

Remarks prepared for
David Strickland, Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
For the
National Federation of the Blind
National Convention
Panel Discussion: Quiet Cars, Pedestrian Safety, and
Protection for the Environment
July 7, 2011
Orlando, Florida

Good morning. Thank you for the invitation to join this discussion on pedestrian safety. On behalf of Secretary LaHood and the entire staff of the Department of Transportation, I am delighted to tell you that today the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration took a major step forward in the protection of unsuspecting pedestrians and the blind from crashes involving hybrid-electric and electric vehicles – also known as Quiet Vehicles.

This morning, we published a “scoping notice” on the NHTSA website. This notice is one step in our process to assess the environmental impact of adding sound to hybrid-electric and electric vehicles. A forthcoming rulemaking will culminate in a set of standards that auto makers will have to meet when manufacturing these vehicles. Both the scoping and rulemaking processes will include an opportunity for comment and input from a broad range of stakeholders and the public, as well as an

environmental analysis of adding sound to Quiet Vehicles.

I'd like to thank the National Federation of the Blind for your collaboration with us on this issue. We have regularly consulted with you since we first met with you in December of 2007. The valuable input you have provided to our effort on Quiet Vehicles over these years is greatly appreciated and helped shape our way forward.

The standard for hybrid and electric vehicles is in line with the safety agenda established by Secretary LaHood and the Administration. Through the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act, Congress has set an aggressive schedule for us to complete this work. By law, we will initiate Rule making by July of next year, and our final rule, the standards themselves, will be published by January of 2014.

Prior to passage of the Act, NHTSA took the lead when we held a public meeting in 2008 not only to bring greater awareness to this issue but to bring together a number of stakeholders to discuss the technical and policy issues associated with quiet vehicles. From that meeting we developed a comprehensive research plan and have been working steadily to complete that plan.

We have also involved and worked with the automotive industry in researching the Quiet Vehicles issues, including individual manufacturers and partners such as the Alliance, Global Automakers, and the Organization of International Automobile Manufacturers (OICA).

Through these organizations we have been able to evaluate and test the sound approaches they are developing for future hybrid and electric vehicles.

Similarly, we participate on the Vehicle Sound for Pedestrians Subcommittee formed by the SAE International Safety and Human Factors Committee. The committee is nearing completion of procedure recommended practice for measuring the sound emitted by motor vehicles that could be incorporated into the new safety standard that NHTSA is developing.

Internationally, NHTSA is a full participant in the United Nations World Forum for the Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations (or WP.29), where we are consulting with the world's acoustic experts as we conduct research on Quiet Vehicles. We are also planning to lead an effort to develop a Global Technical Regulation for quieter vehicles through the international harmonization process at the United Nations Forum.

We are now beginning the rulemaking effort to develop a standard for countermeasure sounds on Quiet Vehicles. This includes development of the test procedure that will be used for compliance testing as well as the performance criteria that will be used to determine whether or not a manufacturer's sound is recognizable as a motor vehicle.

As such, this summer, we will continue our evaluation of various types of vehicles in different operating conditions such as constant speed, acceleration and deceleration.

Internal combustion engine vehicles and both electric and hybrid electric vehicles will be tested – including vehicles with production or near production countermeasure systems.

We will use the acoustic data of countermeasure sounds we collect for human subject testing to evaluate the

effectiveness of these sounds. All of the collected acoustic data will be analyzed and evaluated for use in developing the standard for acoustic countermeasures on Quiet Vehicles.

NHTSA will also begin evaluating crash data and acoustic data from internal combustion engines to determine if this new acoustic standard or perhaps a different standard needs to be applied to non-hybrid and electric vehicles. The Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act requires that NHTSA report to Congress on this issue by January 2015.

The sound standard for hybrid and electric vehicles is part of the latest push by NHTSA and USDOT to ensure the highest standards of safety for pedestrians in our communities.

Our final rule will help ensure the safety of pedestrians and the blind. By ensuring that Quiet Vehicles produce adequate sound to signal their approach, the standards will dramatically improve pedestrian safety without diminishing the appeal of these vehicles to socially conscious and safety-minded consumers.

Thank you.###