

**Remarks of FMCSA Deputy Administrator Bill Bronrott
Annual Meeting of the
National Conference of State Transportation Specialists
Atlanta, GA
Monday, June 10, 2013**

Introduction

Good afternoon, everyone. It's great to be with you again. One of my first meetings just weeks after joining FMCSA three years ago was your annual meeting in Park City.

While I was no stranger to highway and commercial vehicle safety, it probably was the first time I heard the terms UCR, URS, IRP (International Registration Plan), IFTA (International Fuel Tax Agreement), and the list went on ... and on.

So, on behalf of Administrator Anne Ferro and our 11 Hundred employees across the country, thank you for inviting me back and for giving me this opportunity to provide an update on some of our priority programs and projects at FMCSA.

We greatly appreciate ALL that you do back home in your respective states -- and collectively under the auspices of the NCSTS -- in support of improving transportation safety and consumer protection.

The Administrator and I have deep roots at the state level where she served as a long-time and highly-respected Motor Vehicle Administrator and where I was immersed in a wide range of transportation, safety and consumer issues as a State Legislator for 12 years just prior to joining US DOT.

Our Assistant Administrator and Chief Safety Officer Jack Van Steenburg was a New York State Trooper, and our Associate Administrator for our Field Services, Anne Collins, was the Registrar of Motor Vehicles in Massachusetts.

We know that it is at the state level where the rubber meets the road – literally and programmatically. You are part of our front line of defense – and it's often said that the best

offense is a strong defense. And it couldn't be more important than when it comes to preventing death and injury on our roads, as well as protecting consumers from rogue movers.

That is our core mission at FMCSA. And, that is why our policies and programs, our enforcement and education efforts, our grants to our state partners, and our investments in research and technology are all tied to 3 core principles:

1. **Raising** the bar to enter the motor carrier industry;
2. **Requiring** carriers and drivers to maintain our high safety standards to operate in the industry; and
3. **Removing** high-risk carriers, unsafe companies, drivers, and vehicles from operating.

But, we can't do it without you and the partnerships we have at the state and local levels.

With that in mind, I'd like to focus my update on three of our priority initiatives at FMCSA –

- our stepped up efforts to enhance motorcoach safety,
- the status of the proposed Unified Registration System, and
- the progress of our household goods efforts.

Commitment to Motorcoach Safety

I will start with motorcoach safety. Today, there are an estimated 12,000 passenger carriers, including 4,000 motorcoach companies.

Many are surprised to learn that more Americans are now taking trips on intercity and chartered buses than on airlines. The number of bus trips has risen to more than 4 million a year.

The growth of intercity bus service is providing a needed service –an affordable means of getting to their destination without depending on a car to get there. But, at what cost when it comes to safety??

In fact, there have been growing concerns about the safety of motorcoach companies – many of them curbside, fly by night – all too often day AND night operations – with very big question marks about their drivers’ qualifications and the maintenance of their vehicles.

Earlier this year, Transportation Secretary LaHood and Administrator Ferro announced “Operation Quick-Strike” -- a nationwide crackdown on high-risk passenger carriers. The vision behind this is to give passengers the same level of safety across all modes.

As a first step, an elite corps of 50 safety investigators went through intensified training to dig deeper into identifying dangerous patterns of unsafe behavior and practices by motorcoach companies and drivers.

Since our teams of Quick-Strike safety investigators started fanning out across the country on April 1, we have placed 13 companies out of service because of serious violations of safety regulations that were putting their passengers at risk. And the number keeps growing.

This stepped up enforcement and legal action is only part of our strategy. The Secretary is asking for all safety stakeholders to help us get the word out to the public about “Thinking Safety: Every Trip, Every Time.”

Secretary LaHood convened meetings with a broad range of safety stakeholder groups from the bus industry to safety advocates to law enforcement to state motor vehicle administrators, and the travel industry, to ask for their partnership in raising the safety bar for passenger carrier operations.

We have developed a number of consumer education tools to encourage travelers to **Look Before You Book** a bus trip. We want anyone planning a bus trip to first consider the company’s:

- Safety performance history
- Safety rating (Satisfactory, Conditional, Unsatisfactory)
- Authority to operate (granted by FMCSA)
- Adequate insurance (minimum of \$5 million)

We have organized this information so it can fit into the palm of a consumer's hand. Yes, that's right, in their Smart Phone. You might already know about our SaferBus App – the Department's first mobile app. Last year it was launched for iPhones. Now, it is also available for Android phones. Still a free and quick way for a consumer to review a bus company's safety record before buying a ticket or chartering a bus. It's available for download from the FMCSA website.

I also have copies of three fliers for you:

- Look Before You Book
- 3 Things You Need to Know
- It's the Law

Much of this is on our Passenger Carrier Safety webpage. We are asking for your help when you go home to share this material with your networks. It couldn't be more timely with the last day of school and first day of Summer upon us, which is the start of what is typically known as the 100 most dangerous days on our roadways. Thank you for anything you can do to share this information.

Unified Registration System

I know that the proposed Unified Registration System rule has been of great interest to many. We see it as a huge step forward in fulfilling our first core principle: Raising the bar to enter the industry.

The URS rule is a reflection of our long-standing interest in truly knowing who is operating as a motor carrier on our nation's highways. We are well on our way toward completing the rulemaking and assembling an IT system to support it. As proposed, the URS rule would

consolidate 16 registration forms and several disparate systems into one single on-line automated system.

It would require truck and bus companies—under FMCSA’s jurisdiction—to register in the system and update their information every two years.

- US DOT number;
- Federal operating authority
- Proof of Insurance; and
- Process agent designations

This includes all for-hire motor carriers, brokers, freight forwarders, intermodal equipment providers, cargo tank facilities, and private motor carriers transporting hazardous materials in interstate commerce.

Among its many advantages, the URS rule will improve the efficiency of identifying chameleon carriers and reincarnated bus companies and stop them from receiving new registration.

Currently, the draft final rule is under review at the President’s Office of Management and Budget. We plan to publish the final rule in the Federal Register later this year.

FMCSA is already working on URS 2, a proposed rule to incorporate the new registration requirements included in our most recent authorization, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act – better known as or MAP-21. This NPRM is set for publication in 2014. Stay tuned.

Household Goods

Another priority for us is protecting consumers by taking enforcement actions against rogue moving companies. This year alone, more than 35 million Americans will move. We are working to ensure that the customers’ goods arrive on time and at the agreed upon price.

FMCSA's household goods team is hard at work scrutinizing applications from those seeking to enter the industry. Since we began more carefully vetting applications for household goods operating authority in 2009, nearly 4 of 10 applications have been rejected, dismissed, or withdrawn.

They are rejected for reasons ranging from an incomplete application, to affiliation with an out-of-service carrier, inadequate insurance, or a poor safety history. To help enforce our high standards once a household goods motor carrier is in the industry, we operate a National Consumer Complaint Database where consumers can file complaints against unsafe or unscrupulous moving companies. They can lodge a complaint either online or by calling our toll-free hotline.

To remove bad actors from the business, we work with our enforcement partners, including the Inspector General, state Attorneys General, state and local consumer protection offices, our law enforcement partners, and members of NCSTS.

Once we identify fraud we often work with our Inspector General's Office, which utilizes a specially trained HHG team on criminal cases. FMCSA now has important new authority from MAP-21 to help us crack down on rogue moving companies. We now have the authority to recover household goods held hostage by unscrupulous moving companies and assign all or a portion of hostage load civil penalties to aggrieved shippers.

Common Sense Consumer Protection

Beyond our enforcement strategies – we're working to empower consumers to make the right decision when selecting a moving company. We want to be sure that all consumers have the resources they need for a safe and hassle-free move.

The "Protect Your Move" web site is a one-stop shop to give consumers the information they need to protect themselves from fraudulent moving companies. Our web site includes a user-

friendly database that allows visitors to look up interstate moving companies and view both the consumer complaint history and the company's on-road safety performance records.

Our 2013 on-line campaign runs through the Summer and focuses on preventing and detecting moving fraud. To do that, we are using targeted internet ads to drive consumers to our web site. The on-line campaign targets the top ten markets with the highest number of complaints. These cities include New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Las Vegas and the very city we're in today, Atlanta.

These ads use a "red flag" theme to show consumers how to spot rogue movers. This year's we produced a new "Spot the Red Flags" Public Service Announcement to encourage consumers to be aware of rogue movers. The 30-second PSA runs on the "Protect Your Move" web site and FMCSA's Facebook page.

It is available for download for your free and unrestricted use. It's one more tool to help consumers protect their move. Feel free to use these materials in your own outreach back home to help protect consumers and prevent moving fraud.

Follow Us on Facebook

You can follow our work on truck and bus safety and on household goods on our Facebook page. We have 2 or 3 updates day, so please find us at www.facebook.com/fmcsa and "follow" us so we can stay connected.

Safety-First Mission

We are grateful for our partnership with you. When you look back over the past decade, there has been measurable progress in bringing down the death toll. But, our work is far from over.

Especially when you focus on the fact that last year alone, nearly 4,000 people were killed and near 90,000 others were injured in crashes involving large trucks and buses. That's 11 people killed and 241 injured on average each and every day. These were mothers, fathers,

sons, daughters, and friends who got up that morning as they always do, and didn't make it home.

I've said many times over the years that getting to your destination should not be some sort of death-defying act. So, your efforts -- and our efforts together -- to ensure that the movement of products and people on our roadways is safe is not just important -- it is among the highest of callings in public service. And for that I thank you for your ever vigilant focus on our common ground safety-first mission.

Conclusion

Thank you again for the invitation to join you and for the opportunity to give you an update on how FMCSA:

- Is removing unsafe carriers from operation through our Quick Strike Task Force,
- Is preparing to increase the efficiency of our operations with our new Unified Registration System, and
- Is safeguarding consumers through our new household goods authority and educational outreach.

I would be happy to answer your questions.