

usefulness of these data for all highway safety related activities, not the least of which is the potential for injury and fatality data to become an increasingly valuable resource for purposes of more pinpointed problem identification.

Uniform Data

NHTSA and FHWA support the ANSI Standard D20.1, Data Element Dictionary for Traffic Record Systems, and ANSI Standard D16.1, Manual on Classification of Motor Vehicle Traffic Accidents. Neither, however, specifies those variables and elements that should be included in a typical motor vehicle crash reporting system or identifies those variables which, if collected and automated, would be appropriate for a full range of problem identification and analytical activities.

NHTSA's most recent activity to focus on standardized data was its development of the CADRE (Critical Automated Data Reporting Elements). CADRE is a set of variables NHTSA believes, if uniformly collected, would improve the usability of state crash data for analytical purposes. CADRE was not intended to serve as a minimal set of elements to cover all aspects of crash data collection. Although the definition of variables to be collected on police crash reports is clearly a state determination, the lack of standardization both of variables across states and of the application of variable definitions within states makes comparison and analysis difficult for all highway safety data users.

Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA)

On December 18, 1991, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) (Pub. L. 102-240) was signed into law. Section 2002 (a) of ISTEA was enacted to ensure national uniform data on traffic related deaths and injuries in the U.S. It requires that the following action be taken:

The Secretary shall establish a highway safety program for the collection and reporting of data on traffic related deaths and injuries by the States. Under such program, the States shall collect and report such data as the Secretary may require. The purposes of the program are to ensure national uniform data on such deaths and injuries and to allow the Secretary to make determinations for use in developing programs to reduce such deaths and injuries and making recommendations to Congress concerning legislation necessary to implement such programs. The program shall include information obtained by the Secretary under section 4007¹ of the Intermodal Surface

Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 and provide for annual reports to the Secretary on the efforts being made by the States in reducing deaths and injuries occurring at highway construction sites and the effectiveness and results of such efforts. The Secretary shall establish minimum reporting criteria for the program. Such criteria shall include, but not be limited to, criteria on deaths and injuries resulting from police pursuits, school bus accidents, and speeding, on traffic-related deaths and injuries at highway construction sites and on the configuration of commercial motor vehicles involved in motor vehicle accidents.

In 1994, NHTSA began a strategic planning process intended to develop a comprehensive, long-range approach to crash and injury prevention. NHTSA's Strategic Plan was crafted to support the goals of DOT's Strategic Plan and the legislative mandates of the Agency. Eleven strategic goals were developed and derived from the Agency's mission. One of these goals addressed the improvement of data collection and analysis so as to "better identify and understand problems and to support and evaluate programs"

Uniform Data Issues

Section 2002(a) of ISTEA requires the Secretary to "establish a highway safety program for the collection and reporting of data." It further provides that the Secretary "shall establish minimum reporting criteria for the program," and that "the states shall collect and report such data as the Secretary requires." The Agency solicits comments on these requirements, and is particularly interested in answers to the following questions:

1. Commenters should indicate whether they believe there is a need to create a set of uniform definitions for all states to use and should provide a rationale for their position. How would data analysis activities for which commenters have responsibility, use, or benefit from, be specifically affected by having a uniform set of definitions? Is there already an acceptable level of uniformity? If yes, please provide a basis for that determination.

2. If commenters support the development of a uniform set of elements, they should indicate what they believe to be the best way to go about establishing standard or uniform data elements or sets. Who would be best qualified to take on this task? What forum should be used to explore the establishment and adoption of a national uniform data set: a series of public meetings? another **Federal Register** Notice? Other?

3. Commenters should identify financial impacts of establishing a uniform system and assess their capability to meet those funding commitments. What solutions might be proposed to accomplish this? Commenters should describe what they see as DOT's role in establishing and implementing such a system, the state's role, and the role of the highway safety community.

4. Besides the CADRE elements, commenters should indicate what other elements might serve as a core set of elements sufficient to allow for meaningful inter/intrastate comparisons and analyses. Are there any CADRE elements that should be deleted? If so, please include a rationale.

5. If commenters have adopted some or all of the CADRE elements, what adjustments were made to the police accident report (PAR) to accommodate this activity? If commenters have made a decision not to adopt CADRE, what are the impediments to implementation that have been identified? What nationally uniform data elements would the commenter consider adopting?

Minimum Reporting Criteria Issues

Section 2002(a) provides that the Secretary shall establish "minimum reporting criteria" and that the criteria "shall include, but not be limited to, criteria on deaths and injuries resulting from police pursuits, school bus accidents, and speeding, on traffic-related deaths and injuries at highway construction sites and on the configuration of commercial motor vehicles involved in motor vehicle accidents."

Many states currently collect some information about these crash characteristics on their PARs. However, not all states do so, and for those that do, the data definitions and variables collected vary widely. Included below is a brief discussion of issues relating to each of these areas and questions to which NHTSA seeks input from commenters.

Police Pursuits

To determine the nature and extent of the relationship of police pursuit to motor vehicle crashes, DOT believes it may be useful to develop a uniform definition of police pursuit and a data element(s) to properly identify and code whether a police pursuit may have been a contributing factor to a crash. Since the 1994 Fatal Accident Reporting System (FARS) data collection year, police pursuit has been coded as a special circumstance in the Accident Level-Related Factors section and also as a factor in the Driver Level section.

¹ The reference to Section 4007 is incorrect. We believe the intended reference was Section 4003,

which added a new section 407 to Part A of title IV of the Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1982 (49 U.S.C. App. 2301-2305).