

Consumer Groups Sue Government Over Backup Camera Delay

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Consumers Union — the lobbying group for Consumer Reports — joined the Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety, Kids and Cars Inc. and two parents in filing a lawsuit Wednesday against the Department of Transportation for "unreasonable delay" on a backup camera mandate. The ruling, issued after Congress passed — and President George W. Bush signed — the Cameron Gulbransen Kids Transportation Safety Act in 2008, is named after a child killed when an SUV backed into him in 2002. The bill authorized the DOT to

issue a law within three years unless conditions could not be met.

Since then, DOT has pushed the timetable back [four times](#), the [latest of which](#) delays a final rule until 2015. That rule would likely stipulate a phase-in period, which means shoppers may not see standard backup cameras until the 2017 or 2018 model year. Still, automakers like Honda are ahead of the game with backup cameras [in almost all cars](#).

A 2012 Harris Poll survey found [growing consumer interest](#) in the cameras. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has said they would add \$159 to \$203 per vehicle for cars without instrument panel screens but only \$58 to \$88 for cars that already have them — and those displays are reaching ubiquity, with brands as affordable as Scion [making them standard](#).

The DOT estimates standard backup cameras would prevent 95 to 112 deaths and 7,072 to 8,374 injuries a year, Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety [said in a press release](#). That's a large chunk of the 228 people killed and 17,000 injured in so-called "backover" crashes by light-duty vehicles (e.g., not semi-trucks), the lawsuit claimed. The death toll is a small chunk of pedestrian deaths caused by motorists — 4,432 were killed in 2011, according to a [May 2013 report](#) by NHTSA — but the injury toll is significant. NHTSA says some 69,000 pedestrians were injured by a motorist in 2011; that means a quarter of those incidents may have resulted from light-duty vehicles backing into people.

"The Transportation Department has a mission, duty and obligation to protect the public, but every day it stalls this rule, Americans unnecessarily remain in danger," Kids and Cars President Janette Fennell said in a statement. DOT spokeswoman Karen Aldana did not respond to our request for comment. NHTSA said Monday it would add backup cameras to its list of recommended vehicle technologies, which go alongside a given car's five-star safety ratings. Scott Michelman, an attorney at Public Citizen, which represents the litigating group, [told USA Today](#) that "a recommendation is no substitute for a mandate."

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