

**Remarks prepared for
David Strickland, Administrator
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration
Decade of Action Policy and Donor Forum
and Awards Luncheon 2012
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Good morning. It is my great pleasure to address the Decade of Action Policy and Donor Forum this morning and talk about our continuing efforts to improve our global quality of life by preventing the tragedy of roadway deaths. And it's always good to see our friends from the international community.

In the year since we launched the Decade of Action for Road Safety, we have focused our collective energies and gained impressive momentum. The Decade has brought together a disparate range of partners and accelerated their potential through the added synergy of collaboration.

Our potential as partners in the Decade of Action is incredible—if we reach our objectives, more than 5 million lives, 50 million serious injuries, and \$5 trillion can be saved over the decade—and the returns will continue accumulating into the future. This is a vision that we cannot afford to lose sight of—and one that is worth working for.

Our challenge is formidable, but I am here to tell you that it is achievable. The U.S. has experienced remarkable progress in reducing roadway deaths over the past decade. The number of annual fatalities on our roads dropped by more 9,000—and the rate of traffic deaths per vehicle mile fell by nearly a third. We at the Department of Transportation played a role in this of course—but the accomplishment was due to an incredible amount of work by a broad range of constituents.

I am not here to give you a step-by-step account of our progress, but rather to tell you that ten years ago there were many people here in the U.S. who felt that it couldn't be done. We had barriers that seemed insurmountable. But it

was done and it has affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. What I am here to tell you is that I believe in the potential of the Decade of Action—and the collaboration among those of you in the room today—to achieve our global goals in the decade ahead.

The U.S. made progress through a combination of improvements—in driver behavior, the vehicle, and the roadway. Some of the improvements were complex and required extensive research—like air bags—but others were much easier to understand. Seat belt use alone saved nearly 150,000 lives during the past decade. Simple things can make a big difference.

While we recognize that the challenges to improving road safety in other nations will be very different than those we faced here in the U.S.—both in scale and variety—I believe that we—and other nations that have experienced such improvements—have gained some knowledge that can greatly facilitate the work of nations that are just starting down this path.

Of course as we use our experience to raise the bar on traffic safety in other countries, we must operate with an acute awareness of environmental, social, and cultural differences and sensitivities. Technology transfer in this context is not easy. There are no out-of-the-box solutions.

We are still learning how to work across a variety of governmental structures, roadway infrastructures, and often-competing health care priorities. It is important to remember that introducing changes out of context can produce unintended consequences that undermine the safety benefits we all want to see.

For example, there are fundamental differences between the character of a transportation system in which 70 to 80 percent of vehicles are two-wheelers and that of a system with 95 percent four-wheelers. The reasons behind these differences are embedded deeply in the environment, economics, and culture.

The responses to safety initiatives—such as reducing congestion and road speeds, for

example—are likely to vary widely from country to country. I have seen firsthand on the streets of Mumbai a family of six on a motorcycle, babies included, and that occurrence is as normal as a family of four in a pickup truck in Wrightsville, Ga. going to the Piggy Wiggly.

Our global road safety mission requires sensitivity and care, and I believe it also requires a vision. Let me tell you about mine.

I am looking forward to expanded global partnerships in research and policy that focus our best minds worldwide on the toughest roadway safety problems and bring economies of scale to the development and deployment of countermeasures.

We need to continue to improve the crashworthiness of vehicles and develop advanced safety systems such as vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-infrastructure communications that support the driver and can even help avoid a crash from happening.

Technology is critical, but we also know that driver error is a factor in approximately 90 percent of crashes in the United States. So our dedication to programs that help drivers make the right decisions needs to be stronger than ever. Driving while impaired by drugs or alcohol or while distracted, driving too fast or without wearing a seatbelt, are decisions that are within a driver's control. We know that we can affect those decisions through education, strong laws, and enforcement—but we need more effective

and efficient methods for building local commitment to get the job done.

My vision is that collaborations such as the Decade of Action can bring a new global safety era that revolves around emerging technologies, safe vehicle designs, and responsible driver behavior.

And I believe we have a good start toward such a vision.

Since 2004, when World Health Day highlighted the critical impact of road safety on the daily well-being of people around the globe, our international community has captured the world's attention and gathered significant resources for this important issue.

In 2009, all of these efforts led to the creation of the Decade of Action and a focus on road safety that was first introduced at the global ministerial conference in Moscow.

I know that many of you here today were at that conference, where Secretary LaHood spoke about how our international community can identify and apply evidence-based best practices as we work together to improve traffic safety globally. Support from many directions—the United Nations, government organizations around the world, as well as non-government organizations and foundations—has since raised public awareness to new levels. I am extremely encouraged by our progress.

NHTSA is now engaged in a number of productive partnerships that provide meaningful international assistance. Of course, we work through the United Nations System—through our long-term partners at the UNECE and through the WHO and the World Bank—and with many others. We have focused on best practices that can be offered to nations looking for evidence-based strategies. We have fostered the development of international standards to ensure a common level of vehicle and equipment safety performance.

We have focused in particular on traffic safety data system development. The experience of the U.S. and many other nations has shown that the best way to approach traffic safety is through a systematic, science-based approach similar to

the public health model of injury prevention. It includes:

- Collecting/analyzing data to determine the nature and scope of the problem**
- Developing and testing approaches to address the problems**
- Delivering interventions**
- Evaluating the implemented programs**

Data collection and analysis are unquestionably fundamental to understanding and addressing traffic safety problems in countries around the world.

In 2009, NHTSA conducted a pilot training program to help nations implement the types of data systems described in the new Data System manual developed in partnership with the WHO

and the CDC, along with support from the Make Roads Safe Foundation and the Global Road Safety Partnership. Representatives of Argentina, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, and Vietnam participated in the pilot. Last year, Secretary LaHood made a commitment to the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation in San Francisco to move forward with this initiative. NHTSA is now planning a regional data conference in Vietnam this fall.

The purpose of the workshop will be to increase understanding of road traffic data systems and evaluation, and to impart the value of reliable and up-to-date data for policymakers.

Participants will learn to improve and strengthen the collection and evaluation of traffic and road safety data systems in their own countries. They will also learn how to leverage data to create,

develop, and implement effective traffic safety policies.

We have made substantial progress in focusing the world's attention on the crisis of global road traffic injuries. We understand that the way forward is to leverage the efforts of those with knowledge and experience in reducing highway fatalities for the benefit of those who will soon see an expansion of personal motorized travel. And we have the strength of collaborations under the Decade of Action that can gather the experience and resources needed to achieve our ambitious vision.

We are now one year into our ten-year commitment and I believe our prospects look very good. But the hardest work is still ahead of

us. I want to thank all of the organizations represented here today for your partnership in this global effort. Special thanks go to the Bloomberg Philanthropies and to all the generous corporate and Foundation donors for their support of this mission. You provide the lifeblood for this ongoing work. This is a cause that connects at every level. We just need to continue working these connections until we have made a difference around the world.

Thank you for your time. It was an honor to speak to such an esteemed audience of international lifesavers.