

Appendix C

Discussion Guide for Qualitative Focus Groups/Dealer Interviews

Research Objectives:

- 1) Understand vehicle purchase decision-making criteria;
- 2) Identify and evaluate sources of vehicle safety information to help inform the development of a consumer education program;
- 3) Evaluate Monroney label content comprehension and potential tradeoffs; and
- 4) Evaluate recent changes to the safety rating section of the Monroney label to help inform future revisions.

Each question is marked with a number (or numbers) that corresponds to the above objectives. This is meant to indicate which objective that question satisfies.

Note: Any questions that are highlighted in yellow are meant to be used for both the focus groups and the 30-minute dealer in-depth interviews. All other questions will only be asked in the consumer focus groups.

Introduction (Approx. 5 minutes)

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

Section 1: Purchase Decision (Approx. 25 minutes)

I'd like to start tonight's group by talking about the process you go through when buying a new vehicle.

First, by a show of hands, how many of you have purchased a car recently? And how many are currently thinking about a new vehicle?

1. In general, what are some of the factors that [lead you to consider purchasing a new vehicle?/lead customers to come see you about purchasing a new vehicle?]¹
 - a. [MODERATOR PROBES:] (1) Mechanical problems, (2) Current deals and incentives, (3) Growing family – need larger vehicle, (4) New safety features, (5) Better vehicle and (6) Fuel economy/fuel costs
2. When you think about purchasing a new vehicle, tell me about the process that you go through. [MODERATOR RECORDS ON FLIP CHART]^{1,2}
 - a. What do you do first? Next? When do you visit a dealership?
 - b. How long before the purchase do you start searching for information?
 - c. Where do you go for initial information?
 - i. [MODERATOR PROBES:] (1) About costs, (2) About features, (3) About safety, (4) About comparable vehicles, and (5) About reliability
 - d. As you move further along in your purchase, are you looking to the same sources of information or do these information sources change? [MODERATOR ADDS ANY NEW SOURCES TO LIST]
 - e. Overall, which of these sources do you trust most? What reasons do you have for trusting this source?

3. Whether you're currently thinking about purchasing a vehicle, or you recently purchased one, when you started your search, how many different vehicles were you considering?¹
 - a. What steps did you take to narrow down your list of potential vehicles?
 - b. What were the key factors that caused you to add or drop certain vehicles from consideration?
 - c. How many vehicles were you considering when you first visited a dealer?
 - d. Once at the dealership, what types of information were you evaluating in order to make your decision?

4. [When you go to a car dealership to see a vehicle you're interested in/When you have a customer in the dealership looking to see a vehicle they are interested in], what is the process that you go through? Tell me about the events that happen at a dealership, in detail.^{1,2}
 - a. What information do [you/they] bring to the dealership?
 - i. Handwritten notes? Printed Internet information? Brochures for comparative vehicles? Information in mind? Information on mobile device or digital tablet?
 - b. Do you see a salesperson before you go to the vehicle, or go straight to the vehicle?
 - c. Do you compare the information you've researched with what the salesperson is saying?
 - i. Which do you find more credible?
 - d. Do you ask for information about the vehicle, or test drive first?
 - e. Do you [look at/talk to your customers about] the window sticker/Monroney label?
 - i. What information do you [look for/point out] on the window sticker?

5. Now imagine you've just made your purchase. What were the most important factors that helped you make your decision? [MODERATOR WRITES FACTORS ON FLIP CHART]¹
 - a. Looking at the list we just made, how would you prioritize these items in your purchase decision?
 - b. [MODERATOR PROBES FOR REASONS FACTORS ARE IMPORTANT]
 - i. Purchase price, Convenience features (i.e., technology, trim levels, power options, etc.), Safety features, Comfort, Vehicle image, Performance, Warranty, How green the vehicle is (i.e., hybrid, fuel efficiency, etc.), Brand reputation, Fuel economy/fuel mileage costs

Section 2: Safety Information (Approx. 20 minutes)

I'd like to talk about one of these factors in more detail [MODERATOR, IF SAFETY WAS NOT MENTIONED, ADDS TO LIST]

6. What kind of safety information do [you look for/customers ask about] when evaluating which vehicle to purchase?¹
 - a. What kind of safety features do you look for when shopping for a vehicle?
 - i. What safety features are must-have vs. nice to have?
 - b. When it comes to safety, what is the most important thing [you need to know/you want your customer to know]?

7. Thinking specifically about safety information, what sources of information do you use to research the safety of the vehicles you're interested in?²
 - a. Which ones do you trust most? Why?

8. By a show of hands, how many of you have heard of Government Safety Ratings for vehicles?²
 - a. Tell me what you know about these ratings. [IF DEALER: Imagine I'm a customer. Tell me about Government Safety Ratings for vehicles.]
 - b. [IF 5-STAR DOES NOT COME UP IN DISCUSSION] How many of you have heard 5-Star Safety Ratings?
 - i. Tell me what you know about these ratings.
 - ii. Who administers the 5-Star Safety Ratings?
 - c. What group or organization is responsible for administering Government 5-Star Safety Ratings?
 - i. What have you heard about the Department of Transportation?
 - ii. IF GROUP CANNOT IDENTIFY NHTSA: Have you heard of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration?
 - a. What have you heard about them?
 - iii. How do you feel about NHTSA as a source for safety rating information?
 - b. DOT?
9. [IF CONSUMER: Thinking back to the purchase process that we discussed earlier,] when [you're/your customers are] shopping for a new vehicle, how important are a vehicle's Government 5-Star Safety Ratings in your decision to purchase or not purchase a vehicle?^{2,3}
 - a. What reasons do you have for feeling this way?
 - b. Where can you find the safety ratings for a vehicle?
 - c. For those of you who recently purchased or leased a vehicle, do you recall what the star rating is for your vehicle?

Section 3: The Monroney Label (Approx. 25 minutes)

The window sticker, which is also called the Monroney label, on a new vehicle displays specific information about the vehicle and is mandated by Congress and cannot be changed. The label currently has a space for that vehicle's safety rating.

10. Aside from safety ratings, what other content have you noticed on the window sticker?³
 [MODERATOR WRITES RESPONSES ON INDEX CARDS – ONE INDEX CARD FOR RESPONSE. ADD INDEX CARDS FOR SECTIONS THAT WERE NOT MENTIONED. PRE-DRAW A RATING SCALE/THERMOMETER TO HELP EVALUATE IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENT ITEMS.]
 - a. Thinking about how you go about evaluating a new vehicle that you might purchase, I'd like to rank these items as a group. This side means the information is of top importance – essential to your decision. The other end means it is not at all important and you may not even consider it in your decision. Where should I place... [MODERATOR TAPES INDEX CARDS TO SCALE BASED ON PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK.]
 - i. For what reasons did you place this item at this end of the thermometer?
 - ii. Does anyone disagree with where this item was placed?
 - a. [IF YES] How important is this item to you?

11. Now I'm going to pass out a piece of paper that I'd like you evaluate and complete on your own. On this paper, you will find sample Monroney labels or window stickers. I'd like you to look at each label and choose which vehicle you would choose based on the information you see. When you're finished, we'll talk about your selections as a group.³
 - a. [MODERATOR ALLOWS A COUPLE OF MINUTES FOR PARTICIPANTS TO REVIEW TWO CURRENT MONRONEY LABELS AND SELECT THE VEHICLE THEY WOULD PURCHASE]
 - b. Before we go over this exercise, let's talk a little about the labels that are in front of you.
 - i. Looking at the label as it currently stands, agencies have worked together to determine what information is included on the label and what information is left off the label. Some of the information here is mandated by Congress and cannot be changed. Overall, how do you feel about the information presented on this label?
 - ii. Does the label provide the information you need to help you make an informed decision?
 - iii. Is there any additional information you need?
 - iv. Is there any information on the label that you don't need?
 - v. Is there anything on this label that is unclear or confusing for you?
 - c. Now, looking at which vehicle you selected how many chose vehicle A? B?
 - i. May I have a volunteer to talk me through what you were thinking when you were making your decision?
 - a. Did anyone have other reasons for choosing this vehicle?
 - ii. For those who chose the other vehicle, what reasons made you decide this way?
 - iii. Ultimately, what made you choose the vehicle you chose?













12. [IF DEALER: I have two sample window stickers or Monroney labels that I'd like you to review.] Let's take a look at the safety ratings in more detail. In your own words, what do the different ratings mean?³
 - a. How easy or hard is it to [understand/explain] how safe a vehicle is from this information?
 - b. Is the information on the safety ratings portion legible?
 - a. Is any of the font too small for you to read? What, if anything, would you change to make it easier to read?
 - c. Is this safety ratings portion prominent enough to provide [you/your customers] the information you need to make a decision?
 - i. [IF NO] In what ways might you change this portion to make it more prominent?
 - d. Let's look at each item on this label in detail. First, frontal crash ratings.
 - i. What does a 5-star rating mean?
 - ii. What does a 1-star rating mean?
 - iii. What is the difference between 5-stars and 4-stars? What is the difference between 4-stars and 2-stars?
 - iv. What is the rating threshold, if there is any, that you would consider a vehicle to be "safe"?
 - e. Side impact crash ratings
 - i. What does a 5-star rating mean?
 - ii. What does a 1-star rating mean?
 - iii. What is the difference between 5-stars and 4-stars? What is the difference between 4-stars and 2-stars?
 - iv. What is the rating threshold, if there is any, that you would consider a vehicle to be "safe"?

- f. Rollover ratings:
 - i. What does a 5-star rating mean?
 - ii. What does a 1-star rating mean?
 - iii. What is the difference between 5-stars and 4-stars? What is the difference between 4-stars and 2-stars?
 - iv. What is the rating threshold, if there is any, that you would consider a vehicle to be “safe”?

13. Imagine you are in charge of designing the 5-star safety ratings section of the label. What would you personally change on this label to help make it easier for consumers to understand?⁴

Section 4: New Safety Ratings Label Changes (Approx. 45 minutes)

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) recently made enhancements to the safety ratings program which, in addition to changes to testing programs, includes adding an overall vehicle score to the safety label and added a program to promote crash avoidance technologies to the car buying public. Because of these changes, NHTSA is considering revising the design of the 5-star safety ratings section of the label to ensure it is clear to consumers and useful to their purchase decision. I'd like us [IF CONSUMER: as a group] to evaluate some potential labels that the agency is considering.

	Standard Label	Design Change Label	Simplified Label	Loaded Label
Minimum Size (A)				
Horizontal (B)				
Vertical (C)				
	Label A1	Label A2	Label A3	Label A4
	Label B1	Label B2	Label B3	Label B4
	Label C1	Label C2	Label C3	Label C4

Testing Order:

Group	Label 1	Label 2	Label 3
1	A	B	C
2	B	A	C
3	B	C	A
4	C	A	B
5	C	B	A
6	A	C	B
7	A	B	C
8	C	B	A
9	B	C	A
10	A	C	B

Dealer Interview	Label 1	Label 2
1	A	B
2	A	C
3	B	A
4	B	C
5	C	A
6	C	B
7	A	B
8	C	A
9	B	A
10	C	B

*We will test two types of labels in each dealer interview to reduce respondent burden.

[NOTE THAT FOR TESTING PURPOSES, THE ‘STANDARD’ LABEL (WHICH INCLUDES THE CURRENT INFORMATION PRESENTED IN THE 5-STAR SAFETY RATINGS SECTION) WILL BE PRESENTED TO RESPONDENTS FIRST, THEN RESPONDENTS WILL BE SHOWN IN RANDOM ORDER DESIGN CHANGE (WHICH IS THE SAME AS THE STANDARD LABEL EXCEPT FOR TEXT/COLOR CHANGES), LOADED LABEL (WHICH INCLUDES ADDITIONAL EXPLANATION BEYOND THE CURRENT LABEL)AND FINALLY SIMPLIFIED (WHICH PRESENTS THE RATINGS AS OVERALL SCORES RATHER THAN BY SEATING POSITION). SAMPLE LABEL HANDOUTS WILL BE PRINTED TO SCALE SO THAT PARTICIPANTS ARE ACCURATELY ASSESSING LEGIBILITY OF THE INFORMATION]

[MODERATOR HANDS OUT FIRST LABEL – STANDARD]

14. Looking at this label, what information stands out most to you?⁴
 - a. Why does this information stand out to you?
 - b. Is the text on this version of the label legible?
 - c. Is there any information presented here that is confusing or unclear for you?
 - a. Would you say this information is easy for you to comprehend, or do you have questions about what is presented on this label?
 - d. How important is this information in [your/your customer's] purchase decision? Why?
 - e. Is there other information that's more important? Why?

15. Earlier, we looked at the different scores presented in this section. As I had mentioned the new labels will now have an overall vehicle score:⁴
 - a. Looking at this label, what does this overall score mean to you?
 - b. What is the minimum score, if any, you would [consider/recommend] purchasing?

16. There is also a new section for recommended crash avoidance technologies, [is anyone/are you] familiar with this term?⁴
 - a. When you hear the term crash avoidance technologies, what comes to mind?
 - b. In your own words, [can I have a volunteer/can you] explain crash avoidance technologies?
 - i. How many are familiar with the crash avoidance technologies presented here?
 - ii. What have you heard about these technologies?
 - iii. Have you seen crash avoidance technologies referenced in other parts of the Monroney label?
 - iv. In your own opinion, is it appropriate to include crash avoidance technologies in the safety ratings section of the Monroney label?
 - c. Looking at the crash avoidance technologies section of this label, what is it communicating to you?
 - i. You'll notice that some of the technologies have a check mark, while others do not, what do you think this means?
 - ii. Is there any additional information you would like to see on this label about crash avoidance technologies that you need in order to help [you/your customers] in [your/their] vehicle purchase decision?

17. [By a show of hands, how many of you are/Are you] familiar with QR codes?⁴
 - a. In your own words, can I have a volunteer explain what this code is?
 - b. How many of you have a cell phone that can read a QR code?
 - c. Where have you seen QR codes in the past? Have you used these?
 - i. [IF YES] When have you used this? Describe your experience using this technology.
 - d. If you were to scan the QR code presented on this label, what information would you expect come up?
 - a. PROBE: Ratings for the specific model? Ratings search? Explanation of ratings meaning?
 - b. What information would be most helpful for [you/your customers]?
 - c. If you were presented with a screen in which you can search for your specific model, how likely would you be to use this?
 - e. How likely are [you/your customers] to use this QR code to obtain additional safety information if you were to see one on the window sticker of a vehicle at the dealership?

[MODERATOR RANDOMIZE Q18-Q20 (ORDER OF LABELS DESIGNS PRESENTED)]

18. I have another example of how this particular label can be designed. [I will hand out a sample of this, give you a minute to look it over, then we'll discuss as a group/I will give you a minute to look it over]. [MODERATOR HANDS OUT DESIGN CHANGE LABEL]⁴
- a. When looking at this label, what information stands out to you?
 - i. Is the information that stands out to you different than what stood out to you when looking at the black and white label?
 - ii. Is the information presented here more or less legible than the previous label(s) we have looked at tonight?
 - b. Do the colors make the information easier or harder to read or does it make no difference?
 - i. What reasons do you have for saying this?
 - c. Do the colors help you to understand the information better or does it make no difference?
 - i. What reasons do you have for saying this?
19. I have another example of how this label can be designed. Again, I'll hand out a sample, give you a minute to look it over, then we'll discuss [IF FOCUS GROUP: as a group]. [MODERATOR HANDS OUT SIMPLIFIED LABEL]⁴
- a. When looking at this label, what information stands out to you?
 - i. Is the information that stands out to you different than what stood out to you when looking at the other labels we already reviewed?
 - b. You may have noticed that the ratings for frontal crash and side crash are presented differently than in the previous two labels – showing an overall score rather than a score by seating position.
 - i. If you are [looking to/helping your customer] evaluate the safety of a vehicle [you/they] are considering, does this overall score for front and side crash ratings provide you with enough information?
 - ii. I'd like to read the description of what the Overall Frontal Crash and the Overall Side Crash ratings mean [MODERATOR READ FROM LABEL]. Does this explanation match what you thought these ratings meant?
 - b. Are these explanations clear or confusing?
 - c. Did you read these explanations before I read them aloud?
 - iii. [By a show of hands, how many believe/Do you believe] it is easier to evaluate the safety of a vehicle if these ratings are shown by seating position? Overall score? Makes no difference?
20. I have another example of how this label can be designed. Again, I'll hand out a sample, give you a minute to look it over, then we'll discuss [IF FOCUS GROUP: as a group]. [MODERATOR HANDS OUT LOADED LABEL]⁴
- a. When looking at this label, what information stands out to you?
 - i. Is the information that stands out to you different than what stood out to you when looking at the other labels we already reviewed?
 - b. You may have noticed that there is additional information presented on this label. This label reads "a vehicle with a 3-star overall vehicle score has about the same relative safety as the passenger vehicle fleet average."
 - i. How many read this explanation when you were initially reviewing the label?
 - ii. If you are [looking to/helping your customer] evaluate the safety of a vehicle [you/they] are considering, does this explanation help you?
 - iii. Do you find this explanation to be necessary to include directly on the label?

21. [MODERATOR HAND OUT ALL VERSIONS OF LABEL 1 MOCKED AS FULL MONRONEY LABEL] Now looking at these label designs in the context of the entire Monroney label, does one stand out as better able to help you in your purchase decision?⁴
- a. Does one stand out as easier to read?
 - b. Does one stand out visually as more appealing? Less cluttered?
 - c. Does one stand out as better at capturing your attention?
 - d. Does one stand out as easier to understand?

[MODERATOR – IF CLEAR WINNER, SET MOCK UP ASIDE]

22. Let's briefly take look at another way the 5-star safety ratings section could be presented.

[MODERATOR HANDS LABEL 2 - STANDARD]⁴

- a. When looking at this label, what information stands out to you?

[MODERATOR RANDOMIZE ORDER OF LABELS PRESENTED]

[MODERATOR HANDS LABEL 2 – DESIGN CHANGE]

- b. When looking at this label, what information stands out to you?
 - i. Is the information that stands out to you different than what stood out to you when looking at the black and white label?

[MODERATOR HANDS LABEL 2 – SIMPLIFIED]

- c. When looking at this label, what information stands out to you?
 - i. Is the information that stands out to you different than what stood out to you when looking at the other versions of this label?

[MODERATOR HANDS LABEL 2 – LOADED]

- d. When looking at this label, what information stands out to you?
 - i. Is the information that stands out to you different than what stood out to you when looking at the other versions of this label?

23. [MODERATOR HAND OUT ALL VERSIONS MOCKED AS FULL MONRONEY LABEL] Now looking at these label designs in the context of the entire Monroney label, does one stand out as better able to help you in your purchase decision?⁴

- a. Does one stand out as easier to read?
- b. Does one stand out visually as more appealing? Less cluttered?
- c. Does one stand out as better at capturing your attention?
- d. Does one stand out as easier to understand?

24. Compared to the first set of labels we looked at, is this label easier or harder to read or does it make no difference?⁴

- a. What reasons do you have for saying this?
- b. Compared to the first set of labels we looked at, is this label easier or harder to understand or does it make no difference?
 - i. What reasons do you have for saying this?

25. I have one final example of how this section could be presented. [MODERATOR HANDS LABEL 3 - STANDARD]⁴

a. When looking at this label, what information stands out to you?

[MODERATOR RANDOMIZE ORDER OF LABELS]

[MODERATOR HANDS LABEL 3 – DESIGN CHANGE]

b. When looking at this label, what information stands out to you?

i. Is the information that stands out to you different than what stood out to you when looking at the black and white label?

[MODERATOR HANDS LABEL 3 – SIMPLIFIED]

c. When looking at this label, what information stands out to you?

i. Is the information that stands out to you different than what stood out to you when looking at the other versions of this label?

[MODERATOR HANDS LABEL 2 – LOADED]

e. When looking at this label, what information stands out to you?

i. Is the information that stands out to you different than what stood out to you when looking at the other versions of this label?

26. [MODERATOR HAND OUT ALL VERSIONS MOCKED UP AS FULL MONRONEY LABEL]

Now looking at these label designs in the context of the entire Monroney label, does one stand out as better able to help you in your purchase decision?⁴

a. Does one stand out as easier to read?

b. Does one stand out visually as more appealing? Less cluttered?

c. Does one stand out as better at capturing your attention?

d. Does one stand out as easier to understand?

27. Compared to the other sets of labels we looked at, is this label easier or harder to read or does it make no difference?⁴

a. What reasons do you have for saying this?

b. Compared to the first set of labels we looked at, is this label easier or harder to understand or does it make no difference?

i. What reasons do you have for saying this?

28. Let's take one last look at these labels in the context of the entire Monroney label. We had four examples of Label 1 [MODERATOR PLACE 4 LABEL 1 EXAMPLES ON TABLE]⁴
- a. Does one of these designs stand out as being most useful to your purchase decision?
[MODERATOR SET ASIDE THOSE THAT ARE MENTIONED]
 - b. Now let's look at Label 2 [MODERATOR PLACE 4 LABEL 1 EXAMPLES ON TABLE]
 - i. Does one of these designs stand out as most useful to your purchase decision?
[MODERATOR SET ASIDE THOSE THAT ARE MENTIONED]
 - c. Finally, Label 3 [MODERATOR PLACE 4 LABEL 1 EXAMPLES ON TABLE]
 - i. Does one of these designs stand out as most useful to your purchase decision?
[MODERATOR SET ASIDE THOSE THAT ARE MENTIONED]
 - d. [MODERATOR LAY OUT TOP 4 LABELS SELECTED BY GROUP] Now, looking at all the ones that were selected, does one stand out as being most useful to your purchase decision?

[IF TIME ALLOWS] For our last activity tonight, I'd like you as a group to create the ideal Monroney label. I have each section printed out separately and I have samples from each of the different types of labels we evaluated tonight. I'll spread these out on the table, and I'd like you put the label together like a puzzle. You choose which design to use, you choose where the information is positioned. Remember that the various sections of the Monroney label are mandated by Congress and cannot be changed, so you must use each section – you are only making a recommendation on which design to use. [MODERATOR STEPS OUT OF THE ROOM TO FIELD ANY FINAL QUESTIONS FROM THE BACK ROOM]

29. Can I have a volunteer explain the choices you made to design this label?⁴
- a. Since you were given print outs, you did not have the ability to choose the size of each section. So looking at the relative size of each piece of information on the Monroney label, would you make any of these sections larger? Smaller? Why?
 - i. Which section do you believe should be the largest? Why?
 - b. Is the safety ratings example you chose the ideal size for this section of the Monroney label?
 - i. Does anyone believe this section should be larger? Why?
 - ii. Does anyone believe this section should be smaller? Why?
 - c. Looking at the label you put together, is there anything you would change if you were given additional options for this exercise?
 - i. In what ways would this change help you make your vehicle purchase decision?
30. Do you have any final advice for NHTSA as they are looking to redesign the 5-star safety ratings section of the label to help consumers evaluate the safety of the vehicles they are considering?

Thank and close group.