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FAX ONLY
(202) 366-7882
(202) 366-3081

MR FRANK BORRIS
DEFECTS INVESTIGATION
U S DEPT OF TRANSPORTATION
NATIONAL HIGHWAY TRAFFIC SAFETY ADM
1200 NEW JERSEY AVE SE WEST BLDG
WASHINGTON DC 20590

RE: FORD E-150 VAN WAGONS (2008-2011)
2011 E-150 CLUB VAN XL PASSENGER WAGON WITH TOWING PACKAGE
VIN #1FMNE1BW1BD[redacted]

Dear Mr. Borris:

Enclosed you will find a fax to Mr. Bill Weigel at Bill's Auto Spring Service dated November 14, a follow-up of December 13 and Mr. Weigel's handwritten response to my December 13 fax.

The two best local suspension experts in this town are Bill's Auto Spring Service and Medley's Auto Alignment. Both receive considerable work from Ford Motor Company where they resolve spring, sway, control and weight distribution problems, etc. etc. with the larger Ford trucks. With two plants in Louisville they are the beneficiaries of a large revenue stream from Ford Motor Company as to warranty repairs and as vendors. Both companies refuse to provide me with anything in writing identifying the control issues experienced by my E-150 Club Wagon Van which is classified as a truck even though sold and packaged as a passenger van.

Mr. Weigel's conclusions are the same conclusions drawn by the national aftermarket suspension experts Hellwig, Roadmaster and Performance Suspension Technologies (PST).

Medley indicated that part of the problem was the front bushing brackets. The sway bar is sliding left to right through the bushings of the brackets. The purpose of a sway bar is to control the lean of the vehicle when turning. It is about controlling vertical lift as the weight of the vehicle shifts in a turn; however, it is no less significant that the sway bar is not supposed to shift from left to right and slide horizontally through the front bracket bushings.

The end of the sway bar no longer passes through the hole in the steel beam as shown in the pictures that were provided on the 2005 model (see Photo #3993). This design change occurred in 2009 and problems of control proliferated thereafter as reported by consumers

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after that design change. This is supported by the Technical Service Bulletins that NHTSA was involved with that came out in 2010. The Bulletin referenced "wandering". The suspension experts all agree contrary to the Bulletin that the "steering adjustment" on a newly manufactured vehicle should not be touched.

The new sway bar design is attached to a ball and pivot link. You have pictures. In the previous design (prior to 2009) where the end of the sway bar goes through the middle of the tire assembly I-beam as depicted in the year 2005 model. (See photo #3993.)

Medley's indicated that the sway bar should not be moving left to right through the front bracket bushing (see photos #3998 and 4015). True, there can be some up and down movement but there is not supposed to be any left-to-right movement.

When I first purchased the van, apparently the sway bar was moving left to right and that's why consumers reported that they had to constantly fight the vehicle to keep it tracking straight. In reality the cab body is moving and the platform is tracking straight giving the driver the wrong impression of uncontrollable steering.

If you have carefully examined the photographs that I sent you there was a severe shift from the driver's side to the passenger side. The shift was so severe that the sway bar is now stuck and pinned to the passenger side. Various technicians have indicated when the 2011 van is on flat ground, the links should be completely vertical. Because the sway bar is jammed, these links are severely angled toward the passenger side. I went over a set of about 15 railroad tracks that fed into a railroad yard and the sway bar remained in this stuck position.

Mr. Weigel indicated that because of the severe angle of the links, they could snap and then the sway bar would drop down into the steering linkage (see photo #4018) and probably cause a fatal accident.

The redesign that started in 2009 meant that the two solid stationary anchors of the sway bar going through the I-beam suspension were now attached to pivoting flexible links instead. Also, the sway bar should not be moving left to right through the front bracket bushings.

The wind resistance hitting the van at 65 to 70 mph or if the wind is 10 mph or greater, this causes the front cab of the van to slide left to right and back and forth. In other words, the sway bar serves a dual purpose – to limit the lean when making turns and also to keep the body over the platform when wind hits the vehicle.

The left to right movement was so severe one time that there was such a severe shift that the sway bar has become jammed and stuck and it has remained that way ever since. What becomes stuck will become unstuck eventually and when that happens there is going to be a severe accident. What we have are design defects in both the links and front bracket bushings

that are not holding the sway bar in place. The correction to save lives might be as easy as front redesigned bushing brackets that prevent left to right movement of the sway bar.

Take a real close look at Photos Nos. 3998 and 4014. These are pictures of the sway bar that are moving back and forth through the front brackets. You can see how the paint has been disturbed and is starting to rub off. Bear in mind this new vehicle only has 1200 miles on the odometer. In Photo No. 4014 this is a picture of the driver side sway bar where the sway bar has shifted so severely toward the passenger side that on the outer side of the bracket where the sway bar turns. It is making metal to metal contact with the bracket. All suspension experts will tell you that there should be no sway bar movement left to right or from driver side to passenger side and no metal-to-metal contact between the sway bar and the front bracket. Comparative photographs on year model 2005 are photos 3975 and 3976. This is a different type of a front sway bar bracket but you will observe that it hasn't moved in seven years. The sway bar is held in place because the ends of it are inserted in the I-beam.

Photograph No. 4015 is also the driver's side sway bar. The shift is so severe that you will observe metal-to-metal contact where the sway bar, which is hollow, is making contact with the edge of the metal bracket. As to the year model 2011 brackets, the bushing material is covered up entirely by the bracket and it is seated inside the bracket.

If you examine photograph No. 3993 it shows the passenger side of the sway bar that bends down and goes through the I-beam. On the other side of the I-beam it passes through, it is anchored with a washer and a nut. There is bushing material surrounding the frame I-beam hole that the sway bar passes through. You will also see in the same photograph a picture of the way bar and the front bracket. Look at the grime buildup and it becomes obvious that this sway bar has not moved in 7 years.

In photograph No. 3995 if you look at the bottom edge of the link, you will see the frame hole in the I-beam that is no longer used to attach the sway bar. In this picture the 2011 van is on a flat surface and the link should be vertical whereas the picture (No. 3995) clearly depicts the severe angle of the link.

When the wind blows the sway bar and the body is moving left to right and right to left and becomes much more severe when wind conditions exceed 10 mph.

The 2011 year sway bars are very accessible – two bolts for each bracket and one nut and screw on each link. The sway bar is hollow. The metal and materials probably were sold to Ford by a vendor costing perhaps costing as little as $50.00.

When you are traveling down the highway and the driver experiences left to right movement, it is a constant battle to keep the vehicle straight because the driver thinks that something is wrong with the steering and tires, which is not the problem at all. It is the cabin on top of the

platform that is moving left to right when driving on flat surfaces at a high rate of speed and/or when winds are above 10 mph.

As mentioned before, there is going to be a knee jerk reaction to this "wandering" and a driver is going to sense that the vehicle is headed for a ditch when in reality is it not, it is just the body shifting left to right on top of the platform. Then there is going to be a knee jerk reaction to grab the steering wheel and jerk it in the opposite direction causing a crash where the boxy type van is going to topple over and tumble down the highway.

The problem is so severe and numerous that Hellwig is working on a prototype of a replacement sway bar and brackets and bear in mind that there is supposed to be a 3-year manufacturing warranty on these issues but Ford fails to recognize that there is a problem. I can assure you that Hellwig is not going to go ahead with the sway bar/bracket manufacturing process involving vehicles under warranty unless there is a severe concern and a big demand to correct these problems.

[redacted]
Louisville KY [redacted]
[redacted]
lpb

cc: **FAX ONLY**
(937) 666-3590
MR ROGER SAUL
NVS-213
1200 NEW JERSEY AVE SE
WASHINGTON DC 20590

FAX ONLY
(202) 366-1767
MR RANDY REED
NVS-213
1200 NEW JERSEY AVE SE
WASHINGTON DC 20590