It’s Time to Step Up Support for ATRI

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In creating the American Transportation Research Institute nearly 15 years ago, the trucking industry launched a plan to provide credible research focused on the industry’s top priorities.

At that time, Mike Wickham, founding chairman of ATRI, experienced his own Neil Armstrong moment — his one small step in establishing ATRI was a giant step for the industry he loved.

Today, we all benefit from that first step, and we need to ensure that ATRI continues to deliver on its critical mission for the next 15 years and beyond. Now is the time for our collective industry to boost our support of ATRI, which is the only not-for-profit research organization exclusively dedicated to the trucking industry’s safety and productivity.

The ATRI board members and I have a specific request: We need more support from more of you in the industry, whether that means starting to give or increasing your annual amount. In fact, each of our individual professional organizations has committed to increase annual giving to ATRI by a minimum of 20%.

ATRI works to carry out research with an emphasis on the trucking industry’s essential role in a safe, efficient transportation system.

Over the years, ATRI analyses have helped us crystallize the facts around the real-world effects of regulatory actions so that we’re better armed to advocate our positions on Capitol Hill. ATRI’s extensive work in freight performance measures has allowed us to identify the nation’s most critical freight nodes and bottlenecks so that we can target limited transportation resources. And ATRI’s objective analyses of the costs and benefits of myriad safety technologies have given us the data needed to make wise investment decisions and maximize our returns on investments.

Some examples:

- In the past two years, at least three state governors have cited ATRI’s bottleneck analyses when initiating major reconstruction projects.

- Eighteen months before Congress acted in December 2014 to suspend the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration’s 34-hour restart provision in the hours-of-service regulations, ATRI research documented government miscalculations on the costs and benefits and the potential effects that the industry would experience under those rules. In April 2014, ATRI delivered a peer review of FMCSA research that highlighted serious concerns with the agency’s research methodology and findings.

- Last December, ATRI took a deep dive into census data that provided a sobering assessment of the true causes of the truck driver shortage — research that also gives us proactive guidance on how we can substantively address the issues over the long run.

ATRI differs from outside research endeavors because of its profound understanding of how our industry really works. This has generated unparalleled ATRI support from the trucking industry.

Further enhancing ATRI’s credibility is its Research Advisory Committee, a diverse group of motor carriers, industry suppliers, government officials, law enforcement agencies, academics, organized labor and driver association officials — all of whom collaboratively develop an aggressive research agenda for the industry.

ATRI also benefits from real-world data it receives from motor carriers and insurers, extensive partnerships and data-sharing agreements with numerous industry suppliers and stakeholders, as well as robust participation of truck drivers in its research.

In summary, we all desire to be good corporate citizens. We want to share the highways safely, protect the environment and ensure the safety of our greatest asset, our employees. We must be armed with the latest information to ensure that what we do makes scientific and business sense. Your support of ATRI will help make that happen.

If you have never contributed to ATRI, please make 2015 the year you “step up.” If you have contributed, please consider giving more. This can be done easily through ATRI’s website www.atri-online.org. Click through the dozens of ATRI research reports and analyses, and you’ll quickly recognize the long-term value of your annual commitment to ATRI.

We’ve done a lot for the industry, and there’s more to do. On behalf of my fellow board members, I thank you for your support.

American Transportation Research Institute is part of American Trucking Associations, and is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit research organization headquartered in Arlington, Virginia. The institute’s primary mission is to conduct transportation research with an emphasis on the trucking industry’s essential role in a safe, efficient and viable transportation system.

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