

**Appendix C: Focus Group Discussion Guide**  
**Tire Fuel Efficiency Consumer Information Program**  
**May 16, 2011**

**Revised: June 21, 2011**

We recommend a funnel approach to the focus group discussion. We will start broad, discussing the reasons for purchasing replacement tires and the most important factors in that purchase decision, then focus the conversation on the topic of tire ratings and the communication of those ratings. Note that the ratings will be presented in a different order for each group to avoid order bias (see page 4). For each group, the moderator will be in possession of a discussion guide that reflects the order in which the ratings will be presented.

**Introduction**

- Welcome, why we're here, privacy
- Group rules
- Before we start I'd like to go around the room and have you introduce yourselves. Please tell us,
  - Name
  - How often do you personally drive?
  - What is your primary purpose for driving?

**Tire purchase<sup>1</sup> (15-20 minutes)**

- How do you know it's time to replace your tires?
  - PROBE: Mechanic tells you, Dealer/Manufacturer suggestions, Tires look worn, Someone else tells you it's time, Emergency
  - In your experience, what most often motivates you to replace your tires?
    - PROBE: Tire wear vs. Emergency replacement
  - How often do you purchase replacement tires?
- Explain to me how you go about getting tires replaced. What is the process?
  - Does the process you go through to purchase a replacement tire change based on whether it is an emergency or if it is to address tire wear?
    - If you have a flat tire and need to replace it, how do you decide which tire to buy?
      - What criteria do you consider? What is the most important criterion?
    - If you know you're going to need to purchase replacement tires soon, how do you decide which tire to buy?
      - Do you research your choices? [IF YES] What are you looking for?
      - What criteria do you consider? What is the most important criterion?
- Where do you go to purchase replacement tires?
  - Tire retailer? Other retailer/department store (i.e. Walmart/Sears/Costco)? Mechanic? Online? Dealer?
  - Do you see the actual tires prior to your purchase?
    - [IF YES] Are these the actual tires that are installed on your vehicle or a model tire that matches the model of the tires that will be installed on your vehicle?
- Do you look for information about tires before you buy?
  - What kind of information are you looking for during the process?
  - How do you use this information in your purchase process?
- Where do you look for tire information?
  - Home (current tires, vehicle owners' manual, etc.)? Online? In-store? Word-of-mouth?

---

<sup>1</sup> Questioning will meet Objective 1: Understand the tire purchase process from the consumer perspective

- Are you more likely to proactively look for information or are you more likely to rely on information available at the place of purchase?
  - How much impact does this information have on your purchase decision? Which sources have the most impact on your purchase decisions?
  - How much would you say you rely on recommendations from tire sales staff?
    - How trustworthy is sales staff? Versus other sources?
- Do you consider more than one tire? [IF YES] How would you go about comparing tires?
  - At a retail store, have you been presented with more than one option for tires to purchase?
  - Do you go with what is recommended or do you ask about additional options?
- In a store, have you ever seen either on a tire label or displayed near a tire, information about a tire you considered purchasing?
  - What information did these labels or displays include?
    - Did the labels or displays include information that could be used to compare different tires?
  - How useful is this information to your purchase?
  - Do different manufacturers use different labels or presentations of information?
    - Which manufacturers do you recall having labels?
    - Which manufacturers do you recall displaying other forms of information?
    - Did any one label or information display stick out as the most helpful or useful to your tire purchase decision? Which manufacturer?
  - Have you seen any tire-related ratings before?
    - Where did you see these ratings?
    - What information was conveyed by the ratings?
    - How well did you comprehend the meaning of these ratings?
    - How, if at all, did you use the ratings in your purchase decision?
- Thinking about the information you get from these various sources, how well would you say you comprehend the information?
- Thinking about replacement tires, what are your main purchase criteria?
  - What is the most important factor in your decision?
  - [PROBE: brand, cost, durability/life of tires, safety, fuel efficiency, tradeoffs, availability/in stock, something else?]
- When considering replacement tires, do you seek replacement tires that match the size of the original tires that came on your vehicle?
  - Are you aware that multiple tire sizes may fit your vehicle?
  - Have you ever considered changing the diameter of the tires you currently have on your vehicle?
    - [IF YES] Why?
    - [IF YES] How much bigger or smaller a diameter would you consider?
- Do you want to be able to compare tires across different sizes? Why?
- How might you go about comparing tires across different sizes? What sources would you consult?
  - How many in the group have more than one vehicle in your household?
    - What types of vehicles are these? (small passenger vehicle, SUV, light truck, etc.)
    - For those who have different sized vehicles, how helpful, if at all, would it be for you to compare the tire you purchase for your [INSERT TYPE OF VEHICLE] and the tire you purchase for your [INSERT TYPE OF VEHICLE]?
      - What criteria would you want to compare the tires on? (PROBE: safety, fuel economy, durability, stopping distance, etc.)

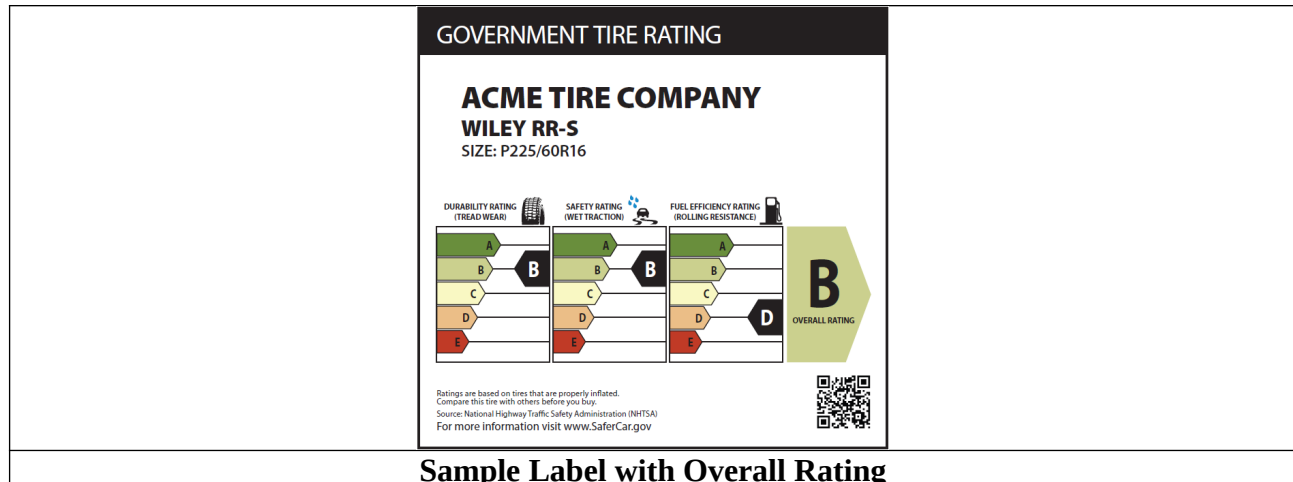
**Evaluate tire ratings<sup>2</sup> (80 minutes)**

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is a Federal agency that is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation. NHTSA is exploring different ways to provide tire ratings to help consumers as they purchase tires. Today, I am going to show you some new methods that NHTSA could use to rate tires. Keep in mind, these are meant to help keep you as consumers informed in your purchase decisions, so while we go through these ratings I'd like to hear everything that you think about these ratings.

First, I'd like you to complete a short individual activity. On each page of your workbooks, you will see three tires rated using one of several potential rating scales. I want you to look at the ratings and circle which tire you would elect to purchase. Then, at the bottom of the page, answer the corresponding questions. I'll give you about 10 minutes to complete this activity. When you are finished, turn your packet over so that I know when everyone is done. After the activity, we are going to talk about each rating scale in detail, and I'll ask some of you to share your answers.

<p align="center"><b>Rating Scale A</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Rating Scale B</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Rating Scale C</b></p>
<p align="center"><b>Rating Scale D</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Rating Scale E</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>Rating Scale F</b></p>

<sup>2</sup> Questioning will meet Objective 2: Evaluate comprehension of ratings, exploring clarity, meaningfulness and the likely resulting behaviors



**Sample Label with Overall Rating**

[NOTE: WORKBOOK ACTIVITY IS INCLUDED IN THIS ICR PACKAGE AS APPENDIX H AND A DOCUMENT CONTAINING ALL THE LABEL MOCK-UPS USED IN THIS DISCUSSION IS ATTACHED AS APPENDIX I]

Order of Rating Evaluation:

- Group 1: A, B, C, D, E, F
- Group 2: B, D, A, E, C, F
- Group 3: C, E, B, A, D, F
- Group 4: D, B, C, E, A, F
- Group 5: E, C, D, B, A, F
- Group 6: A, D, E, C, B, F

[MODERATOR TO ASK OF THE FIRST RATING PRESENTED:]

- What is your initial impression of this rating?
  - What did you notice first about this rating?
- What do these tire ratings mean?
  - Looking at this rating you can see three things are measured.
    - Would you look at each rating separately or as a whole?
    - In your own words, explain to me what you think each of these ratings means:
      - Fuel efficiency rating (Rolling Resistance)
      - Safety rating (Wet Traction)
      - Durability rating (Tread Wear)
    - How valuable do you believe this information is to your purchase?
    - Do you see any one measure as more important than others, or are they all equally important?
      - Which is most important? Which is least important?
    - Is there any information missing from this label that would be helpful to you when purchasing a replacement tire?
- Notice that the source listed on the rating is NHTSA.
  - How trustworthy do you feel this source is?
  - If the source was instead listed as “Manufacturer’s reported rankings compiled by NHTSA” would that be more trustworthy, less trustworthy, or make no difference.

- **Rating A:**
  - What is your initial impression of this rating?
    - What did you notice first about this rating?
  - Looking at the fuel efficiency rating, in your own words, how would you explain what you think the difference is between a 4-star rating and a 3-star rating? [MODERATOR NOTE IF SPECIFIC MPG CHANGE IS MENTIONED]
    - In your own words, what do you personally see as the benefits of purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - What, if any, drawbacks do you personally see for purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - How large or small a difference between star ratings would indicate a significant difference in tire performance?
  - Looking at the tread wear rating, in your own words, how would you explain what you think the difference is between a 4-star rating and a 2-star rating?
    - In your own words, what do you personally see as the benefits of purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - What, if any, drawbacks do you personally see for purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - How large or small a difference between star ratings would indicate a significant difference in tire performance?
  - Looking at the wet traction rating, in your own words, how would you explain what you think the difference is between a 4-star rating and a 5-star rating?
    - In your own words, what do you personally see as the benefits of purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - What, if any, drawbacks do you personally see for purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - How large or small a difference between star ratings would indicate a significant difference in tire performance?
  - Looking at these ratings as a whole, how would the information presented impact your decision on which tire to purchase?
  - How easy or hard is it to compare tires using this rating system?
  - Would you say this rating is clear or confusing? Why?
    - What if anything would you recommend changing to improve this rating to more clearly convey the information you need when evaluating tires?
  - How likely are you to use these ratings when deciding which tire to purchase?
  - Looking at how you evaluated the choice between three tires using this rating scale in your workbook, how many selected Tire A to purchase? Why?
    - How many selected Tire B? Why?
    - How many selected Tire C? Why?
- **Rating B:**
  - What is your initial impression of this rating?
    - What did you notice first about this rating?
  - Looking at the fuel efficiency rating, in your own words, how would you explain what you think the difference is between a rating of 50 and a rating of 58?
    - How would you explain the difference between a rating of 58 and a rating of 80?
    - In your own words, what do you personally see as the benefits of purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - What, if any, drawbacks do you personally see for purchasing a tire with a higher rating?

- How large or small a difference between numbers would indicate a significant difference in tire performance?
  - Looking at the tread wear rating, in your own words, how would you explain what you think the difference is between a rating of 64 and a rating of 61?
    - How would you explain the difference between a rating of 61 and a rating of 39?
    - In your own words, what do you personally see as the benefits of purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - What, if any, drawbacks do you personally see for purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - How large or small a difference between numbers would indicate a significant difference in tire performance?
  - Looking at the wet traction rating, in your own words, how would you explain what you think the difference is between a rating of 73 and a rating of 72?
    - How would you explain the difference between a rating of 73 and a rating of 90?
    - In your own words, what do you personally see as the benefits of purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - What, if any, drawbacks do you personally see for purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - How large or small a difference between numbers would indicate a significant difference in tire performance?
  - Looking at these ratings as a whole, how would the information presented impact your decision on which tire to purchase?
  - How large or small a difference between numbers would indicate a significant difference in tire performance?
    - How, if at all, does the “range of tires in this size” display impact how you interpret the rating number?
  - How easy or hard is it to compare tires using this rating system?
  - Would you say this rating is clear or confusing? Why?
    - What if anything would you recommend changing to improve this rating to more clearly convey the information you need when evaluating tires?
  - How likely are you to use these ratings when deciding which tire to purchase?
  - Looking at how you evaluated the choice between three tires using this rating scale in your workbook, how many selected Tire A to purchase? Why?
    - How many selected Tire B? Why?
    - How many selected Tire C? Why?
- **Rating C:**
  - What is your initial impression of this rating?
    - What did you notice first about this rating?
  - Looking at the fuel efficiency rating, in your own words, how would you explain what you think the difference is between a rating of C and a rating of B?
    - In your own words, what do you personally see as the benefits of purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - What, if any, drawbacks do you personally see for purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - How large or small a difference between grades would indicate a significant difference in tire performance?
  - Looking at the tread wear rating, in your own words, how would you explain what you think the difference is between a rating of C and a rating of D?
    - In your own words, what do you personally see as the benefits of purchasing a tire with a higher rating?

- What, if any, drawbacks do you personally see for purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - How large or small a difference between grades would indicate a significant difference in tire performance?
  - Looking at the wet traction rating, in your own words, how would you explain what you think the difference is between a rating of A and a rating of B?
    - In your own words, what do you personally see as the benefits of purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - What, if any, drawbacks do you personally see for purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - How large or small a difference between grades would indicate a significant difference in tire performance?
  - Looking at these ratings as a whole, how would the information presented impact your decision on which tire to purchase?
  - How easy or hard is it to compare tires using this rating system?
  - Would you say this rating is clear or confusing? Why?
    - What if anything would you recommend changing to improve this rating to more clearly convey the information you need when evaluating tires?
  - How likely are you to use these ratings when deciding which tire to purchase?
  - Looking at how you evaluated the choice between three tires using this rating scale in your workbook, how many selected Tire A to purchase? Why?
    - How many selected Tire B? Why?
    - How many selected Tire C? Why?
- **Rating D:**
  - What is your initial impression of this rating?
    - What did you notice first about this rating?
  - Looking at the fuel efficiency rating, in your own words, how would you explain the difference between these tires?
    - In your own words, what do you personally see as the benefits of purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - What, if any, drawbacks do you personally see for purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - How large or small a difference between numbers would indicate a significant difference in tire performance?
  - Looking at the tread wear rating, in your own words, how would you explain what you think the difference is between a rating of 580 and a rating of 560?
    - How would you explain what you think the difference is between a rating of 320 and a rating of 560?
    - In your own words, what do you personally see as the benefits of purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - What, if any, drawbacks do you personally see for purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - How large or small a difference between numbers would indicate a significant difference in tire performance?
  - Looking at the wet traction rating, in your own words, how would you explain what you think the difference is between a rating of A and a rating of AA?
    - In your own words, what do you personally see as the benefits of purchasing a tire with a higher rating?
    - What, if any, drawbacks do you personally see for purchasing a tire with a higher rating?

- How large or small a difference between grades would indicate a significant difference in tire performance?
- Looking at these ratings as a whole, how would the information presented impact your decision on which tire to purchase?
- How easy or hard is it to compare tires using this rating system?
- Would you say this rating is clear or confusing? Why?
  - What if anything would you recommend changing to improve this rating to more clearly convey the information you need when evaluating tires?
- Notice for this scale, each point is measured on a different scale. How does this impact how well you understand the ratings? Would having all the ratings on the same scale make it easier or harder to understand? Does it matter?
- How likely are you to use these ratings when deciding which tire to purchase?
- Looking at how you evaluated the choice between three tires using this rating scale in your workbook, how many selected Tire A to purchase? Why?
  - How many selected Tire B? Why?
  - How many selected Tire C? Why?



- **Rating E:**
  - What is your initial impression of this rating?
    - What did you notice first about this rating?
  - One option for rating tires may be to label replacement tires in a way like the EnergyStar and SmartWay systems are currently being used.
  - How many of you are familiar with EnergyStar?
    - In your own words, what does the EnergyStar symbol mean?
    - How much of an impact does this symbol have on your purchase behaviors?
  - How many of you are familiar with SmartWay?
    - In your own words, what does the SmartWay symbol mean?
    - How much of an impact does this symbol have on your purchase behaviors?
  - If you were to see a symbol like this associated with a specific replacement tire, what would that mean to you?
  - How helpful or not helpful would a symbol like this be for replacement tires?
  - In what ways, if any, would a symbol like this impact your decisions?
    - In your opinion, should this symbol be used for each type of rating, for any one rating over others, or as an overall tire rating? Why?
  - In your own words, what do you personally see as the benefits of purchasing a tire with a symbol like this?
  - What, if any, drawbacks do you personally see for purchasing a tire with a symbol like this?
  - Does either EnergyStar or SmartWay stand out as more appropriate for a tire rating?
    - Would you prefer one of these systems or a new symbol that is only used for replacement tires? Why?
- **Rating F:**
  - We have one more rating scale in your workbooks to review. This time, you'll see that the ratings for each metric are displayed as potential savings in terms of dollars, miles driven and stopping distance. For example, one tire's Fuel Efficiency rating can save you up to \$32.50 a year in fuel costs as compared to the control tire whereas the other tire can save you up to \$25 a year in fuel costs as compared to the control tire.
  - What is your initial impression of this rating?
    - What did you notice first about this rating?
  - Looking at the range for the fuel efficiency rating, how, if at all does this help you in making your decision about which tire to purchase?
    - How important is this information for you personally to consider when purchasing a tire? Why?
    - In your own words, based on the information in this label, explain to me the difference between Tire A (\$32.50 less in fuel costs per year as compared to the control tire) and Tire B (\$25 less in fuel costs per year as compared to the control tire) in terms of fuel efficiency.
    - The range of fuel savings is based on a number of assumptions like the type of vehicle you drive, the average distance you drive per year, climate and road conditions.
      - How accurate do you believe this estimate to be for you personally?
      - How, if at all, does this information change how important this measure is for you?
      - Based on this information, how do you feel about having a fuel savings range included on a tire label?

- As you can see tread wear on this rating system is measured as “miles before tire needs to be replaced.”
  - How important is this for you personally to consider when purchasing a tire? Why?
  - In your own words, can you please explain the differences between Tire A (0 more miles before replacement as compared to the control tire) and Tire B (30,000 more miles before replacement as compared to the control tire)?
  - This tread wear rating would be calculated by comparing the wear rate of a particular tire, to the wear rate of a control tire, whose approximate wear out in terms of mileage is known. The accuracy of this comparison depends on assumptions regarding the vehicle load, road conditions, how aggressively the person drives, and a number of other measures.
    - How accurate do you believe this estimate to be for you personally?
    - How, if at all, does this information change how important this measure is for you?
    - Based on this information, how do you feel about having an estimated average mileage included on a tire label?
  - Instead of ‘additional miles,’ would it be more or less useful to you if tread wear could be displayed as dollar savings, that is, how much you could save by not having to replace your tires sooner?
    - Would you want to see this information on a tire label? Why?/Why not?
    - Would you prefer to see a dollar savings for tread wear or miles before tire needs to be replaced? Why?
- Wet traction, in this example, is measured as stopping distance (in feet). How would you feel about a label giving a range of how much shorter or longer the stopping distance you can expect from one tire as compared to “an average tire”
  - How important is this for you personally to consider when purchasing a tire? Why?
  - In your own words, can you please explain the differences between Tire A (24 less feet of stopping distance as compared to the control tire) and Tire B (25 more feet of stopping distance as compared to the control tire)?
  - This stopping distance estimate would be made assuming the tires are mounted on vehicles with similar handling characteristics and load and that the force with which the brakes are applied is the same.
    - How accurate do you believe this estimate to be for you personally?
    - How, if at all, does this information change how important this measure is for you?
    - Based on this information, how do you feel about having an estimated average mileage included on a tire label?
    - Would you expect your vehicle to perform at that precise stopping distance at all times?
  - Instead of ‘stopping distance,’ would it be more or less useful to you if wet traction could be displayed as dollar savings, that is, how much you could save with a tire that contributes to fewer average crashes per year and, thus, a certain number of dollars less in resultant economic damages.
    - Would you want to see this information on a tire label? Why?/Why not?
    - Would you prefer to see a dollar savings for wet traction or stopping distance in feet? Why?
- Overall, would you say this rating is clear or confusing? Why?

- What if anything would you recommend changing to improve this rating to more clearly convey the information you need when evaluating tires?
- If the information presented here was included on one of the other labels, would this make you more or less likely to use the ratings when purchasing replacement tires, or would it have no impact?
  - How, if at all, would this impact how easy it is to understand the other ratings?
- Based on all of these ratings and the assumptions that we discussed, if you were to choose one of these replacement tires for your vehicle, by a show of hands how many would purchase Tire A? Tire B?
  - Why?

○ **[AFTER REVIEWING ALL RATINGS]**

- Now that we've evaluated all the ratings, I want to go back and take another look at Rating C. [MODERATOR HANDOUT RATING C WITH OVERALL RATING]. This version of Rating C shows an overall rating for the tire. If the overall tire rating was added to one of these systems, how, if at all would this affect your opinion of those ratings?
  - Rating A? Rating B? Rating D?
  - Do you think you would find an overall tire rating helpful or not helpful?
    - Are you more likely to use the individual ratings, the overall tire rating, or both when deciding which tire to purchase? Why?
    - How does the overall rating impact how easy or hard it is to decide which tire to purchase?
    - Is there a difference in helpfulness of an overall rating depending on the rating system used?
  - This overall rating was calculated as an average rating for each of the three ratings.
    - Does this method of calculating an overall rating make sense to you?
    - Knowing how this overall rating is calculated, how, if at all, does this change how useful or helpful this rating is to your purchase decision?
    - Do you think equal weight should be given to all three scores, or is one factor more or less important than others?

[MODERATOR TO HANG UP ALL 5 RATING SCALES]

- Looking at all the rating scales, which scale do you believe is the easiest to understand?
  - What, if any, additional information do you need in order to understand what these ratings mean?
  - Where would you need this information to be present?
    - PROBE: Directly on the rating scale? On the website that the scale directs you to? Somewhere else?
- Which scale are you most likely to use in your purchase decision?
- Which, if any, of these scales helps you to identify which tires are the most fuel efficient? Why?
- Which, if any, of these scales helps you to identify which tires are the safest? Why?
- Which, if any, of these scales helps you to identify which tires are the most durable? Why?
- Which scale do you personally prefer?

Let's take a look at some of the language used on these rating scales:

- Currently, you can see that each scale is labeled with more common terms as the main rating title and the actual performance measurement in parentheses. If NHTSA was trying to help you understand these ratings systems and make the ratings more useful for you, which terms do you think they should use...
  - Tread wear, also known as tire wear, is considered to be one measure of durability because how quickly a tire tread wears affects how long the tire will last.
    - If you were using the ratings system in your purchase decision, would you prefer the scale to be labeled as 'tread wear rating' or 'durability rating' or for the label to contain both terms as in the examples we evaluated? Why?
      - Is one easier to understand over the other?
      - Do either of these terms impact how likely you are to use the rating scale?
    - Are you aware that the tread wear of a tire is arguably not the only measure of a tire's "durability"? If you consider durability to mean the capability of a tire to resist deterioration or failure (i.e., not just to mean "long lasting"), other indicators of durability might be road hazard resistance and capability to sustain high-speed driving.
      - Does knowing this change your opinion about calling the rating "tread wear" versus calling the rating "durability"?
  - Wet traction is the measure of the tire's ability to deliver traction, or prevent sliding, under wet conditions. Wet traction is considered to be one indicator of safety.
    - If you were using the ratings system in your purchase decision, would you prefer the scale to be labeled as 'wet traction rating' or 'safety rating' or for the label to contain both terms as in the examples we evaluated? Why?
      - Is one easier to understand over the other?
      - Do either of these terms impact how likely you are to use the rating scale?
    - Are you aware that the wet traction performance of a tire is just one element/component of the overall "safety" of a tire? While wet traction performance is an *indicator* of safety, other elements/components of the safety of a tire include handling, cornering, grip, dry traction, winter traction.
      - Does knowing this change your opinion about calling the rating "wet traction" versus calling the rating "safety"?
  - Rolling resistance is the resistance, or energy loss, that occurs when a tire rolls on a flat surface. Rolling resistance is a measure a tire's contribution to a vehicle's fuel efficiency.
    - If you were using the ratings system in your purchase decision, would you prefer the scale to be labeled as 'rolling resistance rating' or 'fuel efficiency rating' or for the label to contain both terms as in the examples we evaluated? Why?
      - Is one easier to understand over the other?
      - Do either of these terms impact how likely you are to use the rating scale?
  - Overall, how well do these terms help you understand what is being rated on the tire?
    - Do you believe there should be more or less information about these measures on the label, or should it remain as displayed here?

Now, I'd like to talk further about tires' fuel efficiency ratings in relation to the fuel efficiency of the vehicles these tires are used on. There are two ways to measure fuel efficiency – we're not going into the science of these measurements tonight, but I'd like to know...

- Thinking about the two ways tires could be measured – one measurement system would allow you to compare the ratings for tires no matter what the size. Using the other measurement system, you would only be able to compare the ratings for tires within the same size.
  - Which, if any, measure would you prefer? Why?
- How many have more than one vehicle that your family owns or leases?
  - How important is it that the fuel efficiency rating of tires for your primary vehicle be directly comparable to the fuel efficiency ratings of the tires of your other vehicle or vehicles?
- If you were comparing the fuel efficiency ratings of the replacement tires available for your vehicle how would you feel if none of those tires available to you were a top-rated fuel efficient tire?
  - Would fuel efficiency factor into your decision if all the tires available in the sizes you need fell at the low-end of the scale?

### **Communication Channels<sup>3</sup> (15 minutes)**

Now that we've looked at a number of ways to present information about tire ratings, I'd like to talk about ways to communicate this information to consumers like you.

- If you knew these tire ratings were available for consumers, where would you expect to find this information? What sources do you think absolutely must have this information?
  - Think again about the range of fuel savings that was presented as part of the concepts for how to convey a tire's fuel efficiency. One way to communicate potential fuel savings is an online tool that you could enter the type of vehicle you drive, the average distance you drive, and other measures. Based on this information, you would be presented with the potential fuel savings you could expect based on the tires you are considering.
    - Do you think this is more or less helpful than seeing a range of fuel savings on the rating for a specific tire?
    - Which format would you prefer?
- If these ratings were provided as a paper label that is attached to a tire, how useful would you find this information?
  - Thinking about the rating scales as a paper label attached to a tire, does any rating scale stand out as being the most helpful?
  - Does any rating scale stand out as being the least helpful if included as a paper label on a tire?
  - Would you use this information if it were included as a paper label attached to a tire?
  - If NHTSA decided not to use a paper label attached to a tire, where would you want to find this information?
    - What other information would you want about replacement tires?
- Recall that all the labels we looked at today mentioned "SaferCar.gov" as a website to visit for more information about the ratings. How likely are you to visit the website?
  - What information would you want to be present on the website?

---

<sup>3</sup> Objective 3: Evaluate the creative and the channels for communication

- These labels also have a QR code (MODERATOR POINT OUT QR CODE). By a show of hands, how many of you are familiar with these QR codes?
  - In your own words, can I have a volunteer explain what this code is?
  - How many of you have a cell phone that can read a QR code?
  - Where have you seen QR codes in the past? Have you used these?
    - [IF YES] When have you used this? Describe your experience using this technology.
  - How likely are you to use this QR code when shopping for replacement tires?
- Thinking in general about the ratings we've been discussing today, are there certain sources of information you trust more so than others to provide you with ratings information?
  - PROBE: In-store sources, Word-of-mouth sources, Print, Online, On-tire, etc.
- Thinking back to the purchase process that we discussed at the beginning of the group, would the availability of these ratings change your approach in any way? How?
  - How would you use this information in your purchase?

[MODERATOR IF TIME, PLEASE PROCEED TO TIRE MAINTENANCE SECTION – IF NOT END DISCUSSION WITH THE FOLLOWING QUESTION]

- Before we end our discussion, are there any last bits of advice you'd give to an organization trying to develop ratings to help consumers when purchasing replacement tires?

**[IF TIME ALLOWS] Current tire maintenance<sup>4</sup>**

- Thinking specifically about the tires you currently have on your vehicle, have you ever done anything to maintain your tires?
  - What did you do?
  - How often do you do these things?
- For what reasons do you do these maintenance activities?
  - [MODERATOR LISTEN FOR FUEL EFFICIENCY, SAFETY, DURABILITY]  
PROBE: Connection between tire maintenance and fuel efficiency, safety, and/or durability.
  - How many were aware that proper tire maintenance could help maintain your vehicle's fuel efficiency and that lack of proper tire maintenance could decrease your vehicle's optimum fuel efficiency? [SHOW OF HANDS]
    - For those of you who know this, can you think of any tire maintenance practice in particular that you have heard impacts fuel efficiency?
    - For those of you who did not know this, how, if at all, does this information change the way you see your tire maintenance? Would you change your behaviors?
  - In what ways is tire maintenance related to safety and durability (the other measures we have discussed today)?
  - For those who are aware of these connections, where did you learn about them?
    - Expert? Friend/Family member? Media?
- Before we end our discussion, are there any last bits of advice you'd give to an organization trying to develop ratings to help consumers when purchasing replacement tires?

Thank and close group.

---

<sup>4</sup> Questioning will meet Objective 4: Understand consumers' knowledge of tire maintenance and performance  
NHTSA Tire Fuel Efficiency Consumer Information Program  
Focus Group Discussion Guide  
Submitted: May 16, 2011; Revised: June 21, 2011