

**Remarks prepared for**  
**David Strickland**  
**Administrator**  
**National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**

**FISITA World Automotive Summit**  
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**Good morning. I am very pleased to be here today at this global forum to talk about making road transportation safer everywhere.**

**On behalf of Secretary LaHood, the U.S. Department of Transportation and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to the organizers of this conference for placing the focus on road safety.**

**It is a problem every country around the globe struggles with. And for each country, the solution is a unique and complex undertaking with a variety of strategies—tailored to the different traffic safety risks of each nation.**

**This coming together to exchange information is critical, so that we in the global community can share our best practices and take full advantage of lessons learned and advancements already made elsewhere.**

**With the continued leadership of President Obama and Secretary LaHood, there are many opportunities unfolding for the Department of Transportation and NHTSA to build up our nation for the future and help create a culture of safety across the United States.**

**NHTSA has developed or implemented a broad array of programs that address both behavioral and vehicle-related causes of highway crashes, injuries, and deaths. The foundation of our programs is good data, sound science, and careful engineering. We use that sound science, and that data, to inform our decisions on what actions to take to reduce the high toll that traffic crashes have on the American public.**

**This combination of strategies takes time, but ultimately, it works, and it works well. Our latest numbers tell an encouraging story on the highway safety front. And I feel very optimistic that we will make even further progress in the future.**

**We recently released U.S. highway safety estimates for the first 6 months of 2010, and we estimate fatalities are down more than 9 percent from the same period in 2009. And, when combined with early estimates of Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), the fatality rate is also down nearly 9 percent. So, this progress in reducing fatalities comes even as Americans are driving a greater number of miles.**

**But there is so much more progress to be made on any number of fronts in highway safety. Key among those is the issue of Distracted Driving. This is an international phenomenon. As you are all aware, Secretary LaHood has taken a personal interest in this issue and with his leadership, we have elevated awareness of this issue to a national level in the United States.**

**Distracted Driving is not new, but advances in technology have increased the number of distractions that can tempt drivers. From 2005 to 2008, for example, distraction-related fatalities as a proportion of all traffic fatalities in the United States jumped from 10 to 16 percent.**

**An estimated 20 percent of the 1.52 million injury crashes in 2009 involved distracted driving. We know that distraction is most likely to be a factor in crashes involving younger drivers, especially those less than 20 years old. But drivers of all ages are at risk.**

**The Department has engaged stakeholders and researchers in a very comprehensive way, and this exchange has assisted us immensely, but I can honestly say that we probably have many more questions than answers right**

**now. We are at the discovery stage. We are looking at the research and the data and we are assessing the real impact of driving while distracted. We are looking at what further research we might need.**

**In the United States, the anti-distraction effort is probably in the same place that the seat belt effort was in the early 1980s. Eventually, it took strong laws, focused media efforts, and aggressive enforcement to move us forward. We are starting to see some laws enacted, the public is aware of the dangers, but not quite ready to comply, and enforcement is in the pilot stages.**

**So we have tapped our experience with seat belts and drunk driving to develop our Distraction Plan to eliminate distraction-related crashes. We can – and have – leveraged the wide range of talents and capabilities in our agency to come up with the integrated approach reflected in our plan.**

**First and foremost we are obtaining new data. We base all of our work and decisions on data. We have *some* good data on distraction, but we need more. So we're taking steps to obtain more accurate and timely data to define the size and nature of crashes related to distraction. We're looking at improving crash and citation data through enhanced police reporting.**

**Some key pieces are in place already. We have launched two federally funded pilot programs to test the effectiveness of highly publicized law enforcement efforts to change driver behavior and get drivers to put down their cell phones.**

**Thanks to these two pilot programs, I think we have a very strong enforcement message already. We can prove that good laws coupled with tough enforcement and targeted communications can reduce deadly distracted driving behavior.**

**The sites are in two cities, Hartford , Connecticut and Syracuse, New York. In the last six months alone, hand held cell phone use has dropped 56 percent in Hartford and 38 percent in Syracuse; and texting while driving has declined 68 percent in Hartford and 42 percent in Syracuse.**

**Furthermore, in 2009, for the first time in four years, the proportion of distraction-related fatalities as a percentage of all traffic fatalities leveled off. That leveling off coincided with our national anti-distracted driving**

**campaign, other public education efforts, and an increasing number of state anti-distracted driving laws.**

**That tells us that our efforts to raise public awareness, enact tough laws, and step up enforcement can make a difference and save lives.**

**The next piece of our Distraction plan reflects one of those unique situations in our respective nations. In many countries, the national government is the final arbiter of highway safety law. But in the United States, each one of the 50 States has the right to establish its own highway safety laws for the protection of its citizens. We in the Federal government work closely with the individual States' highway safety agencies on the various safety issues to show them what works and what doesn't work, but ultimately, they decide which laws to enact, and which safety programs to support.**

**In support of the anti-distraction effort, NHTSA, along with a number of safety and enforcement groups, and manufacturers, developed sample legislation that individual States can use as a starting point to craft laws prohibiting texting while driving. Our work to encourage State action is ongoing, but it has been very successful in the past year, in that eleven States passed new texting bans this year, with over 30 of the 50 States having laws on the books.**

**Where the Federal government does have direct regulatory authority, it has taken direct action. The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration, an agency of the Department of Transportation which is responsible for truck and bus safety, is using its existing authority to prohibit commercial interstate truck and bus drivers from texting while driving.**

**An important part of our comprehensive approach to the Distraction problem includes examining potential technical solutions to the problem.**

**Our data will help point us to the appropriate solutions, but right now, we are examining various technologies including true "voice-only hands-free", and cell phone blocker systems that could actually prevent phone use or texting by the driver.**

**But more importantly, we see a potential explosion or proliferation of infotainment systems in vehicles, and are very concerned about the potential with those for increased driver workload and distraction. So we are working**

**hard right now to develop safety guidelines for in-vehicle technologies such as communication, information, and navigation systems.**

**Our intent is to develop an evaluative framework for in-car technologies. Rather than react to every technology as it pops up and becomes a distraction, we are taking the lead rather than a backseat while new telematics and *infotainment* systems are introduced.**

**And we are challenging the auto industry and the cell phone industry to work collaboratively with us to keep the driver focused on driving.**

**We also believe that certain crash avoidance and driver assistance technologies may be beneficial to aid an already distracted or otherwise inattentive driver. We are looking hard at forward collision warning and automatic braking systems, as well as lane departure warning and lane-keeping systems and others. We are collaborating with the German BAST to evaluate automatic braking systems for pedestrian protection.**

**We are quantifying the potential of these systems and will be assessing how they best fit in with a future regulatory or NCAP approach. And we encourage all manufacturers to continue developing and deploying these systems for the entire range of the vehicle fleet.**

**Lastly, we will use our extremely robust communications program to inform the public about the dangers of Distracted Driving. We've started on the Web, with [distraction.gov](http://distraction.gov), a national clearinghouse for information on Distracted Driving.**

**I believe that we are putting the right framework in place to turn the tide against Distracted Driving. It is a multi-disciplinary strategy to make all road users safer by reducing driver distraction. It will require collaboration and leadership, but we are committed to make daily progress on this issue.**

**Technology is also a key component of our enhanced Consumer Safety program. Last month, we rolled out an enhanced NCAP program for new vehicles. The enhancements are designed to raise the bar on safety for the future automobile and for the protection of the American Public.**

**Beginning with the 2011 model year, earning a 5-Star Safety Rating became that much tougher for new vehicles. We've added a side pole crash test. This**

**test simulates a car or truck crashing sideways into a narrow object like a utility pole or a tree. We want cars and trucks to offer better head protection in these kinds of real-world crashes.**

**To learn more about injuries that can occur in frontal and side crash tests, we've upgraded our family of test dummies. We're now using improved crash test dummies of differing sizes that provide us better information about potential injuries. We added small-sized adult female dummies and a new medium-sized adult male dummy. As part of the frontal crash tests, we'll be collecting injury data on additional areas of the body, including head, chest, neck, and legs.**

**That injury data will help us improve the information we provide to consumers so they can have a more comprehensive view of the relative safety of a new vehicle.**

**And an important piece of the program is designed to encourage the use of advanced vehicle technologies. Beginning now, we will promote the safety advantages of three systems. The three crash-avoidance systems are: electronic stability control (ESC), forward collision warning (FCW), and lane departure warning (LDW) systems.**

**We will continually add technologies to our recommendations as these develop and prove themselves.**

**I look forward to constructive engagement with you on this new challenge of the modern era.**

**Thank you.**