



NHTSA


NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADMINISTRATION

Speed Prevention Social Norming Campaign Concept Testing

March 2025

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Research Design

Purpose & Methodology

Purpose

Evaluate advertising concepts designed to influence 18- to 44-year-old men to stop driving over the posted speed limit no matter the road type or how comfortable they feel by positioning it as the ultimate act of care for people in their community (neighbors, families and children).

Research Objectives

1. Evaluate concepts.
2. Identify the most compelling elements.
3. Diagnose potential areas of improvement.
4. Evaluate effectiveness in influencing behavior to wear a seat belt every time while driving.
5. Evaluate effectiveness at communicating the message.

Methodology

Focus Groups (8 groups)

- 75-minute groups
- n=48 participants (6 per group)

Qualification Criteria

- National audience
- Male
- 18 to 44 years old
- Holds a valid driver's license
- Drives at least once a week
- Exceeds the posted speed limit by at least 10+ mph on local roads or 15+ mph on highways on a regular basis

Concepts Tested & Discussion Flow

Life Flies By



Intense Conversations



Dog Walker



Expect Delays



Warm-Up/Initial Discussion

Evaluation of Individual Concepts

Main
Message

Effective
Elements

Potential
Improvements

Comparison of Concepts

Memorable
Elements

Most
Influential

Best
Communicates
Enforcement

Wrap-Up & Close

A blurred photograph of a city street with cars and buildings, overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The text 'Key Findings' is centered in white.

Key Findings

Speed Social Norming Concept Evaluation

The Speed social norming concepts included examples of **a more literal concept and three more imaginative concepts**.

After the first two nights of groups, we identified **a clear need to help participants understand the creative intent**.

The **creative director was invited to participate** in the second half of groups to provide the necessary creative vision, which is hard to convey in an animatic, but would be addressed in the production of the final spot.

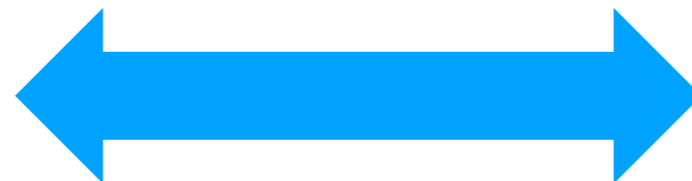
Once participants were properly grounded in the creative direction, a clear shift in feedback was observed, which allowed them to make better-**informed evaluations** of the more abstract, imaginative concepts.

Therefore, in evaluating what concept to pursue, we recommend that a **greater emphasis be placed on the latter half of the groups** in which the creative director participated.

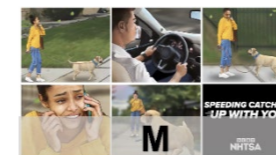
***More
“Literal”***



Life Flies By
(Concept L)



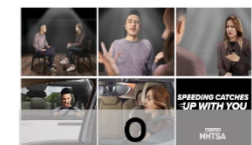
***More
“Imaginative”***



Dog Walker
(Concept M)



Expect Delays
(Concept P)



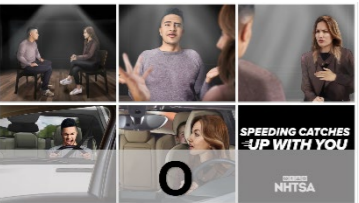



***Intense
Conversations***
(Concept O)

Concept Comparison

Communicates Message

Before and after the creative director's involvement, *Dog Walker* was overwhelmingly chosen as the concept that best communicates the message that driving within the posted speed limit is an act of care for one's community.

Concept Assessment	Communicates Message	Pre-Creative Director Involvement	Post-Creative Director Involvement
	<i>Dog Walker</i> (Concept M)	63% (15/24)	83% (20/24)
	<i>Life Flies By</i> (Concept L)	21% (5/24)	4% (1/24)
	<i>Intense Conversations</i> (Concept O)	17% (4/24)	8% (2/24)
	<i>Expect Delays*</i> (Concept P)	0% (0/24)	6% (1/18)



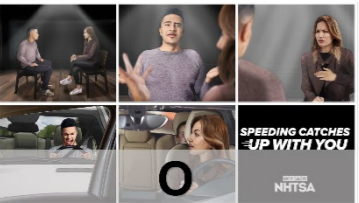

NOTE: Blue highlights highest score among concepts; gray highlights lowest score among concepts

*Concept P was not shown to the final two groups.

Concept Comparison

Influences Behavior

Creative director involvement strongly shifted perceptions of which concepts most influenced behavior. In particular, *Dog Walker* emerged as a much stronger candidate. *Life Flies By*, a more literal concept, performed about the same before and after creative director involvement.

Concept Assessment	Influences Behavior	Pre-Creative Director Involvement	Post-Creative Director Involvement
	<i>Dog Walker</i> (Concept M)	4% (1/24)	42% (10/24)
	<i>Life Flies By</i> (Concept L)	29% (7/24)	33% (8/24)
	<i>Intense Conversations</i> (Concept O)	29% (7/24)	21% (5/24)
	<i>Expect Delays*</i> (Concept P)	38% (9/24)	6% (1/18)



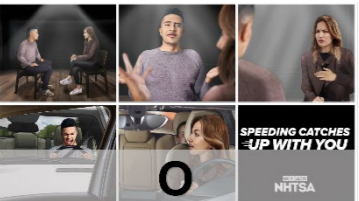

NOTE: Blue highlights highest score among concepts; gray highlights lowest score among concepts.

*Concept P was not shown to the final two groups.

Concept Comparison

Grades

All concepts received better grades after the creative director's involvement. Despite lower scores compared to *Dog Walker* on both concept comparison votes, *Life Flies By* maintained the highest grades even after the creative director's involvement.

Concept Assessment	Graded the Concept A/B	Pre-Creative Director Involvement	Post-Creative Director Involvement
	<i>Dog Walker</i> (Concept M)	25% (6/24)	33% (8/24)
	<i>Life Flies By</i> (Concept L)	50% (12/24)	58% (14/24)
	<i>Intense Conversations</i> (Concept O)	25% (6/24)	54% (13/24)
	<i>Expect Delays*</i> (Concept P)	25% (6/24)	33% (6/18)



NOTE: Blue highlights highest score among concepts; gray highlights lowest score among concepts

**Concept P was not shown to the final two groups.*

Concept Comparison

Thematic Elements

Following the involvement of the creative director, *Dog Walker* performed best for both evaluation questions, while *Life Flies By* garnered the best grades. Therefore, we extended our analysis to consider how each concept performs on key thematic elements.

Evaluation Category	Life Flies By (Concept L)	Dog Walker (Concept M)
		
Familiar	✓	
Realistic	✓	
Relatable	✓	✓
Has a Dog		✓
Connects with Speeding		✓
Communicates Danger of Speeding in Community		✓
Shows Impact on Others		✓
Influences Behavior (Post-Creative Director Involvement)		✓

Q3. Assuming the concept’s main intent is to motivate you to drive at the posted speed limit every time you drive a vehicle, what grade would you give this concept?

Recommendation

Recommendation



Dog Walker

Based on a strong performance on both evaluation questions and its array of compelling thematic elements, we recommend moving forward with *Dog Walker*.

While *Life Flies By* received strong grades and shows potential for influencing behavior, respondent feedback indicates it lacks the necessary thematic elements and emotional punch to be more than a “good” ad execution, whereas *Dog Walker*, if well executed, has the potential to be a “great” concept.

Improvements—*Dog Walker*

1. Need to visually establish a clear connection of the dog walker and driver being in the same neighborhood.
2. Consider leading with the scene of the driver in the vehicle to reinforce the focus on speeding.
3. As the spot transitions to the incident, need to make sure it's clear that the crash is caused by speeding.

The background of the slide is a blurred photograph of a city street, likely taken from an elevated position. The street is filled with cars, and buildings are visible in the distance. A semi-transparent blue overlay covers the entire image, creating a uniform blue tint. The text is centered and rendered in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

Appendix: Concept Evaluations

Dog Walker

(Concept M)

Influences Behavior*	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
1 st (42%)	1 st (83%)	33% (n=8)



Dog Walker depicts the danger of speeding in a residential community and the ways this behavior can harm strangers. The concept tugs at heartstrings with the inclusion of a dog who will lose its owner due to speeding. Additionally, it draws the viewer in with a supernatural element.

Effective Elements

- Dog walker and neighborhood setting strongly communicates the message that speeding can harm others and is a danger in one’s community.
- Most effectively connects to speeding through visuals and dialogue early in the concept.
- The inclusion of the dog emotionally resonates with many in the target.

“It set up that something bad was gonna happen—this person is almost jokingly, like, I’m gonna speed it up, save some time. And it **affected someone other than himself**. I have a dog myself, so it was relatable seeing the dog. Overall, I think it was a fairly strong message.

*Scores and grades are aggregated for groups 5-8—after the involvement of the creative director.

Dog Walker

(Concept M)

Influences Behavior*	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
1 st (42%)	1 st (83%)	33% (n=8)



Dog Walker can be strengthened by clarifying the supernatural elements, showing the driver and the dog walker to be in the same neighborhood, and by showing that the crash is related to speeding.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Make clear earlier in the spot that the driver and the woman are in the same neighborhood (e.g., a drone shot panning out from the driver and then toward the dog walker).
- Make clear the cause of the crash and that it was related to speeding (e.g., consider showing the dog walker at a crosswalk rather than on the sidewalk).
- In production, use sound, camera and lighting techniques to make clear that the protagonist has entered a “Twilight Zone”-esque state and that her staying put is not the result of a mental or medical condition.

“My initial reaction was **confusion**, and it turned from confusion to being **put off by the video**.”

*Scores and grades are aggregated for groups 5-8 — after the involvement of the creative director.

Life Flies By

(Concept L)

Influences Behavior*	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
2nd (42%)	3rd (83%)	58% (n=14)



Life Flies By shows how the decision to speed can bring a life to an abrupt end. The concept builds an emotional connection by showing a family through time.

Effective Elements

- Showing the family through time is relatable.
- The concept is straightforward and realistic, making it more relatable compared to more abstract or supernatural concepts.
- The theme that life can be abruptly cut short by the poor decision to speed is sobering.



*It is a **punch in the gut**. That's how I feel. It makes a very strong statement. Wherever you are in life, however happy you are with a family or your career, **you make one wrong move and it all ends.***

*Scores and grades are aggregated for groups 5-8—after the involvement of the creative director.

Life Flies By

(Concept L)

Influences Behavior*	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
2 nd (42%)	3 rd (83%)	58% (n=14)



Life Flies By struggles to connect to speeding, and the lack of dialogue limits its ability to build an emotional connection. Additionally, participants question the realism of showing the same family vehicle over such a long period of time.

Opportunities for Improvement

- The concept makes a poor connection to speeding, with nothing in the concept to indicate why the protagonist was the one speeding, whether they caused the crash and whether they were a habitual speeder.
- While context suggests the protagonist caused the crash due to speeding, some respondents were confused as to who was at fault in the crash.
- Respondents found the family use of the same vehicle over such a long period unrealistic.
- The concept’s emotional impact is reduced due to a lack of storyline or dialog between the characters, as well as not showing the impact on loved ones.



At the very end, *was [the protagonist] the one speeding?* And if he was, were there any *reasons* for it? Was he late for something? Everything up to that point resonates with me, then *you just see the car accident and you're like, what happened?*

*Scores and grades are aggregated for groups 5-8—after the involvement of the creative director.

Intense Conversations

(Concept O)

Influences Behavior*	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
3 rd (21%)	2 nd (8%)	54% (n=13)



Intense Conversations shows the danger of speeding by portraying the conversation between a speeder and the victim of a speeding-related crash they caused. The concept is dramatic and intrigues viewers by starting with an intervention-style conversation.

Effective Elements

- Portrays the harm of speeding on innocent third parties.
- Intervention-style conversation catches attention and builds interest.
- Shows the regret the speeder experiences when he sees how his actions affect others.



*I like this one... I got, like, an **intervention vibe**... it **grabbed my attention because it was a story**. What's going on? What's happening?*

*Scores and grades are aggregated for groups 5-8—after the involvement of the creative director.

Intense Conversations

(Concept O)

Influences Behavior*	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
3 rd (21%)	2 nd (8%)	54% (n=13)



Intense Conversations causes confusion among many viewers who struggle to connect it to speeding. Even after seeing the full animatic, some viewers remain confused about the relationship between the two characters.

Opportunities for Improvement

- For many, the reveal that the conversation relates to a speeding-related crash comes too late and causes confusion. While the misdirection is the point of the concept and should not be removed entirely, it may be helpful to workshop how the revelation should be clarified or moved forward in the conversation.
- Even after viewing the animatic, many viewers remain confused about the relationship between the characters.
- Clarify in the outro shots (showing the crash) that the crash was speeding-related.

“It felt like they were having some sort of **intervention for either a domestic issue or she was confronting him about some substance abuse issue**. The only thing that made me think otherwise was the screeching tires—it was **very confusing without that**.”

*Scores and grades are aggregated for groups 5-8—after the involvement of the creative director.

Expect Delays

(Concept P)

Influences Behavior*	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
4 th (6%)	4 th (6%)	33% (n=6)

Effective Elements

- Driver’s use of GPS and the frustration of finding oneself stuck in traffic are both relatable.
- For those who understand the concept, many find the time loop engaging or humorous.



*I liked this one. It kind of had a **Groundhog Day theme** about it where it just **keeps glitching** and kind of can't get out of that loop. And I think that's a popular theme in media and movies right now."*



Expect Delays uses a Groundhog Day-style time loop to show that speeding never turns out well. The concept is humorous and relatable to some viewers due to the prominent inclusion of the GPS.

**Scores and grades are aggregated for groups 5-6—after the involvement of the creative director and before Concept P was dropped in the final two groups.*

Expect Delays

(Concept P)

Influences Behavior*	Communicates Message	Graded the Concept A/B:
4 th (6%)	4 th (6%)	33% (n=6)



Expect Delays' use of repetition, while intriguing, leaves many viewers confused and put off by the fact that the character's behavior doesn't change at all between repetitions. The concept struggles to make a clear connection to speeding since many don't believe that it's realistic to speed when the GPS shows a crash ahead.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Many find the identical repetition between loops unrealistic—why does the driver keep trying the same thing?
- Respondents are confused about why the driver speeds up when seeing traffic ahead since most say they would immediately slow down.
- The concept struggles to connect to speeding since it's unclear whether it was speeding, aggressive driving or driving in the express lane that caused the crash.

I thought it was **nonsensical**, just the logic of the ad itself. **If the GPS is telling you there's an accident ahead, I think you have to be an illogical person to then just hit the accelerator.** How that would work in in a real-life situation didn't make any sense. And then to put it on repeat, it felt kind of crazy, to be honest.

*Scores and grades are aggregated for groups 5-6—after the involvement of the creative director and before Concept P was dropped in the final two groups.