

**STATEMENT OF JOHN H. HILL
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**BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION, HOUSING AND URBAN
DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES**

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Good Morning Chairman Murray, Ranking Member Bond, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify before you. I am pleased to describe how the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is working to make the Nation's highways safer as it relates to commercial vehicle operations. The good news is that for the past two years, we as a Nation achieved the lowest large-truck fatality rate in 30 years. This means that despite more trucks traveling more miles – over 7% in the past five years – the proportion of fatalities is down. However, we know that despite these gains, we are not seeing a drop in overall fatalities.

To meet this daunting challenge we are innovating. We will increase our effectiveness and efficiency and we will continue to leverage the talents and resources of our State partners. We will also work closely with our stakeholders from the trucking and motorcoach industries, and the many committed safety advocate organizations through our newly chartered advisory committees, the Motor Carrier Safety Advisory Committee and the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Task Force.

SAFETY IS NUMBER ONE

The largest share – \$489 million or 93 percent – of our budget focuses on reducing large truck and bus crashes. In addition to our own efforts, we partner with the States by providing them grants to enforce commercial truck and bus safety laws, with special attention to motorcoach companies and carriers registered as hauling hazardous materials.

FMCSA's oversight programs are producing results. In FY 2006, FMCSA and our State partners conducted 15,177 compliance reviews. These compliance reviews resulted in 4,195 enforcement actions being initiated. FMCSA found 1,035 companies deficient to the extent that we placed their operations out-of-service. We know from analysis of our compliance review programs that after a compliance review, carriers improve their safety operations. We estimate that the compliance reviews conducted in 2004 resulted in over 2,700 fewer crashes, approximately 1,900 fewer injuries, and over 100 fewer fatalities.

In addition to conducting reviews of carrier operations, FMCSA and our State partners also conducted over 3 million roadside inspections of high risk carriers' vehicles during FY 2006. As a result of these inspections, we placed approximately 220,000 drivers out-of-service until serious violations could be remedied. We also removed approximately 547,000 unsafe vehicles from our highways. Again, we know from previous analysis that

roadside inspections prevent crashes and save lives. We estimate that roadside inspections conducted in 2005 resulted in over 18,000 fewer crashes, approximately 13,000 fewer injuries, and approximately 700 fewer fatalities.

While we recognize there is still much work to be done to make our highways safer, FMCSA is proud of the safety impact resulting from these programs.

SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS WITH STATES

In SAFETEA-LU, Congress provided us new authority to allow Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP) Grants to be used for traffic enforcement on commercial motor vehicles (CMVs) without an accompanying safety inspection. The authority also allows reimbursement of traffic enforcement against non-CMV when such actions are necessary to improve CMV safety (i.e., cars driving unsafely around trucks).

This new direction is consistent with the findings of FMCSA's long-term crash causation studies, and other similar studies, that have identified driver behavior as the leading causal factor in all crashes. It also addresses findings in those same studies that identify the non-CMV driver as the causal factor in a majority of CMV/non-CMV crashes. By expanding this traffic enforcement authority, FMCSA and its State-partners are able to reach out to a broader population of law enforcement organizations in an effort to improve delivery of the program and achieve FMCSA's goal of reducing fatal crashes.

TACT Programs

In cooperation with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, we recently piloted the Ticketing Aggressive Cars and Trucks or "TACT" program in the State of Washington. Working with the State trucking association, troopers conducted a high visibility enforcement campaign to reduce unsafe driving behavior in and around large trucks. The program included a high profile media campaign to build awareness and educate drivers about the hazards of driving around commercial motor vehicles.

The first TACT pilot program was successful in large part due to the cooperative efforts of DOT, State, and local law enforcement agencies that were involved. The evaluation showed a considerable reduction in unsafe driving behaviors on the designated enforcement corridors. Based upon its success, FMCSA will expand TACT to selected States with the highest fatality and crash rates. In fact, just this month, the State of Kansas begins its Trucks on Patrol for Safety (TOPS) program based directly on the success of TACT in Washington. These programs demonstrate the effectiveness of combining high-visibility enforcement with education and communication. FMCSA will print and disseminate the TACT "How to Guide" to State Agencies nationwide and encourage all MCSAP States to adopt this successful program or some form of non-CMV enforcement as allowed in SAFETEA-LU.

SAFETY GRANTS TO STATES

In FY 2008, FMCSA will provide \$300 million in grants, including the Border Enforcement Grants Program to the following areas:

- \$202 million for Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program (MCSAP) Grants enabling States to conduct more than 2 million roadside driver and vehicle inspections and more than 5,000 compliance reviews. This includes \$29 million to be used towards 28,500 State-conducted New Entrant Audits as authorized by SAFETEA-LU;
- \$25 million for improvement of State CDL activities to prevent unqualified drivers from being issued or maintaining a CDL;
- \$5 million for management and operations of the Performance Registration Information Systems and Management (PRISM) program, linking State commercial motor vehicle registration systems with carrier safety performance data to identify unsafe commercial motor carriers and prevent them from registering their vehicles;
- \$25 million for the Commercial Vehicle Information Systems and Networks (CVISN) grants towards improving the exchange of safety information, electronic screening of trucks and buses at the roadside and the administration of interstate credentials;
- \$3 million for safety data improvement grants which are vital for the correct identification of high risk carriers; and
- \$8 million for modernization efforts of the Commercial Driver's License Information System (CDLIS).

SAFETY AT THE BORDER

We have a stringent safety plan in place to ensure that trucks from Mexico that enter the United States under our limited, year-long demonstration program are safe to make deliveries. Our plan includes conducting safety audits in Mexico before the company is granted authority to operate beyond the current 25-mile restricted border zone. The trucks must be insured by a U.S.-licensed insurance firm and they must meet all U.S. safety standards. And, as we already do now at border crossings, we will continue regular inspections of vehicles and drivers.

In addition, our FY 2008 budget request includes \$32 million for the Border Enforcement Grants Program which will support State efforts, along with our own Federal force, to enforce compliance by foreign carriers with the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Regulations, operating authority requirements, and insurance rules. We estimate that the States will conduct approximately 350,000 vehicle and driver inspections at the Northern

and Southern Borders as well as an estimated 30,000 driver license/authority/financial responsibility checks at the border. Close cooperation between Federal and State agencies will continue to be necessary to ensure safe and secure cargo, vehicles, drivers, and authorized carriers cross our international borders.

SAFETY THROUGH INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY

FMCSA is working with the States and partners in private industry to advance innovative safety technologies that have the potential to reduce serious injury and fatal crashes involving large trucks. We recently tested and evaluated a number of these on-board safety systems and the data is impressive.

Roll stability control systems and electronic stability control systems are two different types of automated control systems that reduce the vehicle's throttle and apply brakes without driver intervention to decelerate the vehicle if a high rollover risk is detected. Crashes caused by excessive speed in curves, evasive maneuvers, and loss of vehicle control are typical conditions that are often addressed by stability control systems. The system tested was estimated to potentially reduce about 20 percent of rollover crashes that are caused by driving too fast around a curve. And it could potentially reduce roadway departures by about 33 percent. Presently, we are aware of about 40,000 units of this technology being sold.

Another technology –with approximately 70,000 units distributed – is a forward collision warning system. When a large truck with the system approaches a slower moving vehicle, urgent warnings are issued from the system. The purpose of these warning systems is to improve driver behavior, by providing feedback about safe following distances to drivers. Our recent field test showed that this system helped drivers reduce rear-end collisions by approximately 21%, and drivers who used the system maintained longer following distances between their vehicle and a vehicle in front.

Finally, lane departure warning systems warn drivers if they are about to deviate from the lane. Our field test showed that the systems have the potential to reduce 21% to 23% of single vehicle roadway departure crashes.

SAFETY PRIORITIES - FISCAL YEAR 2008

Our fiscal year 2008 funding request will provide the necessary resources to implement key priorities to increase safety including: 1) continuing our focus on driver safety in all programs, by conducting even more driver roadside enforcement and inspections in cooperation with our State and local partners; 2) intensifying our focus on motorcoach safety by prioritizing our Motor Carrier Safety Assistance Program and Federal activities in this area, while also focusing enforcement efforts on higher risk curbside bus operators; 3) testing our Comprehensive Safety Analysis 2010 initiative, which will provide a new approach to the safety fitness rating – and allowing a broader enforcement exposure to the motor carrier industry; and 4) optimizing our organizational structure to increase efficiency and give the American taxpayers the biggest safety increase possible for their investment in FMCSA.

Driver Focus

Recent studies, including FMCSA's Large Truck Crash Causation Study (LTCCS), continue to emphasize the part that drivers play in crash causation and avoidance. In the LTCCS, commercial motor vehicle (CMV) driver action or inaction was determined to be the "critical reason" for the crash in 87% of the crashes where the crash was attributed to the CMV. In FY 2008, FMCSA will address driver safety knowledge "gaps" found by a Technical Working Group of government and private partners. We will hold public listening sessions and a major public conference to define what actions will address these knowledge gaps and obtain stakeholder commitments to partner with FMCSA to implement the action items quickly and efficiently. FMCSA will also work with our State partners to ensure that they conduct more driver inspections at the roadside as specified in their respective Commercial Vehicle Safety Plan (CVSP).

Our focus on drivers also includes initiatives to improve oversight of medical conditions that affect CMV safety. These initiatives will increase safety by helping to reduce the number of driver's who have medical conditions which adversely impact their ability drive safely. We currently have three major initiatives under way:

Medical Review Board

Under this initiative we will revisit all of our regulations in the medical arena to ensure they reflect the most recent scientific information. The Medical Review Board is a five-member panel of experts, authorized by SAFETEA-LU, who advise FMCSA on medical standards and emerging medical issues. We announced the selection of the MRB members last year and the Board will be holding its fourth public meeting later this month. On the Board's agenda right now are diabetes, cardiovascular issues and Schedule II medications.

National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners

Our second initiative, also supported by SAFETEA-LU, is the establishment of a National Registry of Certified Medical Examiners. The Registry will provide a list of medical examiners who are authorized to perform the physical qualification examination of the more than 6 million truck and motorcoach drivers operating in interstate commerce. Our goal is to maintain ongoing competency of medical examiners through training, testing, certification and recertification. This will ensure that medical examiners fully understand, and stay current with, medical standards.

Merger of the CDL and Medical Certificate

This initiative would merge truck drivers' medical information with the CDL data system. Under the new system, when a driver gets his or her medical certification it would be sent to the State's division of motor vehicles, which would then be required to show on the CDL that the driver continues to be medically certified. If a driver's medical

certificate expired, the State would be required to downgrade the CDL until the driver provided proof of his or her medical qualifications to operate commercial vehicles in interstate commerce.

CDLIS Modernization

FMCSA continues to work cooperatively with the States to implement a variety of activities designed to advance the agency's driver safety goals and effectively implement the program enhancements included in SAFETEA-LU. These efforts include the modernization of CDLIS to enable FMCSA and the States to take advantage of new technological advances and expand CDLIS storage capacity while increasing performance, responsiveness and adaptability to meet current and future requirements; development of CDL learner's permit rule to establish uniform procedures for State issuance of learner's permits and CDLs, including Social Security Number verification requirements and fraud prevention initiatives; and establishment of the CDL Task force to enable us to take advantage of the knowledge, experiences, and energies of the various interest groups to identify ways to improve the effectiveness of the CDL program.

Bus Safety

Several high profile, and tragic, incidents underscored for all of us the importance of bus passenger safety. Even so, we should keep in mind that mile for mile, motor coaches are the safest form of commercial passenger transportation. Buses account for more passenger traffic in the United States than all other commercial modes of transportation combined. In response to recent motorcoach incidents, FMCSA has increased its bus safety enforcement activities by prioritizing MCSAP and Federal activities in this area; by improving the method for selecting passenger carriers to inspect; by performing more compliance reviews of bus companies; and by improving training for motorcoach drivers.

In FY 2006 FMCSA and our State partners conducted over 125,000 bus inspections. In 2007 we will conduct a compliance review of every motor coach operator that has not been rated.

In addition, FMCSA has taken important steps to focus on enforcing regulations that apply to curbside bus operators that provide fixed-route service among major cities in the northeast such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC. FMCSA and a coalition of State and local police agencies have formed a strike force performing inspections at the roadside and compliance reviews and enforcement actions against these companies. This initiative will continue into 2008.

Comprehensive Safety Analysis 2010 and COMPASS

Every organization should continuously strive to improve how it does business, and FMCSA is no exception. In fiscal year 2008, FMCSA will be midway through development of its Comprehensive Safety Analysis (CSA 2010) effort, which will lead our Agency into a more extensive, effective and efficient approach to carrying out

compliance and enforcement programs. The goal of CSA 2010 is to touch more regulated entities through a broader array of enforcement and educational interventions while optimizing FMCSA resources.

While CSA 2010 looks to improve the way that we do business, COMPASS is our program that looks to align and improve our Information Technology (IT) systems. COMPASS will allow FMCSA to take advantage of the opportunities that today's technology has to offer to improve access to information and accelerate data quality improvements to Federal and State roadside inspectors, auditors and safety investigators. Both of these programs are multi-year efforts designed to bring about better execution of programs, tax dollars savings and most importantly to save lives by reducing the number of crashes.

Organizational Excellence

Although a young Agency, we recognize the importance of continuous improvements brought about through assessing our strengths and weaknesses. In addition to modernizing processes and procedures, another Agency priority is to scrutinize our organizational structure to look for ways to improve our organizational effectiveness. As priorities change, the structure of FMCSA must change as well in order to achieve maximum safety results. Every facet of the Agency will be reexamined to deliver improved performance within the boundaries of the Agency's resources.

FMCSA dedicates approximately 5.2 percent of its budget to Organizational Excellence, which addresses improving the internal workings of the Agency. FMCSA will undertake activities for continuous organizational improvement. Our organizational improvement activities will result in a more highly-trained and motivated workforce, enhanced cost-control measures, and improved decision-making processes, leading to more successful completion of our mission objectives. In addition, these activities make the Agency a significant contributor to DOT's achievement of a "green" rating for elements of the President's Management Agenda (PMA).

CONCLUSION

Madam Chairman, I wish to express my appreciation for all that this committee has done in supporting FMCSA. In our seven years as an independent modal Agency within DOT, FMCSA and the dedicated men and women of State and local law enforcement agencies, Departments of Motor Vehicles, State DOTs, and other State and local partners have made great strides toward reducing fatalities and injuries on our Nation's highways. Your continued investment in the Agency will result in added safety emphasis on our nation's highways. I look forward to working with you to achieve our mutual goals and would be happy to respond to any questions you may have. Thank you.