

**Prepared Remarks by Anne S. Ferro
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Introduction

Good morning everyone. Thank you very much, Captain Dowling. I'm honored to be here today with so many of our state and local law enforcement partners. You are the force multiplier that makes commercial motor vehicle safety a reality.

I truly value the important service our state and local partners provide to our communities and our country each and every day.

Someone once said, "It takes EACH of us, to make a difference for ALL of us."

You make a difference in how we succeed in our safety mission and I am here to talk about where FMCSA stands on our many safety initiatives that will help us all be successful.

Doing the Job of Safety

What brings us together is a shared commitment to make all our roads safe because what we do saves lives.

You have heard me refer to FMCSA's three core principles to guide us strategically in our safety-first mission. One is to raise the safety bar to enter the motor carrier industry. Two – to make sure those who operate and hire commercial transportation operations maintain high safety standards to remain in the industry; and our third is to remove high risk behaviors and operators from the roadways.

We need all hands on deck to do the job of safety. Speaking of hands, you lead the way with enforcement. And it's working.

Earlier this month, Secretary LaHood announced that in 2010, the number of traffic deaths in our country fell to the lowest levels since 1949.

Remarkably, this is the case despite a significant increase in the number of miles Americans drove last year.

While we don't yet have a specific break out for commercial vehicles, we are optimistic that the final numbers due this summer will show a drop in commercial vehicle related deaths for 2010, stepped up traffic in 2011 has all us worried.

Recent Bus Crashes/Strike Forces

One area receiving significant attention is safety in commercial bus travel and the role FMCSA and our state enforcement partners are playing in it. Every year, motor coaches carry 750 million passengers around the country.

In 2009 alone, together, we inspected more than 130,000 commercial buses. As a result, we placed 4.3 percent of drivers and 7.6 percent of buses out- of-service for everything from vehicle safety problems to hours of service violations.

But recent tragic crashes in New York and New Jersey are a sober reminder than we CAN and we MUST do better.

Working together, from March 28 through April 6, we have conducted 2,782 inspections on passenger carriers nation-wide. 289 of those inspections uncovered vehicle defects or driver violations so severe that the drivers or vehicles or both were placed out-of-service.

From a state-wide focus on bus inspections to targeted strike forces at theme parks, national parks and other destinations, we are seeing stepped up enforcement on buses. The bottom line is: This is not a one-shot deal. Strike forces are an effective tool to be used anytime and in many places throughout the calendar year.

Thank you for your initiative in these strike forces. You have our continued support in these life-saving initiatives.

CSA- Where We Are Now/Next Steps

Speaking of lifesaving initiatives, another program where we rely heavily on our partnership is CSA. Since the December launch in all 50 states, we continue to work closely to develop this powerful new program. We are very grateful for the support from each state in making CSA a reality.

CSA has caused the motor carrier industry to be more engaged and aware of its problems.

In the first week after the launch of the safety measurement system, more than 4 million visits were recorded to the web site. Carriers and drivers are starting to pay attention which is exactly what we want them to do!

Essential to CSA's success is the need for quality inspection data and accurate inspection documentation. We are only as good as the data we collect. Without complete inspections and accurate data, CSA can't be fully effective in identifying and staying ahead of safety problems.

Improving data uniformity and consistency is the priority for the Data Uniformity Ad-Hoc Committee led by Major Mark Savage of the Colorado State Patrol. Thank you to Mark and all on the committee for your hard work.

Working together, we have identified consistent methods to document roadside inspection and violation data; standardized processes for challenging data; increased awareness of the importance of roadside data; and developed guidance on uniform inspection selection processes.

The proposed safety fitness determination rule would give safety ratings based on safety data without necessarily going on-site to a carrier's place of business. For CSA to do its job and identify unsafe carriers and drivers, the program requires complete and accurate inspections.

The bottom line is that your continued efforts in support of CSA are needed to make it a strong and effective safety enforcement tool.

Cross Border Trucking Program

Keeping watch on the safety of trucks coming into the U.S. requires a platoon of inspectors, investigators, auditors and state and local law enforcement. This will require us to build upon our partnership with you as our new cross border trucking program with Mexico begins.

Since January, DOT has been working with our Mexican counterparts to frame a long-haul cross border Mexican Trucking program.

As stated by Secretary LaHood, this program makes safety THE NUMBER ONE PRIORITY. Indeed, that is FMCSA's singular focus and responsibility in fulfilling this international treaty obligation.

Just last Friday, FMCSA published the details of the program proposal. It will enable FMCSA to establish a reciprocal, phased-in program built on the highest safety standards. It will authorize both Mexican and U.S. long-haul carriers to engage in cross border operations under NAFTA – the North American Free Trade Agreement.

The program will also result in the lifting of retaliatory tariffs imposed by Mexico which have been harmful to American farmers, businesses and especially, consumers.

Once a final agreement is in place, DOT may begin accepting applications for participation from Mexican carriers.

We will rely on our partnership with you to ensure that Mexican trucks on American roadways are held to rigorous safety standards – just as American trucks are.

Reauthorization/FY 2012 Budget

Finally, I'd like to mention where FMCSA stands with respect to our long-term programs and funding by Congress.

With the enactment of the Surface Transportation Extension Act on March 4, Congress extended FMCSA's authority to obligate funds from the Highway Trust Fund through September 30, 2011.

This authority will enable FMCSA to continue its normal operations for the period of time it has sufficient cash on hand to pay obligations the agency incurred.

The last long-term bill that established our agency's enforcement authority and provided grants to states for roadside enforcement of motor carriers expired in September 2009.

On Labor Day 2010, President Obama proposed a robust six-year "reauthorization" proposal to provide new funding for all federal highway and transit programs which included FMCSA.

The proposal would provide an upfront \$50 billion investment to help employ the nearly one-in-five construction workers who are still out of a job at a time when so many of the roads and bridges we use every day have fallen into disrepair.

The President's proposal also calls for a National Infrastructure Bank, which will leverage private investment dollars and finance transportation innovations that are regional or national in scope.

This proposal will improve the condition of our nation's roads and make travel and freight management more efficient and safer while creating jobs.

The President's Fiscal Year 2012 budget for transportation slashes red tape and consolidates more than 50 programs and includes reforms that will speed up project delivery and empower communities.

Specifically for motor carrier safety programs, our proposal for Congress's consideration includes: streamlining 11 existing separate state grant programs into 3 umbrella grant programs; enhanced enforcement including increased penalties for violators of safety regulations; and enhanced safety oversight of motorcoach operations.

More details will be announced very soon.

Secretary LaHood's goal is to have a long-term bill through Congress and to the President's desk this year.

Investing in our transportation infrastructure is about jobs ... it's about our economy ... and it's about safety. It couldn't be more important.

We don't have time to waste. By 2050, the United States will be home to 100 million additional people – the equivalent of another California, Texas, New York and Florida combined!

If we settle for the status quo, our next generation will find America's arteries of commerce clogged, and our families and neighbors will fight paralyzing congestion.

Conclusion

In closing, I want to thank all of you for your hard work on behalf of highway safety. Your direct contact with drivers and companies affects behavior. You make it happen.

Toward zero deaths is inspirational. To say anything else is unacceptable.

Every trip matters. Every driver matters. Every inspection you make matters. For commercial motor vehicles, we must get that message through.

Thank you for making it count.