



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

**Federal Motor Carrier  
Safety Administration**

**Administrator**

January 17, 2013

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski  
Chairwoman  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Ms. Chairwoman:

Senate Report 112-157 accompanying the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill, 2013 (S. 2322), requested the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) to work with the U.S. Department of Transportation's Volpe Center to develop a mechanism to fairly establish crash accountability and how it weighs on a carrier's Safety Measurement System (SMS) score and to report on its progress. This letter report fulfills that request.

The Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) program is an FMCSA initiative committed to preventing crashes, injuries, and fatalities related to large trucks and buses. The FMCSA deployed SMS to identify motor carriers' safety problems earlier, through improved use of data. The SMS quantifies the on-road safety performance of carriers and drivers to identify candidates for CSA interventions. The SMS assesses motor carriers' safety performance considering all safety-based inspection violations and State-reported crashes, using 24 months of performance data from FMCSA's Motor Carrier Management Information System.

The SMS uses seven Behavior Analysis and Safety Improvement Categories (BASICS) to sort violation information and identify motor carriers that pose the highest safety risk. The Crash Indicator BASIC tracks crash involvement, using State-reported crashes, but it does not include a determination of the motor carrier's role in the crash. However, previous analysis shows that the Crash Indicator BASIC, even based on crash involvement alone, is a strong predictor of future crash risk.

The Crash Indicator BASIC has been a topic of interest to both the industry and safety advocates, and FMCSA is taking their feedback into account. The industry believes that crashes should not be displayed publically on a motor carrier's record unless a preventability review has determined the motor carrier was responsible or accountable. Safety advocates, on the other hand, want access to information on all crashes and support the current Crash Indicator BASIC, citing research that has shown that crash involvement is a good predictor of future crashes. Other stakeholders are interested in the process to determine crash weightings to ensure that public input is considered.

The Agency has initiated a Crash Weighting Research Plan that outlines the research goals and approach to support an equitable mechanism for crash weighting.<sup>1</sup> To better assess a carrier's role in crashes, FMCSA's research plan addresses three objectives: 1) determine whether Police Accident Reports (PAR) from across the nation provide sufficient, consistent, and reliable information to support crash weighting determinations; 2) assess whether a carrier's role in a crash is a stronger predictor of future crash risk than crash involvement alone, and, if so, how crash weighting should be implemented in the SMS; and 3) evaluate how the Agency could use additional data in the determination process to allow for public input.

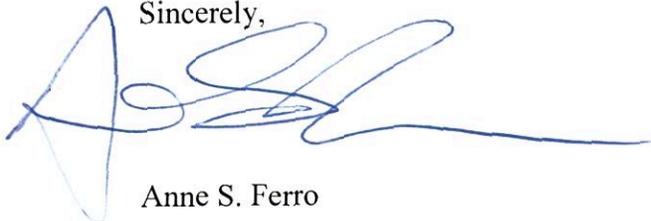
Among the elements of this research plan, which will be completed by summer 2013, are the following:

- A literature review assessing relevant analyses in academia that could be considered or applied to crash weighting.
- An examination of the crash weighting process to determine if it is a stronger predictor of future crash risk than crash involvement alone. The FMCSA and the Volpe Center will further assess the data collected to identify how crash weighting determinations can be implemented in the SMS by optimizing crash weights.
- A nationwide assessment and analysis of the accuracy, consistency, and sufficiency of PARs, including looking into any additional information that should supplement the PAR for maximum reliability. This effort builds on FMCSA's Crash Accountability Feasibility Study and will compare information on the PAR to other data sources.

Once this analysis is complete, FMCSA will develop a proposal and seek public input to ensure that any crash weighting methodology improves safety. The Agency's commitment to safety is the basis of the approach described above to developing an effective and equitable crash weighting mechanism.

A similar letter has been sent to the Ranking Member of the Senate Committee on Appropriations and to the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the Senate Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies; the House Committee on Appropriations; and the House Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development, and Related Agencies.

Sincerely,



Anne S. Ferro

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<sup>1</sup> "The Crash Weighting Research Plan," dated July 23, 2012, can be found on the Internet at [http://csa.fmcsa.dot.gov/documents/CrashWeightingResearchPlan\\_7-2012.pdf](http://csa.fmcsa.dot.gov/documents/CrashWeightingResearchPlan_7-2012.pdf)