while driving, more is needed to stop this dangerous and often deadly practice. AAA respectfully asks the committee to pass legislation next session that bans handheld cellphones and provides tools to enforce the law.

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