

Remarks Prepared for
David Strickland, Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Bike To School Day
Washington, DC
May 9, 2012

Welcome everybody. It's great to see all of you here for the first ever Bike to School Day!

I want to thank Sandra Moscoso from Capitol Hill Montessori School and the entire Capitol Hill Public Schools Parent Organization for coordinating our event this morning. And I would like to offer special thanks to Jennifer Heffener of the DC Department of

Transportation and Safe Routes to School Coordinator for her ongoing safety efforts for children walking and biking to school.

We're here to celebrate Bike to School Day by reminding everyone that riding a bike is a wonderful way to travel. It's an enjoyable, healthy and environmentally friendly way to get to school or work, and run errands, and much less expensive than driving a car. What we all have to remember is that everyone must be responsible for each other's safety.

This means all of us—cyclists, pedestrians, and car drivers—have to share the road. When sharing the road, cyclists have the same rights and responsibilities

as drivers of motorized vehicles, including the responsibility to obey traffic laws.

At the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, we are working to make sure that bike riders and motorists share the road safely. Our bicycle safety programs focus on how bicyclists behave and how automobile drivers behave toward people riding bikes. It's important to understand these behaviors in order to reduce bicycle injuries and fatalities.

Safety is our highest priority, and everyone must take an active role to make it happen. That includes cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers.

For cyclists, the most important thing you can do is always wear a bicycle helmet. Bike helmets are the law for school-aged kids in DC, for a good reason. Helmets are the single most important piece of safety equipment for riders, and they can prevent a crash from resulting in a serious injury. So please, learn the proper way to wear a helmet, and do so every time you ride a bike.

Safety also includes learning to ride a bike and staying focused when you ride—looking out for traffic, pedestrians, and obstacles on the road.

Cyclists can help keep their ride safe by wearing bright colors and reflective clothing (so you can be seen in traffic and at night).

We all need to work together to make our roads safer. Parents can play an important role by preparing their children for safe cycling.

Automobile drivers also need to stay alert and focused on the road—no texting, and no talking on cell phones behind the wheel. We know that these activities distract drivers, taking their eyes off the road and their minds off the task of driving. To do their part for road safety, automobile drivers need to stay constantly aware of the other drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians around them. It's also important for drivers to slow down in school zones and neighborhoods where children are playing.

It really does take a village to sustain traffic safety, and that includes being the best role models for traffic safety we can be. I would encourage you to be a “Roll” model for other adults, for your children and grandchildren, and for your friends. Today and every day, recognize that children hear you tell them to be safe and what to do, but they also watch you. You need to show through your behavior that you can and will be safe. Whether on a bike or in a car... be a “Roll” Model.