Remarks Prepared for
David Strickland, Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Tennessee Valley Authority
Electric Vehicle Forum
Nashville, Tennessee
September 8, 2010

Good morning.

Thank you, Governor Bredesen, for your welcome. It is a pleasure to be a part of such a forward-looking conference. Secretary LaHood was disappointed he could not accept your invitation to be here.

I'd like to convey the Department's optimism about the future. The United States is poised to lead the world in the development of innovative technologies and manufacturing, to enhance energy security, and to improve the environment through the development of a new generation of cleaner, more efficient cars and trucks.

I'm energized by the possibilities unfolding before us to reach new levels of service and protection of the American public. That energy stems directly from a

new way of thinking at the Department and in Washington.

The President set the national framework by proposing a transformative policy for transportation. The Nation's first Livable Communities Initiative, developed by the Department of Transportation in coordination with the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Environmental Protection Agency, will measurably enhance the quality of life for families, workers, and communities across America.

This translates into Federal support for more transportation choices, more public transportation, and more commercial and residential development around transportation hubs.

That includes roads, rails, and transit as well as safer passage for pedestrians and bicyclists. The Department is actively promoting increased travel by foot and bicycle to reduce congestion, pollution, and reliance on oil, and to improve travelers' health.

With this national framework in place, efforts made at the vehicle level will be that much more effective. Of

course that extends to how we power our cars and trucks. We want our vehicles to be as fuel efficient as possible.

NHTSA, working with the Environmental Protection Agency, delivered 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 did so in a way that does not compromise safety. We issued the final rule on April 1.

That rule set the first-ever national program that harmonized fuel economy and greenhouse gas

standards for light-duty vehicles for model years 2012 through 2016 – an historic step in addressing the transportation sector's largest contributor to oil consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. The impact is huge – light-duty vehicles are responsible for about 60 percent of U.S. transportation petroleum consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

Although very important, that was just the first step. At the direction of the President, the Department of Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency are taking the next steps to improve fuel efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from all motor vehicles.

NHTSA and EPA will soon propose joint regulations to reduce the energy consumption by and greenhouse gas emissions from medium- and heavy-duty commercial trucks. Concurrently, we're working with stakeholders to collect information for the second-phase joint rulemaking for light-duty vehicles.

The President directed NHTSA and EPA to work with the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to begin a process for evaluating vehicle technologies and vehicle manufacturer capabilities to improve fuel efficiency and reduce greenhouse gas emissions for passenger

cars and light duty trucks for model years 2017 to 2025.

NHTSA, EPA, and CARB have been meeting with a wide variety of stakeholders, including automobile manufacturers, labor unions, environmental organizations, and others, as part of the process to create a technological assessment and seeking their views about our future regulations.

That technology assessment is being used by NHTSA and EPA to draft a Notice of Intent that we plan to jointly publish by September 30. The notice will

discuss the range of annual improvement in fuel economy and greenhouse gas emissions that can be expected for the period of 2017 to 2025.

The technology assessment certainly includes electrified propulsion vehicles – including hybrid electric vehicles, plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, and Battery Electric Vehicles.

As with all complex technologies, the robust deployment of advanced vehicles will require collaboration across many different groups. The President has called on the Department of Energy, in

coordination with the Department of Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency, to work with stakeholders and develop voluntary standards, promote the deployment of advanced technology vehicles, and standardize electric vehicle infrastructure.

Then there is the safety aspect. In addition to being responsible for fuel economy regulation, NHTSA also has vehicle safety as primary responsibility. The core value in NHTSA's mission is the protection of the American public, and I take that mission very seriously.

So it will come as no surprise when I tell you we believe safety is one of the key measures of success of electrified passenger vehicle technologies. Safety will be crucial in all modes of operation, whether during charging – both at home and at commercial facilities – during normal driving, or during unforeseen crash events.

We know that in the foreseeable future, lithium-ion batteries will be the primary electric storage device in electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles. Safety issues associated with lithium-ion chemistries

are different from those associated with other fuels and technologies. We are conducting research to better understand this area in anticipation of the roll-out of the electrified fleet in the coming years.

We have a dedicated Vehicle Safety Research group performing detailed Failure Analysis. Together with industry and academia, the group is working to establish safety performance measures and criteria. We are assessing the performance and functional requirements of these battery/electric storage systems.

We are partnering with intergovernmental groups to tackle a wide range of related issues. For example, the Lithium Battery Technical/Safety Group combines the experiences of many sister Federal agencies – NASA, the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy, the CIA, the FBI, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the Federal Aviation Administration.

This group shares its expertise and experiences in: test methods, performance data, failure analysis, application limitations, and manufacturer and/or supplier quality. It deals with some proven and difficult applications like the International Space

Station, unmanned aerial vehicles, deep sea submersible crafts, underwater rescue apparatus, and many military and disaster relief applications such as water purification and communications.

And now, the group will collaborate on Passenger Vehicles and Light Trucks.

We are actively involved in efforts with other safety focused industry groups and experts. For example, we are working with the Society of Automotive Engineers on battery and charger safety, and grid interface standardization and safety. We are also working with

the U.S. Advanced Battery Consortium, and the Underwriters Laboratory.

So that is the view from the top down. I believe we are putting the right framework in place to strengthen our Nation and our industry. The Department of Transportation will play an active role in helping the United States lead the world in the emerging fields of new technologies – including electric vehicles. We view these as exciting and promising opportunities for protecting consumer safety, strengthening the economy, and making continued progress toward protecting the environment. Thank you.