

**Prepared Remarks for Anne S. Ferro  
FMCSA Administrator  
“Interstate 80 Challenge”  
Kickoff Ceremony  
Des Moines, IA  
Wednesday, July 24, 2013**

***Introduction***

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you, Governor Branstad and Bureau Chief Hoyer and thank you partners. This campaign will improve safety for ALL drivers. I am going to talk for a few minutes about trucks and buses.

On behalf of Transportation Secretary Foxx, thank you for your leadership in launching the Interstate 80 Challenge. This challenge, to all states along the 2,900 miles of the I-80 corridor to put more cops on the beat will save lives. And with the media’s support, more cops making more stops will make ALL drivers more aware of their actions.

I also want to thank the state agencies participating in this important event, along with representatives of the International Association of Chiefs of Police State for their support in making this event happen.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is proud to partner in this event and join you in your goal of saving lives by preventing crashes involving commercial motor vehicles.

As an agency, FMCSA regulates more than 500,000 trucking companies and 4,000 interstate bus companies.

We oversee physical qualification standards and drug and alcohol testing requirements of 4 million active commercial driver’s license holders.

The majority of truck companies and drivers operate safely. We focus on those that don't, leveraging the power and presence of state law enforcement to catch the ones who are unsafe.

Joining me today is **Jack Van Steenburg**, FMCSA's Assistant Administrator and Chief Safety Officer. He is a great resource for you on all FMCSA safety issues.

### ***Interstate 80 Roadway Safety***

In 2011 – the most recent year for which we have statistics – we saw the lowest rate of deaths on our nation's highways. That year, 78 people died and 1,202 people were seriously injured as a result of crashes involving large truck and buses in along the 2,900 miles of Interstate 80.

Across the entire U.S., over 4,000 people are killed and more than 79,000 people are seriously injured in these crashes every year. Crashes involving a truck or bus in a state that I-80 runs through account for 32 percent of all CMV-related fatalities and serious injuries.

Five of the 11 states that have Interstate 80 passing through it – California, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Pennsylvania – have the most deaths of any state due to large truck crashes.

So, what you are doing is vitally important.

### ***Today's Event***

Interstate 80 runs 2,900 miles from downtown San Francisco to Teaneck, New Jersey – nearly the width of the U.S.

This very busy corridor serves as a major travel route for millions of Americans each year. This month – July – is one of the months with the highest traffic fatalities because of the increased number of people traveling.

That is why we are reaching out to you and asking drivers of all vehicles, especially trucks and buses to be safety conscious and responsible drivers and passengers.

### ***More Cops – More Stops***

David Strickland, my DOT safety colleague and Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, could not be with us here today. But he has made it clear time and again that NHTSA's success in saving lives is because of the important work performed every day by our nation's law enforcement officers.

The high visibility enforcement operations involved in the Interstate 80 Challenge encompasses more than State Police and Highway Patrol agencies that typically work along the I-80 corridor. It is supported by local officers and deputies conducting highly visible traffic enforcement along the secondary roads in communities that adjoin this busy interstate.

To ensure that only safe drivers are on our roadways, FMCSA urges all law enforcement officers to make a vehicle stop, and to issue the driver a citation, when an officer observes a large truck or bus violating the rules of the road and operating unsafely.

It's all about safety. With more cops making more stops, we can improve roadway safety and ultimately save lives.

### ***Driving Around Big Trucks***

The same goes for passenger car drivers. Another major factor in crashes is passenger cars driving in blind spots around big rigs where the cars are not visible to a truck driver. We call these areas "No Zones."

FMCSA's "Stay Out of the No Zone" and our "Teens & Trucks" educational campaign were born out of the fact that teen drivers are disproportionately involved in fatal crashes with big trucks. Young drivers make up less than 5 percent of all licensed drivers, but are involved in double that, or 10 percent, of deadly crashes – and in 13.5 percent of all crashes.

Around large trucks, stay out of a truck's "No Zones." If you cannot see the truck's mirrors, the driver cannot see you. Being safe is the smart thing to do.

### ***Cell Phones/Texting***

One last point I cannot make enough is to hang up and drive. At the Transportation Department, we tell all drivers to pay attention to the road and not drive while distracted – we say NO text or call is worth a life. Just put it down. Just drive.

### ***Conclusion***

On behalf of President Obama and Secretary Foxx, we are grateful for the partnership of each state participating in the Interstate 80 Challenge.

On a personal note, in 1974, a high school friend and I left our hometown in New York to head west. We drove south to New Jersey and turned right on I-80, and followed it all the way to San Francisco.

We were stopped once and drove alert the rest of the way. I am here today, living the opportunities of a lifetime because of the highway safety work of officers and leaders like you.

Each and every stop you make has the potential to save a life and yield future leaders. Thank you for dedicating the next 8 days to zero fatalities on I-80 – God speed. ###