

Remarks Prepared for
David Friedman, Deputy Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administrator
Speech to GSHA General Session
“Success Requires a Plan: GROW AMERICA and the Future of Highway Safety”
Monday, September 8, 2014

Thank you, Kendall. And good morning GSHA.

It’s a pleasure to be here this morning surrounded by our enthusiastic state partners in highway safety.

Together, we’ve made America’s roads safer -- we’ve helped reduce highway fatalities by 22 percent over the past decade alone.

And, together, we’re planning and preparing to deliver an even safer future for Americans.

That work begins with -- and its foundation will always be -- our work to help encourage safer driving.

Urging Americans to drive, bike, and walk more safely is an indispensable aspect of any highway safety strategy -- now and in the future.

At the same time, and as we have done for decades, we can also find significant help and support through groundbreaking automotive safety technologies.

There are advances in vehicle safety on the horizon that will support our shared highway safety goals by reducing drunk driving, increasing seat belt use, and helping drivers avoid crashes in the first place.

If you care about saving lives and preventing injuries on America’s roads as deeply and passionately as members of GSHA, this is an exciting time.

Our passion for safer roads is what drives us every day. But real progress in highway safety requires not just passion, but also a plan.

It’s true in all we do in life: how we advance our careers, strengthen our families, and serve our communities.

Here, we need a plan that delivers solutions measured in lives saved and injuries reduced.

I believe GSHA understands innately that success requires a plan. That’s why we work together to improve how we collect and analyze data, how we establish and execute our programs, and how we evaluate their success and make further improvements. The Highway Safety Plan you

submit each August contains all of these elements, all directed at reducing crashes and the human tragedy and economic hardship they cause.

GHSA understands better than any organization that we need a plan for America's transportation infrastructure that provides certainty to investments in states and communities, continuity in safety programs, and that promotes our safety goals. A plan that would create and sustain good jobs now, build on our safety successes, and lay the foundation for a generation of robust economic growth.

Well, we have developed that plan.

It's called the GROW AMERICA Act and we've been waiting for action on it since President Obama unveiled it early this past spring.

GROW America is the plan that addresses the chronic underinvestment in our nation's infrastructure, which the American Society of Civil Engineers estimates will fall almost \$850 billion short of meeting our needs nationally by 2020.

That's why the GROW AMERICA Act would not only stabilize the highway trust fund but boost its investment by more than \$22 billion each year over four years.

Of particular importance to GHSA and your grantees and partners, the President's plan also puts safety front and center while maintaining robust funding for the full range of highway safety challenges.

GROW AMERICA will deliver a more than \$7 billion investment over four years for safety programs across all surface transportation modes, including new infrastructure improvements that will advance safety.

And for the work we all do together on highway safety programs, GROW AMERICA proposes to increase grant funding to states by 20 percent.

Under our proposal, states also receive greater flexibility for carrying out the critical safety programs that have been the backbone of our successes, including efforts on distracted and drunk driving, and to improve young driver safety.

GROW AMERICA will also do more to help NHTSA encourage the recall of unsafe vehicles by boosting civil penalty limits nearly 10 times to \$300 million.

It also establishes the authority to both prevent the sale or rental of vehicle with unresolved recalls and to immediately recall and stop the sale of vehicles or equipment that pose an imminent hazard.

The President offered the GROW AMERICA Act in April. It's now September. Yet, as GHSA knows from the educational efforts you've undertaken on the Hill, we're still far away from Congressional action on the long-term reauthorization that our nation needs.

Please, do not let up in your efforts. Keep at it. Because this issue is too important for politics and America cannot afford further delay. For our economy, for the safety of Americans on our roads, we need action on a long-term surface transportation bill and we need it now.

GROW AMERICA is the Obama administration's comprehensive approach to America's infrastructure crisis. But within this broader strategy are plans at NHTSA addressing specific emerging challenges in surface transportation.

One example is the challenge of pedestrian and bicyclist safety. This is a major priority for Secretary Foxx and NHTSA.

Americans are increasingly voting with their feet—by walking, running, and cycling—as a way to get to work, to school, or to stay in shape. Regrettably, we've also seen an increase in fatalities and injuries among pedestrians and bicyclists.

Pedestrian fatalities were up more than 6 percent in 2012, with 4,743 lives lost in that year alone. That's one pedestrian's life lost every two hours.

Injuries were up 10 percent in 2012, leading to one pedestrian injured every seven minutes.

As it often does, GHSA has recognized this unfortunate trend and has taken action to get in front of this problem. You already have pedestrian safety on the list of Core Traffic Safety Performance Measures and I want to thank GHSA and its membership for acting to add bicycle safety as well.

While bicycle fatality numbers in many States vary, I applaud and appreciate the effort of GHSA to anticipate a growing problem. The best way to define and begin solving a problem is to measure it, and your efforts to do so will help focus attention on this negative safety trend and find ways to reverse it.

We all have work to do if we're going to see fewer fatalities and injuries on our roads. But, of course, we need a plan for success on pedestrians and bikes.

And we've got it. It's called The R.I.T.E. Approach. In this case, we spell right R-I-T-E.

Yes, I am an engineer, so my spelling is suspect, but in this case it is intentional. R-I-T-E stands for Responsibility, Infrastructure, Technology, and Enforcement.

Responsibility because there will never be a replacement for an attentive driver or pedestrian who is obeying the rules of the road or for the responsibility of government at every level to assess and provide safe and effective infrastructure for non-motorized system users.

Infrastructure because we know that the design of our roads and bridges, crosswalks and sidewalks can improve or undermine safety.

Technology because pushing the envelope of new vehicle systems and other safety advances will save lives.

Enforcement because a ticket is one of the fastest ways to send a message to drivers, cyclists and pedestrians who are risking their safety and that of others by not obeying the rules of the road.

There's a great deal of work underway at NHTSA to help us work better with communities to advance this approach and, with our partners at DOT, we will soon be releasing our comprehensive plan for your feedback and engagement.

To help ensure that sufficient resources are available in the states to help with the RITE approach, the GROW America Act includes a proposal to increase the flow of Federal highway safety grant money towards pedestrian and bicyclist safety where those problems are evident based on the data.

Pedestrian and bicyclist safety is a complex challenge, which is why the RITE approach offers a multidimensional plan for success. I strongly believe it is a plan that will deliver safer roadways for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers—and that will mean fewer tragedies, less pain, and stronger, safer communities.

Traditionally, my visit with you would focus almost exclusively on our approaches to increasing seat belt use and reducing impaired driving, and, more recently, the dangers of distracted driving.

As I've said, we'll never waiver in our commitment in these areas. It is the foundation of past and future successes. But I know you're also interested in several vehicle technologies that can support and enhance our behavior and education goals and NHTSA's plan to bring these advances into the fleet.

First, seatbelt interlocks, which could prevent a vehicle from being driven if the driver and passengers are not buckled up.

With your help, we've boosted seatbelt use across the nation to an average of 86 percent, up from 58 percent in 1994.

That is an incredible success story, but we all know it is getting harder and harder to reach the remaining 16 percent. And when you realize that 16 percent means that more than 11,000 unrestrained people died in vehicle crashes in 2012, you get a sense of the lifesaving difference this technology could make.

Second, a driver alcohol detection system (DADSS) that could prevent a vehicle from being driven by a drunk driver.

Again, our work together has led to tremendous strides in reducing drunk driving by 21 percent since 2003.

But even with all those incredible efforts, drunk driving continues to be responsible for about one third of all roadway fatalities each year.

In 2012 alone, more than 10,000 lives were lost due to drunk driving crashes. This is a tragic, stubborn and incredibly frustrating problem that we must pull out all the stops to address.

Third, vehicle automation technologies, like automatic emergency braking that could detect a forward crash before it occurs and apply the brakes as needed. In fact automatic emergency braking can help avoid or mitigate over half of the 1.7 million rear-end crashes that occur each year.

At NHTSA, we are currently looking at multiple options to speed adoption of this technology into the fleet, which could help us drive down a significant number of crashes due to human error.

Finally, vehicle-to-vehicle communication technology, which will allow basic safety data such as speed and location to flow between nearby vehicles, help identify risks, and provide drivers with warnings to avoid other vehicles in common crash types.

Last month, we moved another step closer to bringing to V2V to our cars and trucks. We released an advance notice of proposed rulemaking, or ANPRM, and a supporting comprehensive research report on V2V communication technology.

As just one example of the report findings, data indicate that just two crash warnings that would be enabled by V2V technology — one for left turns and one for driving through intersections — could save over 1,000 lives each year.

We urge you to weigh in on the ANPRM because your input is essential to the process.

Please also encourage your state partners who work on the infrastructure side of the equation to weigh in too, because V2V represents a 21st century virtual foundation that would support vehicle to infrastructure communication on traffic signals, work zones, congestion mitigation, and optimal routing that could save even more lives, not to mention time and fuel.

When these four technologies are advanced across the fleet it could deliver nothing short of a revolution in transportation safety.

And, again, imagine how much more effective our behavioral and education efforts can be when they are backstopped by technology that can prevent many accidents before they happen and when they are focused on the people and problems technology cannot address. That will be the kind of safer highway future that GHSA and NHTSA have long dreamed of.

I've spent a great deal of time today talking about how our work can better protect America's drivers. But I also want to urge you to continue to work with NHTSA as we fight to protect the men and women of law enforcement.

All 50 states currently have on the books what are known as Move Over laws. These require drivers to slow down and to move over away from first responders — police, fire crews, and paramedics — when they're pulled over on the side of the road. Yet, getting struck by a vehicle while out of their car after having pulled someone over is the fourth largest cause of death among law enforcement personnel.

We ask law enforcement officers to put their lives on the line to protect our family, friends, and neighbors from the ravages of bad decisions like not wearing a seatbelt, driving drunk, and driving distracted. As a result, I believe we have a responsibility to them.

We must do even more to make Americans aware of Move Over laws. At NHTSA, we're partnering with law enforcement organizations and GHSA leadership to raise awareness, and we want to enlist the membership of GHSA to help spread the word. Everyone needs to know that when we see flashing lights of a police or emergency services vehicle on the side of the road — MOVE OVER — and protect the people who protect all of us.

Close

I was honored to join NHTSA as Deputy Administrator because I knew that, as much as if not more than in any aspect of government service, what we do each day can positively impact the lives of the American people in ways they might not always see, but in ways that they appreciate when a motor vehicle crash affects their lives, or that of a loved one.

I've stood beside the families of victims of drunk driving. I've seen the pain in their eyes and felt the hurt in their hearts as they've shared their stories.

I've heard the breaking voices of parents as they've told of how a moment spent texting and driving harmed or took the lives of daughters and sons.

Their stories fuel our passion to protect lives. They urge us on to prevent future tragedies. We owe them not just our best efforts but real, tangible successes. And we know that success requires a plan:

A plan to rebuild and improve the safety of America's roads and highways and rails;

A plan to strengthen our ability to keep unsafe vehicles and products off the market;

A plan to better protect pedestrians and bicyclists as Americans increasingly choose these transportation alternatives;

A plan to advance vehicle technologies that can prevent crashes from ever happening; and,

And... a plan to support and strengthen state and local efforts to educate, enforce, and improve driver behavior so fewer families have to try to pick up the pieces of lives shattered and lost by vehicle crashes that should never have happened in the first place.

We at DOT and NHTSA believe we have a plan. But we know we don't have all of the answers, which is why we always look to your input and your help.

With your support, and with your deeply valued partnership and effort, we can evolve and implement our plans and bring about the safer highway future we all want to see.

Thank you, GHSA for all that you do, and good luck with the rest of your meeting.

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