

Remarks prepared for

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Good morning. Thank you for the invitation to be here. On behalf of Secretary of transportation Ray LaHood and NHTSA Administrator David Strickland, I want to express our appreciation for what you do here, every year, in support of traffic safety.

For more than 20 years, you have offered collaboration and partnership to help save lives on our roadways. Since the beginning, this Symposium has tackled a wide range of traffic safety issues including child passenger safety, driver distraction, multicultural barriers, the aging driver, smart technology and safe design, and protecting children.

What's more, even though New York and New Jersey are among the higher performing States in belt use, death rates,

and impaired driving, you continually do more to push for safer roads.

Highway safety is a complex issue, and it demands collaboration. It can only work if each of us at the Federal, State and local level steps up to do our part—independent, yet integrated—saving lives on our roads and highways.

NHTSA's work has been and will continue to be based on sound data. And the latest data we have tells us we're on target with our programs. In 2009, 33,808 people died on our roads and more than 2.2 million were injured. For 2010 we are estimating that the number killed will drop to 32,788, the smallest number of fatalities on record since 1949. The

fatality rate, too, is projected to be the lowest level ever recorded.

This is great news, but we must remain vigilant and continue to work hard. At NHTSA we believe we're on the threshold of a new vehicle safety era that will revolve around safe vehicle designs and emerging technologies. It took decades to convince the American Public that crashworthiness was key, but now we wholly embrace the idea.

The next safety frontier involves technology and crash avoidance. NHTSA took the lead on this when we rolled out our enhanced government 5-star safety ratings system with the 2011 model year vehicles and raised the bar on safety.

Among the things we changed – we added a family of crash test dummies and a side impact pole test. We established an overall safety score that will combine the star ratings from

the front, side, and rollover programs. And, we implemented a program that we hope will encourage the demand for and use of advanced crash avoidance technologies.

The key to maximizing the safety benefits is a communications program to tell the American public what it all means. We want them to understand why some of the new ratings are lower but more rigorous, and that those lower star ratings do not mean the vehicles are less safe than they were a year ago.

Most importantly, we want the consumer to embrace crash avoidance technologies as a way to make driving safer. We want terms like electronic stability control, lane departure warning, and forward collision warning and crash-imminent braking to become part of the consumer's lexicon. We want to continue to keep the American consumer informed as newer and more sophisticated technologies emerge.

As vehicles continue to evolve, our concept of what is safe will change. Tomorrow's generation of drivers will have wholly different expectations of their vehicles than we do.

We know that the crashworthiness of vehicles is an essential element to help people survive crashes. But we also know that the vast majority of crashes occur because of dangerous behavior. I'm talking about drivers who make poor decisions, including driving drunk, driving while distracted, and speeding, to name a few.

NHTSA's National Motor Vehicle Crash Causation Survey showed that in about 95 percent of serious crashes driver error was attributed to the event that precipitated the crash. Our outreach to consumers in this area is well-known with our national high visibility enforcement campaigns.

We are hopeful that we can harness technology to help mitigate the effects of these risky behaviors. Because it is clear that we cannot regulate or legislate away risk. It's already illegal to engage in any of these dangerous behaviors while behind the wheel, yet people continue to break the law.

If Administrator Strickland were delivering these remarks, he'd be working from his iPad. And I've been known to walk down the halls at DOT HQ with my head buried in my Blackberry. But, we've got nothing on the generation of drivers coming up behind us. Their electronic gadgets, or should I say, mobile devices, are the lifeblood of that generation's entire social experience. This group demands to be connected at all times, and seemingly at all costs. Under Secretary LaHood's leadership, we are working to educate them about safety and distraction behind the wheel of a vehicle.

We are building momentum against Distracted Driving. In addition to reaching out to drivers, NHTSA is developing an evaluative framework for in-car technologies. Rather than react to every technology as it pops up and becomes a potential distraction, NHTSA needs a framework that clearly defines the danger zone for the driver — allowing us to keep pace with the industry and innovation, rather than playing catch-up.

That is why, as part of our NHTSA Distraction Plan we are taking a hard look at developing guidelines and requirements for these systems. We have challenged the auto industry and the cell phone industry to work collaboratively with us to keep the driver focused on their required task: driving, and to keep them safe.

And in the near future, perhaps, the vehicle may step in to help as well. Our Vehicle Communications program includes vehicle-to-vehicle, as well as vehicle-to-infrastructure

applications. We are extremely encouraged by the research, analysis of the safety data, and the ongoing human factors work that all point to vehicle-to-vehicle as the next major safety breakthrough. In fact, vehicle-to-vehicle safety applications could address 80 percent of vehicle crash scenarios involving non-impaired drivers.

Data leads us to believe that we have the opportunity to apply these technologies in ways that could significantly reduce the number of crashes, injuries and fatalities on our roadways. Vehicle-to-vehicle is one of the main focus areas of NHTSA's safety research program, and our plan is to have the research supply the data necessary to enable an agency regulatory decision in the 2013 timeframe.

The success of this program will ultimately rest on human factors and how the driver interacts with the system: the interface. The interface must produce a quick and

appropriate reaction from the driver, yet it cannot increase the potential for distraction.

Any new safety technology will be properly researched before it moves to implementation. The vehicle communication safety applications must be effective at improving safety while not causing unintended consequences. The non-safety applications must be implemented so as not to increase the driver's workload or distraction which could increase the crash risk.

We've also been working together with the EPA on a long-overdue update to the Fuel Economy label on new vehicles. The American consumer is quickly beginning to be offered new advanced technology vehicles – including electric powered and plug-in hybrid vehicles. The old, petroleum-centric labels just aren't good enough anymore.

The American consumer will need more information, especially the total energy costs of electric power and plug-in electric-hybrid vehicles. One of the more exciting features of the proposed new labels is a symbol that can be read by a ‘smartphone’ to deliver additional information directly to the consumer’s phone.

The final rule, issued a year ago, set the first-ever national program that harmonized fuel economy and greenhouse gas standards for light-duty vehicles for model years 2012 through 2016 – an historic step in addressing the transportation sector’s largest contributor to oil consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. The impact is

huge – light-duty vehicles are responsible for about 60 percent of U.S. transportation petroleum consumption.

Although very important, that was just the first step. We're working to advance the second-phase joint rulemaking for light-duty vehicles. The President directed NHTSA and EPA to work with the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to begin a process for evaluating vehicle technologies and vehicle manufacturer capabilities to improve fuel efficiency for the passenger fleet for model years 2017 to 2025.

To meet this objective, we have met with a wide range of stakeholders, including automobile manufacturers, labor unions, environmental organizations, and others, as part of the process to develop a technological assessment and to seek their views about our future regulations.

NHTSA and EPA issued a Notice of Intent last September announcing work we were beginning on the development of new fuel economy and greenhouse gas standards for future light-duty vehicles. At that time together with the EPA and the State of California, we also released an Interim Joint Technical Assessment Report.

And in January, along with EPA, and the state of California, the Department of Transportation announced a single timeframe for proposing fuel economy and greenhouse gas standards for model year 2017-2025 cars and light-duty trucks. Proposing the new standards on the same timeframe in September 2011 - signals continued collaborative efforts to develop another National Program, providing

automakers certainty as they work to build the next generation of clean, fuel efficient cars. Improving fuel efficiency will save consumers money at the pump, reduce America's dependence on foreign oil and cut emissions of harmful pollutants and greenhouse gases.

Then there is the safety aspect. In addition to being responsible for fuel economy regulation, NHTSA has responsibility for vehicle safety. We believe safety is one of the key measures of success of electrified passenger vehicle technologies. Safety will be crucial in all modes of operation, whether during charging – both at home and at commercial facilities – during normal driving, or during inevitable crash events. So, alongside our fuel economy work, we are conducting research on the safety of electric vehicles.

It is also imperative to consider how adding a significant number of very quiet to silent vehicles in the fleet impacts pedestrian safety, especially since there is a focused effort as a part of the Livable Communities Initiative to encourage walking and biking as vigorous transportation alternatives. President Obama signed the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act earlier this year. In this law Congress requires the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to ensure that electric and hybrid car manufacturers add noises that alert the blind and other pedestrians. We have been working with the blind community and manufacturers to understand the most effective way to implement a safety standard that makes the vehicles identifiable while not adding to the noise pollution that affects so many cities. By law, we have to

initiate rulemaking by July 5, 2012. This can either be accomplished by a proposal (NPRM) or an Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) and then we must publish a Final Rule by January 3rd 2014.

We have quite a roster of safety issues that we are working year-round. The loss of more than 32,000 people in traffic-related crashes in a single year represents a serious public health problem to our Nation. We will not rest and we will keep working to drive that number down. NHTSA will keep making gains in lives saved by using all the tools at our disposal.

The Secretary of Transportation made safety a priority for the Department and he has delivered on that promise. As the

highway traffic safety Agency, we take that duty seriously.

Thank you.