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REPORT SHOWS SAFETY NEEDS OF OLDER DRIVERS ACCELERATING

Older Driver Daily Trips Up 77%

Fredericksburg, VA, June 14, 2002 – A new analysis of leading research indicates rapid change in the demand placed on America's roadways by a burgeoning population of older drivers. The report, entitled "The State of the Nation's Roadway Safety for Older Drivers," highlights several key findings:

- The number of daily vehicle trips per older adult (aged 65 and over) driver rose 77% in the 12 years between 1983 and 1995, from 1.7 to 2.9.[1]
- The daily number of vehicle miles per older adult driver rose 98% during that period, from 9.8 to 19.6.[2]
- Approximately 70% of men aged 85 and older are licensed to drive. This is an increase of 25% in the 12 years from 1983 to 1995. More than 90% of men aged 65 to 74, and 75% of the women in that age group, are licensed to drive.[3]
- Based on current data, the number of older driver traffic fatalities is expected to more than triple by the year 2030 (from 8141 in 2000 to 23,121 in 2030) – reaching a rate 35% greater than the total number of alcohol-related traffic fatalities in 1995.[4]

"We have run out of time to *plan* for the needs of older drivers," said Kathi Holst, President of The American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA), as she prepared for a symposium on roadway safety hosted by the Environment and Public Works Committee of the U.S. Senate. "The car is already out of the garage. Of all the older driver issues we must balance – safer cars, safer drivers, or safer roads – safer roads offer the quickest and least expensive reduction in injuries and fatalities – and, not insignificantly, the greatest benefit to all roadway users."

Studies show that many age-related driving vulnerabilities are reduced through the use of existing safety features that can be easily implemented in the normal course of roadway maintenance, in the process of design for new roadways, or in the resolution of roadway "hot

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[1] 1995 Nationwide Personal Transportation Survey (and previous NPTS,1983 & 1990)
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Mobility and Independence: Changes and Challenges for Older Drivers, Jon E. Burkhardt et al, in cooperation with U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services, July 1998.

spots." Research has pinpointed ways in which signage, pavement markings and roadway delineation, for instance, can be applied according to standards that better reflect the needs of older drivers. Intersection design alterations that mitigate common older driver disadvantages are well documented. Changes as simple as where signs are placed to provide advance notice of roadway changes (such as curves or exits), and how information is communicated on those signs (improved graphics, simplified messages), have been carefully researched. More complex engineering issues, such as optimal acceleration/deceleration lane lengths and intersection angles, have also been informed by extensive research.

Among roadway safety improvements recommended by the Federal Highway Administration in its landmark "Guidelines and Recommendations to Accommodate Older Drivers and Pedestrians"[5] (May 2001), many represent the lowest cost, highest return on investment roadway safety features available. Pavement markings, for instance, offer a benefit/cost ratio of $60:$1[6], followed by lighting at $26.8:$1[7] and traffic signs at $22.4:$1.[8]

"Mobility is a core component of America's prosperity," Holst adds. "If we allow the isolation of older Americans, we are cutting ourselves off from their contributions to our society and our economy. It is time to address the ways in which our roadways can protect older Americans' access to the quality of life they have earned."

The American Traffic Safety Services Association (ATSSA) represents the roadway safety construction industry. Its 1900 members include transportation officials and the manufacturers, installers, and distributors of traffic control measures such as pavement markings, signage, and channelizing devices. For more information, go to www.atssa.com.

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[5] Staplin et al, U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Publication No.FHWA-RD-O1-051

[6] Dr. Ted R. Miller, National Public Services Research Institute, Public Roads Magazine, March 1993

[7] FHWA 1996 Annual Report on Highway Safety Improvement Programs

[8] Ibid.