

**REMARKS FOR  
THE HONORABLE NORMAN Y. MINETA  
SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION  
CLICK IT OR TICKET MOBILIZATION PRESS  
CONFERENCE  
WASHINGTON, D.C.  
MAY 12, 2003  
9:30 AM**

Thank you, Jeff. And thank you, everyone, for coming here today to celebrate the start of our latest nationwide safety campaign.

I am especially pleased to acknowledge the presence of our Surgeon General, Vice Admiral Richard Carmona. Dr. Carmona, your presence underscores the commitment of our agencies to work together. And it confirms the reality that the death and injury caused by automobile crashes is one of our nation's leading public health issues. We must

educate Americans about that reality. Thank you for being here to lead in that effort.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to be here with you today, not only as the Secretary of Transportation, but also as a parent and a grandparent. And like many of you who are parents – or even grandparents – when it comes to our families, we enjoy remembering what was, experiencing what is, and dreaming of what could be.

Yet for many of us – too many of us – our families have been scarred by the devastation caused by automobile crashes. What is remembered is the shock of the event, the pain and anguish experienced, and the despair over what could have been and now will never be.

So as a policymaker, when it comes to crash prevention, I remember what was: vehicles engineered mainly for speed and comfort – not safety;

laws that treated drinking and driving as minor mischief; and of course, no seatbelts.

Today, when it comes to highway safety, we experience what is: car buyers demanding vehicles be engineered with safety as a priority instead of an afterthought; stronger laws against impaired driving; and cars with safety belts, properly installed child safety seats, booster seats, and airbags.

But even with all of this we have not defeated this plague of death and injury. 42,000 of our fellow citizens die each year on our roads and highways. Each fatality is someone's parent, sibling, child, or grandchild.

As for the future, I envision what could be: fewer families suffering the loss of a loved one, reducing the emotional anguish and financial devastation caused by these tragedies.

Statistics show that safety belts, when used properly, are the single most effective tool we have to build a safer transportation system. Our aggressive safety belt enforcement campaigns reflect our determination to see that more Americans return safely home from their travels to their families.

Our efforts in this year's national mobilization will focus on teens and young adults. Inexperience behind the wheel, combined with the exuberance of youth, often yields tragic results. But while our efforts in this year's national enforcement campaign will focus on our youth, the message will apply to everyone: if you are not buckled up, you will be stopped, you will be ticketed, and your license to drive could be at risk.

This year we are supporting *Click It or Ticket* with an intense media campaign that includes, for the first time, a series of nationally televised advertisements.

We are going to preview those ads for you in just a minute.

But before we see the ads, I want to leave you with one final message. This Department of Transportation, *your* Department of Transportation, is going to reduce fatalities on our highways and roads.

For the past year and a half we have dedicated ourselves to improving transportation security for Americans. Faced with the scourge of terrorism our Department responded by creating unprecedented partnerships with the private sector, with Congress, and other groups and federal agencies.

Together we succeeded in decreasing the dangers of terrorism through new and better technology, necessary personnel, improved laws, and increased education.

Well, we are going to do the same thing with car crashes. 42,000 Americans dying each year and hundreds of thousands more injured are statistics we will not let stand. This year we are going to take the same passion, call on the same partnerships, and build the same record of success through enforcement, education, and engineering. Why? Because we can – and we will.

Last year Congress gave my Department 36 mandates to improve transportation security. I gave the Department just one – to find a way to meet every one of the 36 Congressional mandates. They did.

Well now, as we begin Transportation Week in 2003, I am giving another mandate to my Department. Dramatically reduce the number of Americans killed or injured in car crashes.

When we succeed, hundreds if not thousands, of lives will be saved and serious injuries reduced each

year. And the futures of thousands of our fellow citizens will be better secured.

Thank you, again, for being here today. And please remember to buckle up. Your life and the lives of the ones you love depend on it.

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