

RIDE Act

The *Reduce Impaired Driving for Everyone Act of 2019* or the *RIDE Act* will fund the technology transfer of federally funded research and development of advanced alcohol detection software – technology that detects whether a driver is impaired over the legal limit and, if so, prevents that driver from starting the car. The act sets up a pilot program for fleet deployment of vehicles equipped with this software with the federal General Services Administration, state and local partners, and private fleet owners. Finally, the act requires a rulemaking to mandate installment of this software in every new vehicle.

Background

In 2017, 10,847 people were killed on American roads as a result of drunk driving¹. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), that means a drunk driver killed someone every 48 minutes². Each one of those deaths was preventable. Yet a drunk driver has only a two percent chance of being caught. Despite robust educational and enforcement initiatives, drunk driving still accounts for one-third of all traffic fatalities.

Potential technologies include devices to determine a driver's blood alcohol level by touching the steering wheel or engine start button. Others include sensors that passively monitor a driver's breath or eye-movements. Car manufacturers are already working on technology that can be integrated into their vehicles to prevent impaired driving.

NHTSA has partnered with leading automakers to explore the feasibility of in-vehicle technologies to prevent drunk driving. NHTSA has invested over \$50 million over 10 years in this technology. Evaluating public acceptance of this technology is a key part of this research and development effort, which does not affect state laws that set the .08 blood alcohol content limit. This equipment is already undergoing limited field testing in Maryland and Virginia.

Summary of Bill

In fiscal years 2021-22, NHTSA is directed to work with automobile manufacturers, suppliers and other interested parties, including universities with expertise in automotive engineering, to advance the Driver Alcohol Detection System for Safety (DADSS) technology or other suitable advanced drunk driving prevention technology, with the goal of integrating the technology in to vehicles available for sale at the earliest practicable date. Five million dollars per year is authorized for this activity.

During this same time, NHTSA will work with the General Services Administration to conduct a fleet demonstration of advanced drunk driving prevention technology in a minimum of 2500 vehicles. Twenty-five million dollars is authorized to support this test fleet. This pilot program will strengthen the manufacturing supply chain to better prepare for widespread deployment.

In addition, NHTSA will work with state and local government and private sector fleets to encourage greater use of advanced drunk driving prevention technology to assist in creating market demand for the technology. States may use their current federal safety funding for these pilot programs.

¹ NHTSA Drunk Driving landing page Retrieved from <https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/drunk-driving>

² Ibid.

Finally, the Administrator of NHTSA will issue a final rule two years after enactment of the bill and vehicle manufacturers must comply with the rule not be more than two model years after the effective date of the rule. The rulemaking will allow for any technology that could stop a drunk driver from driving a vehicle. If a technology utilizes the blood alcohol concentration, then it must meet the legal limit of the jurisdiction in which the vehicle is located. It does not require the specific DADDS technology software.

Support for the Bill

The bipartisan *RIDE Act* is supported by a wide range of organizations representing automakers and advocates for the prevention of drunk driving, including:

- Advocates for Highway & Auto Safety
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)
- National Safety Council