

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

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“Data is the Foundation”**

Thank you so much for the kind introduction and I am very excited to be here. It's also great to have my colleagues Administrators Appel and Ferro participate in the conference. Us being here is emblematic of Secretary LaHood's and the Department's commitment to the partnership with the states and to the pending six-year reauthorization.

My presentation today is the second leg of my Safety Reauthorization Triple Crown.

I spoke before MADD's National Conference on Friday, I am here with you today, and tomorrow I testify before my old subcommittee on reauthorization and lessons learned from SAFETEA-LU.

I would like to apologize in advance for having to leave after my remarks, but I think everybody in this room wants me to make that hearing.

I truly feel like I am meeting myself around the corner every time I talk about reauth. If I have a criticism, more likely than not I am critiquing something that I had a hand in. If I complement it, I appear totally self serving. I am officially in the no win situation, so I might as well roll up my sleeves, get to work.

A quick word of thanks to GHSA and your leadership. Vern Betkey has been a constant companion in my first few months of my tenure, a fantastic leader in safety and a friend. Congratulations on his reelection as chair.

And this is a long overdue thanks. One of the first people that sat down with me when I was new to the Commerce Committee to talk to me about reauthorization was Barbara Harsha. She came in with Dr. Paul Rothberg, who was then with the Congressional Research Service, and they gave me a series of lectures on Highway Safety Reauthorization 101.

Then after she taught the basics, then she began hammering me to make the right decisions for the States. The woman ain't dumb. She is a great leader and representative of your cause. Barbara, thank you for everything.

This year's theme is technology and how we can leverage tech to improve highway safety. While I can go on for hours about NHTSA's plans on crashworthiness and agency guidance for in-cabin technologies and entertainment, I want to talk about data.

I see this reauthorization as the opportunity to strengthen NHTSA's data backbone. As we move forward in the 21st century, we need to use technology and data to

better identify highway risks, track them accurately, and create countermeasures that attack that risk.

I plan to focus on strengthening and improving the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) and the National Automotive Sampling System (NASS) as the foundation of this effort, as well as continuing the work on the National Driver Register. And since we are speaking data, I have some new results to report.

As Secretary LaHood and I announced a few weeks ago, the rate of deaths on our roadways continues to decline. In 2009, highway deaths fell to 33,808, the smallest number since 1950. Fatality and injury rates fell to the lowest levels ever recorded. Today, I am announcing that this decline in fatalities is continuing into 2010. Projections we are releasing today show that for the first 6 months of 2010, fatalities are down more than 9 percent from the same period in 2009.

And, when combined with Federal Highway Administration's early estimates of 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.

I am also excited to highlight the results from our National Occupant Protection Use Survey that America's belt use is now up to 85 percent, saving thousands of lives in 2009. This is fantastic news and shows how our partnership and collaborative efforts are bearing fruit, and saving lives.

But we must remain vigilant. There are heartbreaking stories every day of crashes that didn't have to happen. Like the van carrying members of a small Bronx church that crashed about a week ago on the New York State Thruway.

Six people died and another eight were hospitalized when the church van blew a tire and flipped several times.

Nine of the passengers, including five of the six who died, were ejected. Police say the front occupants were the only ones wearing seat belts.

We have to ramp up our efforts and I am asking you to help us. We know what the vulnerabilities of 15-passenger vans are, and we know what drivers should be doing to drive them safely.

We have a lot of current and valuable information on 15-passenger van safety on safercar.gov. Please visit our website for materials and help us get the word out to the American public.

I now want to talk about reauthorization and our relationship, NHTSA and the States.

NHTSA is very proud of the joint effort we undertook with GHSA and the States in 2008 to develop consensus performance measures to govern the national highway safety program.

NHTSA and the States agreed that the measures would first be included in the FY2010 Highway Safety Plans submitted to NHTSA on September 1, 2009, and then used in every Highway Safety Plan and Annual Report thereafter.

All 50 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico have complied, as planned.

This partnership between us on performance measures is ahead of the curve, setting the example for all other surface transportation programs.

The progress and the results are clear, that when we stand shoulder to shoulder supporting and executing our safety mission, we succeed and we move the needle in a significant way.

Thank you for being our thoughtful and powerful partner. The men and women at NHTSA stand ready to be your partners on the next transformational six year highway reauthorization.

So, what are the plans for Highway Safety Reauthorization after the President made the announcement this past Labor Day?

There are two takeaways. First, the President and the Secretary are committed to a six year reauthorization, the \$50 billion is part and parcel of that plan, there is no mini-highway bill.

Second, we in the administration are committed to working with the Congress to get this bill done, and we at NHTSA are hard at work to be ready to fully engage all of our stakeholders for our chance to make America safer.

So what are my plans for reauthorization? I have a quick story. I was recently in Chicago giving a speech to the international association of taxicab regulators, and one of my uncles owns a cab company.

Before that speech, I was telling my uncle about my plans for vehicle safety and fuel economy and how I was going to discuss them with this group. And my uncle replies, "You know what Mike Tyson says about plans? Everybody has one until you get punched in the mouth."

With that as backdrop, I can talk about NHTSA's game plan for hours, and I likely will with a number of you in this room. But for the sake of our time together the first priority is to review and improve the ongoing programs and issues carried over from SAFETEA-LU.

In addition, I am going to look very hard at highlighting and expanding successful concepts from our pilot programs on Pedestrian Safety going on around the country.

Also, I am looking forward to working with all of you to expand the usage of interlocks for impaired drivers.

I am heartened from our preliminary findings from our High Visibility Enforcement Pilot on distraction in Hartford, CT and Syracuse, NY, and want to expand that program as the results bear out and warrant.

Thank you so much for having me here today, and thanks to the host state of Missouri for putting together such a wonderful event. I am looking forward to working with all of you in the years ahead.