



## National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, DC 20594

Office of the Managing Director

February 8, 2021

INFORMATION REDACTED PURSUANT TO THE FREEDOM  
OF INFORMATION ACT (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. 552(B)(6)[REDACTED]  
Bainbridge Island, Washington [REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

This is in reply to your letter to the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) regarding your inability to have the recall on your 2018 Toyota Highlander addressed because the parts were not available.

To provide you some background, the NTSB is an independent federal agency charged by Congress with investigating every civil aviation accident in the United States and significant accidents in the other modes of transportation—railroad, highway, marine, and pipeline. We determine the probable cause of the accidents that we investigate and issue safety recommendations aimed at preventing future accidents. In addition, we coordinate the resources of the federal government and other organizations to assist victims and their family members affected by major transportation disasters. We derive this authority from Title 49 *United States Code* Chapter 11. We do not regulate highway safety or the automotive industry, nor are we authorized to address vehicle complaints.

The regulation of motor vehicle safety equipment, the investigation of potential vehicle defects, and the supervision of recalls are the responsibility of another federal agency, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). As a courtesy, we have forwarded your letter to that agency. If you wish to contact NHTSA directly regarding your concerns about the recall on your vehicle, you can do so at <https://www-odi.nhtsa.dot.gov/VehicleComplaint>.

I wish you the best.

Sincerely,

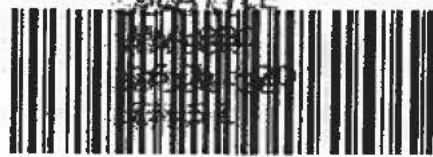
*Shavonne Austin*

Shavonne L. Austin  
Chief  
Executive Secretariat

cc: w/Enclosure  
Executive Secretariat  
NHTSA

PLACE STICKER AT TOP OF ENVELOPE TO THE RIGHT OF THE RETURN ADDRESS. FOLD AT DOTTED LINE

**CERTIFIED MAIL**



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BAINBRIDGE ISLAND, WASHINGTON



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NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION BOARD  
490 L'ENFANT PLAZA S.W.  
WASHINGTON, DC ~~20004~~  
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[REDACTED]  
Bainbridge Island, Washington [REDACTED]  
July 13, 2020

National Transportation Board  
490 L'Enfant Plaza S.W.  
Washington D.C. 30594

Re: Toyota Highlander Recall

Dear Ms. Chou

I received a recall notice in May. When I tried to schedule repairs, I was told parts are not available and when I first learned of the problem, I was told parts were not even in production leaving me an unsafe car. I was verbally told I could have a loaner but when I tried to confirm that I have had no response.

What good is it to be told you have issued a recall if no repairs are forthcoming? Could you please have your office take further action and tell me what recourse I have?

Thank you,

[REDACTED]  
VIN: 5TDDZRFH6JS [REDACTED]

CC: Consumers Report  
Heartland Toyota

Toyota Motor Sales USA Inc.  
P.O. Box 259001  
Plano, Texas 75025-9001

Re: Molly Voorhies/2018 Highlander Limited AWD/Vin:5TDDZRFH6J9 [REDACTED]

Dear Sirs,

I sent the enclosed letter to Heartland Toyota in Bremerton, Washington. I have had no response although, according to certified mail tracking, it was received June 15<sup>th</sup>.

Although I was told that an equivalent loaner vehicle would be provided until the defect is repaired, I am uneasy about driving about 45 minutes to Heartland without a written confirmation of the oral statement by the service manager. Consequently, I sent the letter referenced above, which was delivered, as noted above, on 6/15/20. No Response, which confirms my concern that, perhaps Heartland will not honor the offer made by its service manager since they have not confirmed that oral commitment.

What is the point of a recall if repairs are not available? Moreover, the gall of the dealership in Cathedral City in asking me to sign that I had "declined" the repair of the recall defect when the repair was not available.

Please respond.

Sincerely,  
[REDACTED]

CC w/enclosures Heartland Toyota, NTSB, and Consumer Reports

[REDACTED]  
Bainbridge Island, Washington [REDACTED]  
May 31, 2020

To:  
Scott Moritz, Service Manager  
Heartland Toyota  
901 W. Hills Blvd.  
Bremerton, Washington 98312

Dear Mr. Moritz,

On May 2, 2020 I first learned of a recall on my 2018 Highlander when I went in for a service in Palm Desert, Ca. I was told parts were not available there and I was not told what the recall was for as I had not yet received a notice and the Palm Desert dealer was vague. To release the car back to me they required me to sign their paperwork which stated I had declined the repair, a repair the dealer said it could not make! The needed repair, of course, did not happen and I was about to make a freeway trip across two states and would never have done so had I known how dangerous the car was.

Two weeks later after returning home from California, I received official notice in the mail and learned it was for a problem which could cause a stall. I immediately called the closest dealership to make an appointment to have the repair done as soon as possible.

I regularly drive on the freeway. My fear is that, if the car stalled, I will be rear ended, especially if the power steering went out as a result and I had no chance to get out of the way with a potential for being seriously injured by a collision from a car following me. (I was rear ended in a school zone in 2018 by a pickup which was certainly not going highway speeds. That has resulted in back problems. If I am rear ended a second time, there is no question I would have to have surgery or possibly might be wheelchair bound.)

If this were to happen, when your company had notice of the defect and did not make the parts available, there will be no question as to your responsibility.

When I tried to make an appointment to have the repair, I was told parts were still not available and Toyota had not even started manufacturing them. It strains credulity that your company was unaware of this problem before the Transportation Safety Board required the recall so it is unclear how long you have known of this need while failing to address it.

We purchased the Toyota, our first, after checking Consumer Reports for their rating. They were so positive that I was willing to give up my Acura and my husband and I each bought a Toyota. I am so sorry we did.

I told the dealer I was unwilling to drive an unsafe car and he said I could check my car in and take a loaner until repairs can be made. I plan to do so. Please advise when the necessary parts will be available to make the repairs necessary to make my Highlander safe to drive.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
BAINBRIDGE ISLAND, WASHINGTON [REDACTED]  
JULY 13, 2020

CONSUMER REPORTS  
P.O. Box 2100  
Harlan, IA. 51593-2289

Dear Sir,

We have subscribed for years and have depended upon your reports when making major purchases. This is especially true for car purchases.

Relying upon your consistent praise for the Toyota Highlander we purchased the 2018 Limited FWD.

We received an undated recall notice in May. This arrived after we had driven home from California. I had taken the car to the Toyota dealer in Cathedral City, California for service before leaving to drive back to Washington. I was appalled when I picked up the car and was asked to sign paperwork saying I had "declined" a recall repair. That was the first notice I had of a problem (as the mailed recall notice was sent to my permanent address.) When I said I would never "decline" a needed repair I was told they had no parts and no parts had been delivered to them. Upon further protest I was told the needed parts were not even in production yet. I was told the car was in working order and did not know until I arrived back in Washington that the recall was necessary to prevent stalls while driving, perhaps at freeway speeds.

I regularly drive on the freeway and was paniced to think my car would stall and I might be rear ended. I know with some cars, if they stall, the power steering goes out making it all the more dangerous as I would not be able to even try to pull off the road.

I went in to the local Toyota dealership (Bremerton, Washington) and was told I would be able to have a loaner car until the repair could be made. I wrote to them confirming this oral understanding and sent the letter registered, return receipt. The letter was delivered on June 15. To date I have had no response.

For the NTSB to issue a recall there must have been problems customers had already been complaining about to Toyota. How long have they known, leaving the problem unaddressed and customers with unsafe cars? When can the defect be fixed?

For that reason I have written to the Toyota, USA, the National Transportation Board and to you. I hope you will look into this problem and if you confirm this recall and the fact that it has not been addressed you will not continue to recommend the car to unsuspecting consumers who rely on your expertise.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]  
Enclosures:  
copies of letters to Toyota and the Transportation Board

CC: Heartland Toyota and Toyota USA