

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

**Transportation Research Board  
Open Session: Meet the U.S. DOT Leadership  
Washington, DC  
January 12, 2010**

Thank you, Polly, for your kind introduction. It is a pleasure and an honor for me to be sitting on this panel with my DOT colleagues. We all share in this opportunity to keep our nation's transportation system the best in the world. And the safest.

NHTSA's track record is tremendous, but, I know there is still much work to be done. Secretary LaHood has vowed to keep safety as the top priority for the department, and he has vowed to do so in a spirit of openness and collaboration. I am making that same commitment for NHTSA.

We've had some good news on the highway safety front. The rate of deaths on our roadways continues to decline. In 2008: 37,261 people were killed on U.S. roadways. This number represents the lowest number of deaths since 1961 and the lowest fatality rate since we have been keeping statistics.

My goal is to make sure that we keep making gains in lives saved by using all the tools at our disposal.

For example, we will continue to support our law enforcement partners with national campaigns and other resources in the fight against drunk driving. We will continue to encourage States to expand and improve their ignition interlock programs as part of a comprehensive approach to combat drunk driving. Drunk driving is one of our nation's deadliest crimes, and we are committed to eliminating it from our roadways.

We will continue to work closely with law enforcement and State and local safety advocates promoting seat belt use. The simple seat belt has saved more lives than any other technological invention ever implemented in vehicles. And even though seat belt use is at an all-time high across the country, we still have work to do.

Advances in technology have increased the number of distractions that tempt drivers. As we have in the past, NHTSA will continue to use all of the tools and strategies at our disposal to combat distracted driving. The Distracted Driving summit convened by Secretary LaHood made the problem a national topic. It has always been a part of NHTSA's charter, and we will continue our work in this area.

Motorcoach Safety is another high-profile issue for NHTSA. Travel by motorcoach is an extremely safe form of travel. But NHTSA is investigating methods to reduce the number of fatalities in motorcoach crashes. We know that ejections account for 64 percent of motorcoach passenger deaths, and, we are working on several priority safety areas to mitigate these losses.

We expect to publish a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking for seat belts on motorcoaches early this year.

NHTSA, working with the Environmental Protection Agency, will deliver on President Obama's call for a strong and coordinated national policy for fuel economy and greenhouse gas emission standards for motor vehicles, and we will do so in a way that does not compromise safety. We expect to publish the final rule on CAFE in April.

NHTSA's work touches on many fronts, including law enforcement, education, and technology. I've briefly touched on some of the more high-profile items on the NHTSA agenda. I could talk about many more, including teen driver safety, advanced safety technologies, motorcycles, pedestrian safety and quiet cars, and, child passenger safety. I can assure you, every part of our work is a priority and we will continue to focus on making our nation's roadways safer for the American public. Thank you.