

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

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Good morning.

Thank you Paul for your welcome. It is a pleasure to be a part of such a forward-looking conference. It is indeed a new era, and we want new solutions.

It brings to my mind the ancient greeting, “May you live in interesting times.” Some say it is actually an ancient curse. It

might sound great to live in interesting times. But, interesting times are times of change and turmoil and struggle. They are exciting, yes, but they can be tough.

I think today's auto industry understands this better than most. Right now, change is all about us, and change is ahead. We're facing some fairly complex issues. In fact, some of the biggest issues America now faces, as a Nation, involve the auto industry. Rising fuel prices, energy independence, global warming and environment concern, the wireless world...all of these issues touch the auto industry in some way.

And that is why, when I was sworn in four months ago, I felt it was important to look at whether there was a need to

improve NHTSA's effectiveness in this era of the global marketplace and rapidly changing technologies.

One of my first decisions was to question whether NHTSA is being well-served by the four vehicle statutory authorities it relies on to regulate. While they may not be well known to many of you, these statutes are critical because they define NHTSA's role and the scope of its power.

The reality is that while the current authority works and the various constituencies have learned to work with them, they were written in the 1960s and 1970s, when the world and the

automobile market were profoundly different. The question I pose, and the answers I want to have, is whether NHTSA's statutory authorities accommodate the modern automobile? The modern competitive marketplace?

More importantly, do they allow us to regulate in a way that allows the industry to build and sell safe products that the consumer wants to drive? Do they allow us to promote safety, innovation, and fuel efficiency while still providing effective regulatory and enforcement oversight? And do they allow NHTSA to move at pace with the industry?

I've asked our legal and program staff to take a look at our existing authorities; to answer these questions; and to make their best recommendations.

We are in the process of speaking with a number of constituencies and the Congress about our authority, all aiming toward the outcome of being stronger, more efficient, and more transparent.

It is time for new thinking. It is time for new solutions. We must broaden our approach to solving our safety issues.

The President has set the pace and the example. He has proposed a transformative U.S. transportation policy that improves public health and safety, fosters livable communities, promotes infrastructure repair and long-term

economic competitiveness, while achieving environmental sustainability.

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 and safer passage for pedestrians and bicyclists. On March 15, the Secretary announced a new policy on bicycle and pedestrian safety that clearly states that every transportation Agency, including DOT, has the responsibility to improve conditions and opportunities for walking and bicycling and to integrate these modes into their transportation systems.

The Department is actively promoting increased travel by foot and bicycle to reduce congestion, pollution and reliance on oil, and improve traveler's health.

As with motor vehicle transportation, we are making every effort to promote pedestrian safety. To support these efforts, we have awarded major demonstration projects to New Mexico, North Carolina, Florida, and Chicago to implement comprehensive pedestrian safety programs that include infrastructure improvements and contain strong education and enforcement components over the next three years. We hope that these projects will serve as a model for other States, cities and communities.

Our actions must reflect that we are part of the global community. Not only are we all connected, it seems, but I see some common concerns and ideals spreading. Of course that extends to how we power our cars and trucks.

We want our vehicles to be as fuel efficient as possible. As countries around the world move to address global climate change and reduce energy consumption, we pushed for the development of aggressive but achievable fuel economy and greenhouse gas emission standards for motor vehicles.

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 published the final rule on CAFE the first day of this month.

I think we are headed in the right direction, but as with any change, there will be new challenges that arise. For example, as we move to hybrid electric vehicles in an effort to diminish our reliance on oil, we are creating a much quieter fleet.

A quieter fleet could potentially put pedestrians at risk, especially blind pedestrians. NHTSA is currently conducting a research program on quieter cars and the safety of blind pedestrians. Our analysis of limited data from 12 States shows that hybrid electric vehicles do have a significantly higher incidence rate of pedestrian crashes than internal combustion engine vehicles for certain maneuvers—like

slowing or stopping, backing up, entering or leaving a parking space and making a turn.

We are beginning work on phase 2 of this project, intended to assess how we might require vehicles to emit a base level of sound at low speeds to provide some level of identification to pedestrians that a vehicle is approaching. We think that to be effective, this sound has to be readily identifiable as a vehicle.

We are actively working on crash avoidance technologies and believe they offer great hope for safety in the future.

Vehicle-based technologies such as Forward Collision Warning Systems and, Lane Departure Warning Systems will provide drivers a little extra help when they need it most.

Later this year, we will begin to encourage the demand for and use of these technologies. Other technologies such as those capable of detecting vulnerable road-users such as pedestrians and cyclists also show great promise.

We are looking at the future safety benefits of vehicle-to-vehicle communications, or V2V. NHTSA has entered into a cooperative agreement with an industry partnership

including, Ford, General Motors, Honda, Hyundai-Kia, Mercedes-Benz, Nissan, Toyota, and Volkswagen that will develop and evaluate the effectiveness of safety systems that use vehicle-to-vehicle communications. We're in the second year of a 4-year effort that is part of the Department's Intellidrive Program.

This project will ensure that vehicle communications are interoperable across all vehicles regardless of make or model. The effort will also help us determine the minimum performance levels and safety impact of safety applications enabled by V2V. NHTSA believes this technology has the potential to save thousands of lives each year while at the same time offering the opportunity to reduce congestion and provide other services to vehicles drivers.

Drivers and other road users must take an active role in safety—their own and that of those sharing the road. Vehicle occupants need to buckle up and keep focused on the task of driving. Technologies may be able to detect the presence of vulnerable road users, but both they and the vehicle drivers need to be on the lookout for each other.

Take for example, the issue of Distracted Driving.

Look at us—we're all packing Blackberries and we absolutely refuse to be disconnected—even for one minute.

Has it made us more productive at work? Undoubtedly. Has it made us better communicators? I think the jury is out on that one still. The jury is definitely in on cell phone use and driving—be it for texting or talking or whatever else.

Distracted Driving is dangerous – almost 6000 lives lost in 2008 alone due to all types of distractions – and we are determined to put an end to it.

In fact, I can tell you, the Secretary of Transportation is on a rampage about Distracted Driving. Last fall, the Department held a summit on Distracted Driving. It was the first in the Nation to call Federal attention to this dangerous problem, and propose a range of realistic solutions.

We recently unveiled sample legislation that States can use as a starting point to craft laws prohibiting texting while driving.

Hopefully, this will help all the State legislatures currently considering such laws to move forward.

So far, 21 States plus D.C. have texting laws covering all drivers – Iowa became the 21th State earlier this year. That's a good start, but we've got to do better. I know lawmakers around the country are studying this seriously.

We're seeking 50 million dollars in next year's budget for an incentive grant program to encourage more states to pass these laws.

And in Syracuse, New York and Hartford, Connecticut, we just kicked off a two-year federally funded pilot program to test the effectiveness of highly publicized law enforcement efforts to change drivers' behaviors and get them to put down their cell phones.

On the outreach side, we're sponsoring a website, distraction.gov, which acts as a national clearinghouse for information on distracted driving. It also makes our position on Distracted Driving clear, and it details our commitment to work across the spectrum with private and public entities as well as advocacy groups to tackle Distracted Driving.

I am very encouraged by the momentum that is building against Distracted Driving. My intent is for NHTSA to develop an evaluative framework for in-car technologies. We are in the second decade of the 21st century and I guarantee there will be new whiz-bang gadgetry for in-vehicle use every week. Rather than react to every technology as it pops up and becomes a distraction, NHTSA needs a framework that clearly defines the danger zone for the driver — allowing NHTSA to keep pace with the industry, rather than playing catch-up.

We will not take a back seat while new telematics and *infotainment* systems are introduced. These have too great a potential to create more and more distraction for the driver. As part of our NHTSA Distraction Plan we will be taking a

hard look at guidelines or requirements for these systems. I am challenging the auto industry and the cell phone industry to work collaboratively with us to keep the driver focused on their required task: driving.

We are on track to roll out our enhanced government 5-star safety ratings system with the 2011 model year vehicles. For the new ratings, we made changes to the existing front and side crash ratings programs.

We added a family of crash test dummies and a side impact pole test to increase occupant safety. We established an overall safety score that will combine the star ratings from the front, side, and rollover programs. Finally, the Agency also implemented a program that we hope will encourage the

demand for and use of advanced crash avoidance technologies.

The Agency is planning a communications program to ensure the American public understands why some of the new ratings are lower but more rigorous, and that those lower star ratings do not mean the vehicles are less safe than they were a year ago.

I hope that a year from now, when we meet again at SAE 2011, we will continue to have interesting things to talk about. I believe we are putting the right framework in place to strengthen our Nation and our industry. We are ready for change. In fact, we welcome change. What will not change is

NHTSA's commitment to safety. We are the traffic safety Agency, and we will take duty seriously. Thank you.