

January 16, 2026

The Honorable Jonathan Morrison  
Administrator  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Re: Docket No. NHTSA-2025-0721

Dear Administrator Morrison:

The Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) provides critical data and information not only to the federal government, but also to practitioners, advocates, and elected officials at all levels trying to improve the safety of the nation's roadways. **It is imperative that NHTSA prioritize the funding of this resource and protect the integrity of its data.**

Smart Growth America (SGA) is a national nonprofit focused on creating places that are healthy, prosperous, and resilient through work related to transportation, housing, and economic development. As part of our efforts to promote safe, active, and healthy transportation options for all Americans, SGA regularly publishes the Dangerous by Design report. This leading national resource explores pedestrian safety trends across the U.S. and calls for the implementation of proven safety countermeasures to protect not only people walking but all roadway users. This report is used by transportation planning and engineering practitioners and advocates alike, is regularly cited in national media, and is a cornerstone of the dialogue around the pedestrian safety crisis in this country. It cannot be produced without the data made available in FARS.

NHTSA's stated mission is to "save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce economic costs due to road traffic crashes, through education, research, safety standards, and enforcement activity." It would be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve this mission without accurately tracking what is happening on the nation's roadways in detail.

There are already growing concerns about FARS, including the level of detail of the information collected, the integrity of data reported from crash scenes, and the increasing lag time in producing timely quarterly and annual updates. These are all areas that NHTSA and DOT could work to improve upon in their efforts to coordinate with reporting states. If NHTSA and the Department of Transportation are serious in their commitment to addressing the nation's roadway crisis and creating a globally competitive transportation system, they must strengthen and improve data resources such as FARS. Any cuts to the funding or quality of FARS would be a clear message from the government that the safety and mobility of everyday Americans is not a priority.

It is impossible to solve a problem that is ill-defined or underreported. Not knowing the extent of where and how many traffic fatalities are taking place would make it nearly impossible to make progress in creating safer roadways. NHTSA must continue to fund, improve, and prioritize FARS to ensure stakeholders working to improve safety across the country have access to the resources they need to diagnose safety issues and evaluate the effectiveness of safety interventions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Beth Osborne", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Beth Osborne  
CEO, Smart Growth America