

**Remarks Prepared for
Ron Medford, Deputy Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
MADD 2012 National Conference Lunch
Crystal City, VA
September 28, 2012**

**[INTRODUCTION BY Jan Withers, MADD National
President]**

Thank you, Jan, for that kind introduction. I am honored to be here today to acknowledge and thank MADD for the tremendous work that it has been doing for more than three decades to reduce alcohol-impaired driving fatalities and injuries. On behalf of Secretary LaHood and Administrator Strickland and myself, I want to thank the entire MADD organization—national

office, state chapters, and volunteers—for your past and continuing work to eliminate drunk driving.

I am proud of the effective and longstanding partnership between MADD and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Our relationship has matured over the past three decades. For me it most resembles a lifelong friendship: We have come to recognize and respect each other's strengths and abilities, and to achieve much more than if we worked separately. Although at times we need to work individually, for the most part NHTSA and MADD operate within a tradition of close coordination. And in the end, it is the support we give to each other that provides the greatest benefit, in this case safer highways for the nation.

Our sustained efforts, year after year, have transformed highway safety in the United States. But as we all know, there is much more work to be done.

Since 1980, when MADD was founded, alcohol-impaired driving deaths have been cut in half, to a little over 10,000 per year. While this is a measure of exceptional progress, no one is pleased with where we are today. According to data from the 2010 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey, there are more than 110 million instances of impaired driving each year. We know that drivers with a BAC level of .08 or higher are eight times more likely to have had a prior conviction for impaired driving than drivers who had no alcohol in their bodies at the time of wreck.

While technological advances have made our vehicles safer, we know that improper driving behavior is the underlying cause of most crashes—and driving while impaired is one of the most dangerous decisions a driver can make. In addition to the staggering loss of life and injuries, alcohol-impaired motor vehicle crashes in the United States cost more than \$37 billion annually.

Over the past three decades MADD's strong leadership has significantly reduced the nation's tolerance of impaired driving and underage drinking. MADD has been able to present a unified voice for the victims of impaired driving and their families. And most importantly, MADD has consistently and effectively fought for legislative and policy changes at the national and state level that have increased the safety of all road users.

MADD's history of influencing national policy through legislative changes has become a model that is admired around world. One of MADD's first accomplishments was the passage of the National Minimum Drinking Age law. Since its enactment in 1984, that initiative is estimated to have saved 900 lives each year, over 25,000 lives in the past 28 years.

MADD's determined advocacy for 0.08 BAC legislation was a powerful factor in the effort to ensure that every state in the U.S., plus Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia, enacted that legislation. The same is true for Zero Tolerance laws.

MADD's successful grassroots effort to establish and strengthen state impaired driving laws is envied by many advocacy organizations. MADD has influenced

legislation to encourage the use of sobriety checkpoints and to ensure that serious consequences are imposed on high risk offenders—including drivers with high BACs, repeat offenders, and offenders whose licenses have been suspended for impaired driving, yet continue to drive.

Across the nation MADD is recognized as the most effective advocacy group in the nation and is emulated by all others. I cannot count the number of times I have been in a meeting with a new or struggling advocacy group and heard statements like “we want to be as effective as MADD or we need to do what MADD did.”

Administrator Strickland is honored to serve as Honorary Chair of MADD’s Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving. You could not have chosen a more passionate advocate for your cause. The campaign was a critically

important step in securing legislation for alcohol ignition interlock use in the United States. Use of these devices has more than doubled since the campaign began, and because of MADD's efforts all 50 states now require or allow ignition interlock use. Fourteen states now have mandatory ignition interlock provisions for all offenses. Two more states, Illinois and Colorado, have passed laws that are not mandatory for a first conviction, but have strong incentives to install an interlock device on the first conviction.

NHTSA and MADD have enjoyed a long and productive safety partnership. Together, we've made significant progress in raising public consciousness about the dangers of impaired driving. We've worked to engage states, law enforcement, youth, faith-based organizations, and diversity groups in our joint efforts to reduce impaired driving and underage drinking.

NHTSA is proud to have supported your efforts since the 1980s to reduce impaired driving. These include your initiatives of: holding state workshops on alcohol-impaired driving issues; hosting a youth summit that brought young people from every U.S. Congressional district together to brainstorm solutions to the underage drinking problem; implementing court monitoring programs; and supporting law enforcement efforts to reduce impaired driving. MADD shares its mission with NHTSA through its Campaign to Eliminate Drunk Driving by supporting high-visibility law enforcement and the use of ignition interlock devices.

Together, we've held regional law enforcement summits to increase law enforcement participation in high-visibility impaired driving enforcement efforts. Nearly 10,000 law enforcement agencies across the

country participated in the recent nationwide effort to get impaired drivers off our roadways: the NHTSA “Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over” campaign.

We are all now working together to increase and enhance the Court Monitoring programs across the country—to create an environment of accountability by using trained volunteers to observe impaired driving cases within the criminal justice system.

NHTSA and MADD have also jointly hosted Ignition Interlock Institutes in seven regions throughout the United States. And next month MADD will hold an Ignition Interlock Institute in Madison, Wisconsin.

We're seeing exciting research developments now with in-vehicle alcohol detection technology: the Driver Alcohol Detection Safety system (DADSS). The auto companies and NHTSA have joined forces in this research effort to develop this technology. MADD's leadership, experience, and commitment was instrumental in helping to establish this important initiative.

The goal of the program is to develop technology to quickly and accurately determine if a driver's BAC is above the legal limit each time they start a car and, if it is, prohibit the car from moving.

The DADSS program is a collaborative research partnership between NHTSA and the Automotive

Coalition for Traffic Safety, representing 17 U.S. automobile manufacturers. In February 2008, NHTSA entered into a Cooperative Agreement on a five-year program to develop and test alcohol detection prototype technology that may be considered for vehicle integration.

This project has been promoted by MADD and is an important part of MADD's Campaign To Eliminate Drunk Driving. Without your support and hard work, the DADSS project and the necessary funding to advance it would not exist.

The first objective of the project is to develop a proof-of-principle prototype. After that we plan to integrate the DADSS technology into research vehicles. At the end of this process, in late 2013, a research vehicle will be available that will showcase two different

technological approaches to measuring driver alcohol levels: A touch-based approach that enables assessment of alcohol in human tissue and a breath-based approach that allows assessment of alcohol concentration in the driver's exhaled breath.

NHTSA is working with automakers and QinetiQ North America's Technology Solutions Group, a technology company, in Waltham, Massachusetts, to develop touch- and breath-based sensors that could be strategically placed on steering wheels and ignition push buttons to instantly measure drivers' blood-alcohol concentration. The sensors would automatically analyze a driver's breath or skin to determine whether or not he or she was fit to drive. If the blood alcohol level is at or above 0.08 percent, the car would start but not move.

Although DADSS research is still in the early stages, MADD and NHTSA are contributing to the development process, along with a host of others: vehicle manufacturers and suppliers, highway safety researchers, domestic and international government agencies, and medical and behavioral scientists.

We are following a step-by-step, data-driven process to ensure that the end result is a highly unobtrusive, accurate, and precise system. While there is still much more work to be done, we believe that a technology could be ready for general use and integrated into vehicles on a voluntary basis in eight to 10 years.

This is an example of why conferences like this are so important. They provide an opportunity for all of us who care about this important issue to come together,

share information, and challenge ourselves to continue to take bold steps and find additional ways to address one of the deadliest highway safety problems in the United States.

On behalf of NHTSA, I want to thank each of you for the work you do to address this public health threat. You have turned your stories and your sacrifices into real change. Your work is some of the most meaningful work there is. It saves lives every day. For what you do, we thank you.