

**Remarks for
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National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**

**Automotive Trade Association Executives
Brewster, MA
July 12, 2003**

Thank you very much. I'm absolutely delighted to be here. I really appreciate Phil Bradey and Al Starling. This has been great.

By some accounts, I'm shameless in my zeal about this particular issue. I hope you will agree with me with what needs to be done to drive the President's Agenda for preserving human life in America.

I want to again thank Allen and Phil for what they have done, and NADA in particular. We signed a Memorandum of Agreement last June for a national campaign to get kids between the ages of four and eight buckled safely in their vehicles. This is gathering steam. There are great things now on the website. I hope you can access this and have looked at it. There are opportunities for the people you represent to get involved directly in this, and it really is going to make a big difference.

Let me tell you a little about NHTSA. The agency is divided into two parts. One is concerned with vehicle safety. We regulate the automobile industry. We generate safety regulations. We do defect investigations. With the new TREAD rules, we try to find defects before they become big safety problems. The vehicle safety side is 90% of our headache and 95% of our press - for about 5% of our safety problem.

The other side of NHTSA is the behavior side, and that gets us the largest net gain in lives saved. But oftentimes, the people who are trying to push that rock up the hill don't have the horsepower to do so, not like American business, which does. So part of my goal while I'm here at NHTSA, is to get American business involved in this public health problem - and particularly the auto industry, which really is concerned and rightfully should be concerned about the safe use of their product.

And particularly this group here today, because this is the place where we have the nexus of the vehicle and the customer coming together. There's a real chance to change the way we do safety business in America and to get the right people involved. That's why I'm here.

There's a lot to do in the Administration and obviously my two bosses have been consumed with a couple of things. President Bush has said in no uncertain terms that his top priority is the safety and security of the American people. The leading cause of death for Americans from 12 months to age 35 is motor vehicle crashes. You can't have safety

and security as a priority and not pay close attention to what's killing people on our highways.

When I interviewed for this job back in April 2001, Secretary Mineta and I were having this wonderful conversation about what I would do if I became the NHTSA Administrator. Secretary Mineta doodles when he talks. Actually, when he's listening, he doodles. I was in the middle of one of my "sermonettes" and he turned the paper around so I could see it. He turned his legal pad around, and on it was written the exact number of Americans who died the year before on the highways. The Secretary understands this. He gets it.

I was confirmed in August of 2001, and unfortunately, about a month later, we had an event that stole the attention of the Department of Transportation - away from the leading cause of death for Americans. That was 9-11. And 9-11 completely consumed the resources available, the excess capacity to devote our energy to new projects. So for that period of time Secretary Mineta focused mainly on aviation security.

But then in May, just two months ago, he made an announcement at a public meeting, a press conference really, and said we're going to put the same energy now into highway safety that we put into starting up one of the largest federal agencies in history, the TSA, for the last year and a half. So I'm coming here to you today with a charge from my bosses. We've got to get this done.

I'm not going to be in this job forever. I'm going to go back to North Carolina and probably see patients again. And while I'm here I'm going to push the President's and the Secretary's goal. I want to get American business and the people that represent American business involved in this public health task.

These are the numbers, and you've seen them before. They're really unfortunate. This is from our early estimates for 2002. We're soon going to release the final 2002 numbers, which will be slightly less than what you see here.

Around 42,800 people died on America's highways in 2002. That means this was about level with the prior year. When you consider that vehicle miles traveled increased about 2 % last year, the rate of death per vehicle mile traveled is really just about flat. Just stemming the tide is all we've been able to do.

The good news is that injuries are down a statistically significant level for the second year in a row and this means something. This means that when you are in a crash, you're being kept safe. So the vehicle safety side seems to be working. People getting buckled into their vehicles more often seems to be working. But the problem is that if we allow this rate to remain the same, if we hold the death rate per vehicle mile traveled at it's current level, in 5 years the country will see 50,000 people dead each year. So it's not enough to just stem the tide.

We have a charge to reduce the rate. In fact Secretary Mineta has given a goal to all of us at DOT to reduce the rate from 1.5 deaths per hundred million vehicle miles traveled – the current rate - to 1 death per hundred million vehicle miles traveled by 2008. This is a cut of about one-third in the next five years. That's not an easy thing to do.

If the lives lost and human suffering don't get you, don't worry: it doesn't get a lot of people, believe me. You have plenty of company. When you work with the state legislatures, you can throw around numbers like 42,000 deaths all day long and they'll yawn. But sometimes this gets them: the total annual cost in 2000 dollars is \$231 billion and rising. That's \$33 billion in medical costs alone. That's more than we spend on highway construction for the year.

Non-use of safety belts costs the country about \$20 billion per year. When the report came out it was \$26 billion. Because we've had an increase in belt use since then, the cost is down to about \$20 billion. We've already realized some cost savings.

Impaired driving costs about \$50 billion a year, and speeding costs about \$40 billion. These are tangible costs that are calculable and in fact are preventable. Once again, we have these numbers on a state-specific basis, and we have them on our website. I hope you will take a moment to look at them. I hope I can convince you to help us make this argument to your state legislatures. Those numbers are available. If you call me, we'll send you whatever you need.

This slide shows who pays these expenses. I want you to notice that crash victims only pay for about a quarter of the cost of a motor vehicle crash. The rest is borne by society at large, through increased insurance costs, Federal and State costs directly, and the ubiquitous "other" category.

I asked our staff: I said "Listen, let's back up a second. We know that we can't save every life. Crashes are going to happen; severe crashes are going to happen. But if we're going to save lives, tell me the countermeasures that we can do right now to stop the numbers." Secretary Mineta says we need to bring the fatality rate down and to find a way to save 9,000 lives per year by 2008. How are we going to find them?

Well, it's really pretty simple. There are two pieces of this pie chart that account for about 2/3rds of this pie. Safety belt use: if we can get belt use to about 90 % in this country, like they have in Canada, that will save one-third of all the lives that can be saved. If we cut impaired driving by a third, it would result in another third of the lives that can be saved. The last segment of the pie is made up of a number of areas where the gains will be smaller: reductions in large truck fatalities, intersection collisions, roadway departures, child safety, pedestrians, and so forth.

So we know from this exactly where we have got to put our emphasis, we know where we have got to put our resources. There's just no doubt about it.

Going right into safety belts now: Let's talk about numbers and percentages just to bring it home to you. We celebrated a 2% increase in belt use across our country between 2000 and 2001, and another 2% increase between 2001 and 2002. We went from 71% to 75 % national belt use in two years. What this means is that for every percentage point increase, there are another 250 families that are going to have their loved ones there at Christmas the next year or around the dinner table.

It also means \$800 million in economic savings. We've demonstrated that savings with belt use already. And every percentage point increase in belt use also means 4,400 moderate/critical injuries that don't happen. People go home from the emergency department instead of up to the ICU or down to the morgue. This is the thing that we have got to do today: we have got to get our belt use rate to the same level that other developed countries have been able to achieve.

In Canada, Gary hops in his sports car and zooms around, but looking around his country, you just don't see people unbelted. Their use rates are over 90%. It's just a way of life. They've done this. Can you say they're more comfortable being governed than Americans? You know what? It's just the norm in Canada.

So here we are. Here's our progress since 1983. Back here, belt use was at 14%. This was when all we had in place was public education about the value of safety belt use. There is an injury control methodology that we all talk about, the "3 E's:" Education, Engineering and Enforcement. Back in '83 we were simply in the education phase and not enough people listened.

Everybody remembers in the 70's when the National Safety Council spent \$70 million with the jingles, "*Buckle Up for Safety*," "*Buckle Up*." Everybody remembers that from the 70's. The jingles got belt use all the way to 14%. When belt laws came in - New York's first belt law was enacted back in '84 - zoom! The use rates started to zoom up, but then it flattened out again years later.

Years later individual states like North Carolina and others began to use high-visibility enforcement to increase belt use and this started pushing the numbers up again. When I came to NHTSA we took this enforcement approach national. I hope you saw our TV ads over the Memorial Day weekend for the *Click It or Ticket* campaign.

People who are educable understand that they're subject to the laws of physics. The laws of physics apply no matter how rich you are, no matter what kind of car you drive. If you run into something, even at low speed, it's going to be very uncomfortable. So many people understand this and buckle their safety belts - up to a point.

The people now who are still not buckling up are those who will only respond to a ticket. Sorry to say that, but that is just the way it is. The cycle that I mentioned earlier—"Education, Engineering and Enforcement"—is now in the enforcement phase - to take advantage of the engineering that is already in vehicles. So we have this goal of 78%

national safety belt use by the end of this year. We're pushing really hard to get this and will have some preliminary results in the next month or so.

There's a difference among States. Not all States are the same. The map that has been placed on your table shows the red states that have primary safety belt laws. This means that a police officer can stop a motorist if he sees a kid dancing around in the back seat, or a motorist unbelted. The last two - Illinois and Delaware - just passed their laws within the last month. Now we have 33 states with primary belt laws. This also means that real enforcement is not accessible to police officers in the remaining states. They cannot pull the car over unless the officer sees the driver doing something else wrong first, such as making an illegal turn or speeding.

The difference in belt use between a primary law State and a secondary law State is, on average, 11 percentage points. Every percent represents 250 people, \$800 million, and 4,400 moderate/critical injuries. The arithmetic is very simple here. If a police officer can pull you over and is allowed to do high visibility enforcement - no sneakiness now, but real high visibility enforcement for belts - the next day belt use goes up and people can take advantage of the safety engineering already in their vehicles. This is not rocket science. It's about public policy. You can see the results by state - it's a very tiny slide, but it's also printed on the back of that map already on your tables.

This slide shows the red states with primary law states, the green states with secondary law states, and New Hampshire which has only a child seat belt law in yellow at the end. You can see just by the way the colors group together the effect of primary belt laws. So, here's what we need. This is very important public policy for our country. We must have primary safety belt laws in 50 states.

We just won't get there unless we have American business behind us. I had a great meeting with Tom Donohue a couple of months ago. He was the President of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce at that time, and he said to me, "Jeff, this is a no-brainer. This has cost American business huge amounts of money."

NHTSA commissioned a study that showed that in two major companies in the U.S., about 40 percent of the lost work time was due to motor vehicle crash injuries. This is a huge economic drain. The Chamber is going to help us. So now Jeff Crowe, who is the head of Lynchburg Trucking and current President of the U.S. Chamber, mentions the value of primary belt laws in all of the talks he gives. He will be doing this all year long as President.

Let's go back to the car and truck dealers and the safe use of your products. The products that you all represent really depend on safety belt use. We will talk some more about the methodology behind this. We've had some great success and we've had some more difficult situations.

There was a big concern about racial profiling in Illinois. There was an African American Senator from Chicago who decided that primary belt laws were a great idea. In Illinois at

the time African Americans buckled up less often than non-African Americans. This motivated Senator understood this to be a way of taking care of his community. He was able to push through a racial profiling bill at the same time that their primary belt law went through. That's how they succeeded in Illinois.

In the end, there was a problem because of an exemption for pickup trucks. In a nearby state, Indiana, hundreds of teenagers have died in the last three years in pickup trucks. In the last three years, not one teenager killed in a pickup truck was wearing a safety belt. We have become a society that consumes our young. There are solutions to this, to stop these youngsters from dying. Unfortunately, when the bill was passed the farm lobby was not engaged in Indiana, and I think their influence is under-recognized in that state.

We had a great conversation about Nebraska last night - the legislature, and the challenges there are with people who think that if they don't buckle up, they're not subject to Newton's laws of physics. This is the reason that I am here. Last night, I must have talked to a whole bunch of you, I don't know, maybe 20 of you - and I missed the shrimp! But it was great. What I learned was that you know who all the players are in state legislatures. I have the sense that if you want this done, it can be done.

I'm hoping that we can create a snowball effect. What's happened is that NADA is already engaged in this. They have joined with the auto manufacturers and key insurers in the Air Bag and Seat Belt Safety Campaign. The automakers put a ton of money and energy into this campaign, which also involves the National Safety Council. The campaign people go around to the states and they whip the states pretty hard to get this done. They understand the economics behind it. They understand the issues in American business, and I'm delighted that NADA has joined the Air Bag and Seat Belt Safety Campaign. That's going to be a huge addition.

The point of sale is another huge opportunity. I have this vision that nobody will drive off the lot in their new vehicle without being fully instructed on how to use the safety features in the car. They will know how to use ABS brakes, how electronic stability controls effect their steering, how far away a short lady needs to sit from the steering wheel to avoid being harmed by the airbag, and the ages of the children in that family - to make sure that age appropriate restraints are properly fit in that vehicle before the parents drive off the lot. We can't do that from Washington. That can only be done at the point of sale.

Our memorandum of agreement last year to get kids into booster seats is a good start, but there's really so much more opportunity for things that can be done at the point of sale. I hope to be able to convince NADA and those you represent to get more engaged in this issue.

This is the brochure, *Buying a Safer Car*, which I have been shamelessly promoting on our web site. It contains the results of our NCAP tests from the New Car Assessment Program. This follows very closely our motor vehicle safety standards. I truly believe in,

fundamentally believe in market forces, and trying to push market forces. Safety benefits from the pull of market forces.

Not too long ago the folks at Daimler Chrysler called me up and said “Jeff, we want to use your NCAP results when we launch the new Pacifica. We want to launch this thing on May 1, and we want to brag about safety. Can we go with that?” I said, “You bet you can - absolutely you can.” This is huge news. Having that launch on May 1 with the NCAP program safety results getting all that attention, that is an example of how market forces work to make vehicles safer in our country.

And likewise, we’re not afraid to label vehicles when they don’t meet up to our expectations - vehicles that earn less than 3 stars in a rollover, for instance. I’m not ashamed to say that an informed customer should pay attention to those ratings when they shop, and pay attention to the risk that they may be subject to. NADA has been great about making these brochures available. And those of you who run auto shows, we’ve seen those brochures at the auto show and are absolutely delighted. I really do appreciate that very much.

I’d be remiss if I didn’t say just a word about alcohol. When you go to your legislatures, you’ll probably hear about alcohol. There are two important laws that you may hear about. Once again, back in the 80’s, those who were educable were educated. Those people who want to obey the law, who want to keep their neighbor and families safe, have already modified their behavior. Those who drink, drink less. Those who choose to drink but not drink but not mix that with driving do that too.

But we’re at a point with this population where we are no longer making any progress. It’s because of those people who continue to get behind the wheel of a car after drinking substantial amounts of alcohol. The people who are doing this now are drivers with a much higher Blood Alcohol Content. The average Blood Alcohol Content of a driver in a fatal alcohol-related crash in the U.S. today is .16 - that’s twice as high as the legal limit for most states of .08, which our Congress has been firmly behind.

I’m happy to say that now 43 states have .08 laws, and there are 40 states that have Administrative License Revocation, which allows a State to take away a driver’s license if their blood is over the state’s legal maximum, or if the driver refuses a blood alcohol test.

.08 is getting a lot of press. The fact is that the CDC did a study showing a 7 % fatality reduction in states after they passed .08 laws. Nothing happens in isolation. States that pass .08 laws also empower their police officers to then go out and look for drunk drivers and get them off the road. This is what we have seen with the 43 states that already have a .08 limit. And at 43 states, we’re almost there.

We’re also working very closely with the criminal justice community. We’re working with law enforcement and the judges and the DA’s. Jail is not always the best place for somebody who gets arrested for DWI. Some of these people drink until they have very

high BAC's. These people often need treatment and medical attention. We're working with the medical community, doing everything we can do to get them to separate the issue of alcoholism from driving. We're not prohibitionist about drinking by itself, but we are firm about drinking and driving together.

We're doing many things to help. The Administration has sent a reauthorization bill over to Congress that will cover everything we do for the next six years. And for those of you who don't experience this at the State level, there's a group of legislators who are authorized to tell us how much money we're allowed to spend on issues. There's another group called appropriators who actually give us the money to spend. We're at the stage now where we're just trying to get the authorization to spend money for the next six years. This is a very conservative budget because there's just not any more money, but we believe that we have carved out some very important pieces that will help promote our safety goals.

Secretary Mineta wanted to call this bill SAFETEA because he wanted safety to be first and foremost for all. This reauthorization follows our two prior bills, called ISTEPA and TEA-21. We had to come up with some words to fit, which we think we've done very nicely: the bill is called the Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act of 2003.

When this bill gets passed and the authorization and appropriations are done, a state like Florida will get \$38 million - half of which can be spent on any highway safety purpose such as fixing dangerous road shoulders or dangerous turns or poorly designed intersections that lead to crashes. So this should help you, if you choose to help us with this issue. The bill sends money into the states where, frankly, it needs to go.

There's also additional money in there for alcohol programs for a certain number of states that have alcohol death rates that are terrifically high compared to the national average.

We also have money in there for traffic records improvement, so we can pinpoint problem locations in states rather than painting the whole state with a broad brush. It helps the DOTs to pinpoint their problems. They might have problems with road infrastructure, with alcohol, with teen deaths or with something else.

So that's reauthorization. You guys are the experts at the state level. We can't- and won't - do that. The Federal Government is not in the business of lobbying states. What I'm doing is trying to get American business to help with this extremely important public health issue.

We need primary belt laws in all 50 states, absolutely, but on the more local level you can help support NADA's efforts to get the vehicle point of sale engaged in booster seats as well as child safety seat awareness and proper fit. I would very much appreciate it if you would promote the market forces that we believe work really well through our NCAP program, *Buying a Safer Car*.

Every time I buy a car, it's interesting to get the little lecture before I leave the parking lot. The guy at the dealer I've been seeing about my cars since 1987 is really good about telling me what's new. I'm not sure if every salesperson in the United States is as well versed as this guy is, but I really hope that the people you represent are training their sales staff to help their customers understand what's on their vehicles, so that they know how, for example, to apply ABS brakes. When they actively participate, dealers can increase safety for their customers. And finally just be aware of that alcohol legislation that's going to come through.

So, that's my field. I really can't tell you just how much I appreciate the chance to be here to talk to you all about my passion. If you have any time at all, I'll be happy to talk with you about anything else that you want to talk about.