



February 4, 2021

Representative Dan Ruby  
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Chairman Ruby and Members of the House Transportation Committee,

While AAA is not philosophically opposed to raising a given speed limit, we have reservations regarding the proposal to increase the limits on interstate highways in North Dakota as proposed in HB 1315. While it is true today's vehicles are safer, it can be argued that those driving them are not. Impairment, distractions, aggression, not using seat belts and exceeding safe speeds, among others, all contribute to an unacceptable level of death and injury on our roads. In forming your decision on HB 1315, AAA asks you to consider the following:

- Raising speed limits leads to more deaths. Research shows that as speeds go up, so do fatal crashes. A 2016 study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety found that during a 20-year period (1993-2013) each 5 mph increase in the maximum stated speed limit was associated with an 8-percent increase in fatality rates on interstates and freeways and a 4-percent increase on other roads.
- Not all vehicles, nor individuals driving them, can safely travel at the current speed limit. Raising the speed limit will increase closing speeds, reduce reaction time and increase crash severity.
- Increasing the speed limit will not save lives. According to the 2019 North Dakota Crash Summary, speed and/or driving too fast for conditions is a factor in about one-third of fatal crashes in North Dakota each year. As a result, speeding is a priority emphasis area in state's Vision Zero Plan.
- Numerous studies of travel speeds have shown that 85th percentile speeds on rural interstate highways increased when speed limits were raised and then continued increasing. The 85th percentile is a moving target that increases when speed limits are raised. If speed limits are raised to meet a current 85th percentile speed, a new, higher 85th percentile speed will be the result.
- A higher speed limit will likely have a disproportionately negative impact on young, inexperienced drivers, a group already overrepresented in speed-related crashes. According to the Governor's Highway Safety Association, over the past five years, the proportion of fatal crashes that involved speeding was higher for teenage drivers than for other age groups (43% versus 30%). This goes hand-in-hand with inexperience and not understanding when conditions warrant a slower speed.
- Speeds are already exceeding the capabilities of vehicle headlights. Recent AAA test results found that even with the most advanced headlight systems under ideal weather conditions, the ability to see an object in the roadway at night is reduced by as much as 60 percent when compared to driving in daylight. On high beam, headlights provide adequate lighting for maximum speeds of 48 to 55 mph.
- Even small speed increases can have huge impacts on crash outcomes and cancel the effectiveness of vehicle safety features, according to new crash tests by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and Humanetics. The faster a driver is going before a crash, the less likely the vehicle will slow to a survivable speed even if the driver has a chance to brake before impact. Cars are safer than they've ever been, but they cannot defy the laws of physics

- If reducing the number of speed-related traffic citations issued is a goal of higher speed limits, consider what has occurred in South Dakota. According to an article in the Argus Leader newspaper, the South Dakota Highway Patrol followed through on its vow to strictly enforce the state's 80 mph speed limit. In the two-year period following the 2015 increase in the speed limit, the number of speed-related tickets issued increased nearly 50 percent. Another report lists South Dakota in the top 10 of states for most speeding tickets per population. A driver is approximately seven times less likely to receive a ticket in North Dakota as in South Dakota.

AAA appreciates the fact that increasing the speed limit is a popular idea. While many drivers may favor increasing the speed limits, it is unlikely that any family is willing to sacrifice the life of a family member for the sake of the increase. Only after a thorough review of all factors related to the safety of road users should a speed limit increase be considered. Until that time, Mr. Chairman, AAA stands opposed to increasing speed limits as proposed in HB 1315.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Gene LaDoucer".

Gene LaDoucer  
Public Affairs Director

*AAA-The Auto Club Group (ACG) is a membership based, non-profit corporation operating in fourteen states and two US Territories. It is one of the largest American Automobile Association (AAA) clubs in the United States with approximately 14 million members. ACG provides travel, insurance, automotive, and financial services to its members. In North Dakota, AAA – The Auto Club Group serves more than 69,000 members and works to represent the interests of members and the traveling public in the state legislature.*