

## INTRODUCTION

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The challenge to the highway transportation system presented by elderly drivers has been well documented in the Transportation Research Board's "Transportation in an Aging Society." Increasing numbers of older citizens being increasingly dependent upon automobiles for transportation translates into an estimated two-thirds increase in elderly licensed drivers by the year 2030. The "old-old" group of elderly drivers is expected to experience a three-fold increase in size over this period of time.

Increasing numbers of drivers will be accompanied by an increased dependence upon the automobile for transportation. In the 85-plus age group, use of private automobiles relative to other modes of transportation increased by over 10% in the five-year period 1977 - 1983. Such a shift suggests that the annual mileage compiled by that age group will rise by considerably more than the three-fold population increase. A substantial mileage increase in a segment of the population whose per-mile accident rate approaches that of teenagers presents an obvious threat to the safety of the motoring public.

Much of the burden for controlling the threat represented by elderly drivers falls upon State driver licensing agencies. It is the licensing process that is expected to limit the access of unsafe drivers to the

public streets and highways. However, licensing authorities recognize that, with today's dependence upon automobiles for mobility, driving has assumed the stature of a basic right, to be restricted or withdrawn only where continued driving creates a clear and present danger to the public. The dilemma that this situation creates for licensing agencies has been difficult for its agents to resolve. Any attempt to accommodate declining abilities with more extensive testing, or through restrictions in amount or kind of driving, inevitably encounters the individual and collective resistance of the elderly. Yet, when the cause of a serious accident is revealed to be an elderly incompetent, the licensing agency is inevitably called to account.

The papers presented in this report encompass the three principal functions of the driver licensing process as it addresses elderly drivers:

- Screening Processes;
- Corrective Processes; and
- Support Processes.

Each paper examines an individual process within a particular function, describing the *problem* giving rise to the process, the *needs* that the process must satisfy, and the actions that must be taken to meet those needs.