

EDOLPHUS TOWNS, NEW YORK,
CHAIRMAN

PAUL E. KANJORSKI, PENNSYLVANIA
CAROLYN B. MALONEY, NEW YORK
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, MARYLAND
DENNIS J. KUCINICH, OHIO
JOHN F. TIERNEY, MASSACHUSETTS
WM. LACY CLAY, MISSOURI
DIANE E. WATSON, CALIFORNIA
STEPHEN F. LYNCH, MASSACHUSETTS
JIM COOPER, TENNESSEE
GERALD E. CONNOLLY, VIRGINIA
MIKE QUIGLEY, ILLINOIS
MARCY KAPTUR, OHIO
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON,
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
PATRICK J. KENNEDY, RHODE ISLAND
DANNY K. DAVIS, ILLINOIS
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, MARYLAND
HENRY CUELLAR, TEXAS
PAUL W. HODES, NEW HAMPSHIRE
CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY, CONNECTICUT
PETER WELCH, VERMONT
BILL FOSTER, ILLINOIS
JACKIE SPEIER, CALIFORNIA
STEVE DRIEHAUS, OHIO
JUDY CHU, CALIFORNIA

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051
FACSIMILE (202) 225-4784
MINORITY (202) 225-5074

www.oversight.house.gov

DARRELL E. ISSA, CALIFORNIA,
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

DAN BURTON, INDIANA
JOHN L. MICA, FLORIDA
MARK E. SOUDER, INDIANA
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TENNESSEE
MICHAEL R. TURNER, OHIO
LYNN A. WESTMORELAND, GEORGIA
PATRICK T. McHENRY, NORTH CAROLINA
BRIAN P. BILBRAY, CALIFORNIA
JIM JORDAN, OHIO
JEFF FLAKE, ARIZONA
JEFF FORTENBERRY, NEBRASKA
JASON CHAFFETZ, UTAH
AARON SCHOCK, ILLINOIS
BLAINE LUETKEMEYER, MISSOURI
ANH "JOSEPH" CAO, LOUISIANA

February 3, 2010

Mr. Yoshimi Inaba
President and CEO
Toyota Motor North America, Inc.
601 13th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Inaba:

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee in the U.S. House of Representatives, with jurisdiction over "any matter." Under Rules X and XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the Committee is investigating Toyota Motor Corporation's recall of millions of vehicles due to concerns related to unintended acceleration of those vehicles.

As part of this inquiry, on February 2, 2010, officials from Toyota met with Committee staff to discuss a number of issues related to the ongoing concerns related to unintended acceleration in various Toyota models. While a number of explanations were provided as to how Toyota first identified the acceleration issue and also how it intends to address it, several questions were raised that require additional information. To that end, I am writing to request additional clarity regarding the following:

1. Is it safe to drive the Toyota models that have been recalled? Please explain your answer in detail.
2. According to Toyota officials interviewed by staff, in 2007 Toyota issued a recall involving all-weather floor mats for the Lexus ES 350 and at least some models of the Toyota Camry. At that time, did Toyota also examine other Toyota models to determine whether there was a floormat problem? If not, why not? After learning about the pedal entrapment problem in the Lexus ES 350 and Toyota Camry in 2007, were potentially obstructive floor mats subsequently added to any of the vehicles that were eventually recalled in 2009?

3. A review of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's (NHTSA) database on the Toyota Tacoma reveals that in excess of 100 complaints of sudden acceleration have been reported since 2007. Many of these would suggest that something other than floor mat entrapment could be the root cause of these incidents. Nonetheless, as was explained by Toyota officials, the Tacoma is equipped with a Denso pedal assembly which has not been implicated in the "sticky pedal" recall of last month. It is my understanding that the recall is limited to the CTS pedal, which apparently has a different design. Given that fact, what explains the seemingly high number of complaints in NHTSA's database regarding sudden acceleration in this model? Is it Toyota's opinion that most of these can be explained by driver error, erroneous reporting, or faulty floor mats?
4. Some Tacoma drivers reported to NHTSA that they had sudden acceleration problems when there were no floor mats in the vehicle. For example, on March 26, 2009, one complainant reported:

"I bought my 2005 Tacoma about 2 months ago. I have experienced this problem three times now. The last time being tonight after picking up my daughter at work. The truck was accelerating and I was literally standing on the brake and the engine was racing and would not stop. I through [sic] it into neutral and it sounded like it was going to explode! I have no rugs in my vehicle, it did not come with any, and I was going to get the all weather mats, but have not bought them yet. The cruise control was not engaged. I do consider myself to be a fairly experienced driver, I use [sic] to race a 70 Chevelle in the 1/4 mile (this was many years ago). If I did not have such experience I am sure I would have ran the car up a tree or something. I am scared, I have beat cancer twice and I'll be ǀ!@#\$\$% if I am going to let a faulty Tacoma take me out. *TR"

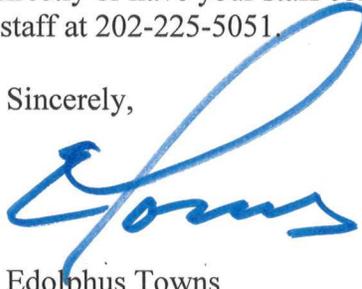
NHTSA has received other, similar complaints. What would explain episodes such as this, where drivers are experiencing an uncontrollable acceleration and, reportedly, no floor mats are present in the vehicle (or they reported the floor mat was not involved), particularly for this make and model where no CTS pedal is involved?

5. It is our understanding that Toyota intends to build a "brake override" system into the computers of all new models of its vehicles. This brake override system would automatically allow the brake to override an acceleration command to the throttle, which would allow the vehicle to be more easily stopped in the event of unintended, sudden acceleration. Which current models now in operation could be reprogrammed to allow a brake override capability and what would the cost be for each vehicle?
6. Is Toyota considering expanding brake override capability to existing models? If so, which models? If not, why not?

7. Recent media reports have suggested that the federal government is exploring whether electrical problems may be involved in these sudden acceleration incidents. Has Toyota examined the possibility that the sudden acceleration problems are not caused by the floor mats or gas pedal in some models, but by problems with the electronic sensors or the computer system which govern the accelerator? Is Toyota confident that the electronics are not involved in this problem?

Because I believe that many of these questions are central to the ongoing safety issues regarding Toyota's recent recalls, I would appreciate your response to these questions no later than the close of business on Monday, February 8, 2010. Should you have any questions regarding this request, you may contact me directly or have your staff contact Christopher Knauer or Kevin Barstow of the Committee staff at 202-225-5051.

Sincerely,



Edolphus Towns
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Darrell Issa
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform