

Prepared Remarks
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“NHTSA Priorities and Opportunities: A Two Year Sprint”
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Thank you, Jackie [Gillen] for your kind introduction. And thank you to the Consumer Federation for the opportunity to join you today. For nearly five decades, CFA has been a powerful voice for a fairer marketplace and for safer products. The 2015 Consumer Assembly is a vital part of this continued work, and it is a pleasure to be a part of it.

Today, I'd like to review with you the challenges and opportunities before us in road and highway safety, and how NHTSA is working to achieve its mission of reducing deaths and injuries due to automotive crashes.

In all of the work I will describe today, time is of the essence—partly because my time at NHTSA will expire along with President Obama's tenure in office. More importantly, time is of the essence because 32,719 people lost their lives in automotive crashes in 2013. That's 90 deaths every day. More than 250 people injured every hour.

They were mothers and fathers, daughters and sons, loved ones, neighbors, friends, and co-workers. All of their deaths were preventable. They deserve all of our best efforts to prevent additional deaths and injuries.

So the next two years will be a sprint with no time to waste. We're going to use every minute to make Americans safer on our roads and highways. And the bottom line is that every American, whether they drive, ride, or walk, should arrive at their destination safely. All of them. Every time. There are no acceptable losses.

To pursue our safety mission, the team at NHTSA will strengthen what works, fix what doesn't, and ensure that NHTSA is using every tool at its disposal to save lives, prevent injuries, and reduce crashes. With that in mind, let me briefly describe three specific priorities for the next two years.

First, we must strengthen how NHTSA identifies and recalls vehicles and equipment with safety-related defects. As it stands, resources – including people, technology, and authority – present challenges to NHTSA's efforts in this area. We have to address these issues through multiple mechanisms, such as seeking more people, new technologies, and increased authority.

Recent cases involving GM and Takata demonstrate the vital importance of getting this right. It is NHTSA's responsibility to do everything in our power to prevent deaths and injuries related to defects. The American people expect that of us.

We have a commitment to the families and friends affected by roadway tragedies, and to you, that we will explore every idea, use every authority, employ every tool to prevent such tragedies. Before I arrived, NHTSA already had launched several initiatives to improve our technology and our processes so we catch more defects sooner. And that work vigorously continues.

In January, we levied a \$70 million maximum fine against Honda for failing to report deaths, injuries and warranty claims over the period of a decade. Our actions are pushing Honda to significantly raise the bar on the effectiveness of its reporting program, will ensure compliance, and determine if there is cause for additional actions.

Last month we also levied new fines in the Takata air bag case. Those fines are accumulating at a maximum rate of \$14,000 a day. They'll keep accumulating until Takata lives up to its obligations under the law. In addition, we issued an order that will force Takata to preserve evidence in this case that may be necessary in our investigation and helpful in any private action.

We are taking any actions allowed under the law to hold manufacturers accountable. But it is clear to any unbiased observer that the law does not currently provide our agency with sufficient authority to hold bad actors fully accountable. That is why Secretary Foxx has repeatedly requested new authorities and resources so that NHTSA can better protect consumers against any company that puts lives at risk.

NHTSA will continue to move with its full authority to ensure that companies do not put private profit ahead of public safety or that would withhold critical safety information when we demand full disclosure. Though I have only been at NHTSA for two months, there are already plenty of examples showing our willingness to stand up and fight on behalf of the consumer.

Another priority is to strengthen NHTSA's core safety programs. The Agency has some well-established and highly successful campaigns that are household names, such as 'Click It or Ticket,' 'Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over,' and more recently, 'U Text. U Drive. U Pay.' These campaigns are changing attitudes, changing how Americans drive for the better, and saving lives.

The Agency's grants to states and local governments are a foundation for our safety work across the nation. These partnerships are essential to provide resources to states to enforce laws against drunk and distracted driving, to provide technical assistance on graduated licensing and other safety issues, and to support a wide range of activities that save lives.

This work garners less attention than our efforts on vehicle defects but is critical to addressing where significant safety risks exist. NHTSA has just published data that shows the critical reason, the last element in the chain of events leading to a crash, is the human 94 percent of the time.

Secretary Foxx has also made our work on pedestrian and bicycle safety a major priority across the Department. They are a focus of his groundbreaking transportation study, entitled Beyond Traffic, and we're looking toward both traditional and technological approaches that can help reduce these deaths and injuries.

And we cannot forget the role that the Agency plays in advancing fuel efficiency. That work continues as we move forward with efforts on heavy truck fuel economy standards and work to support the goals of the President's Climate Action Plan. We're particularly grateful for CFA's efforts in this area.

Our third priority will be emphasizing and supporting technology innovations. They have been critical to saving lives and preventing injuries on our roadways. From the most basic, like a seat belt, to the newest technology, like collision warning and automatic braking systems, these innovations have played a critical role in furthering safety. In January, we announced results of a NHTSA study that examined the role of technology in saving lives on our roadways over the past 50 years. Our findings, more than 613,501 lives have been saved due to technology over the past half-decade. Those 613,000 lives saved are the most important reason to support and nurture technology innovations that enhance safety.

At NHTSA, we are excited about technology and we will encourage innovation. We are even more excited to encourage safety. That's why we continue to move vehicle-to-vehicle communications forward—a game changing innovation that has the potential to help drivers avoid hundreds of thousands of vehicle crashes every year. Together, technology innovation and safety represent the greatest value to the traveling public.

So those are three of our priorities for these next two years. It will indeed involve a great deal of sprinting to accomplish our goals before January 2017. But throughout these two years, I will be listening to you and many different groups to explore any ideas and opportunities to advance NHTSA's safety mission. We have an ambitious agenda. But it is achievable. And all of this work will be guided by three principles.

First, effectiveness. NHTSA will look for every opportunity to be more effective. We will use all the tools available to us to achieve our safety mission. We will bring to bear the best ideas, the best processes, and the best people in order to reduce deaths and injuries on our roads. We will pursue any means possible to help us be more effective.

The second principle is communication. Externally, the public needs to know what we do and how we do it. We will build trust by excelling at what we do—and also, by ensuring that the American public understands how we do it. This will translate into transparency wherever possible to provide people with information to help them make safe choices. You will see diverse changes in how we communicate with the public across nearly every NHTSA platform – and we will do so in clear and direct terms so that our technical information is understood and accessible.

Our third guiding principle is innovation. Across the board, we need to look for opportunities to innovate in everything we do. 'That's how we've always done things' is never an acceptable response. And in areas where NHTSA is already doing something well, then we will constantly be asking ourselves, 'How can we innovate and be even more effective?' Can we explore new and different ways to keep Americans safe on our roads?' We can never stop that exploration if we are to keep driving down deaths and injuries on our roads.

On a final note, the NHTSA safety mission and any successes are shared by the dedicated individuals at CFA and many other organizations who have dedicated their lives to serving the public interest. Transportation touches each and every one of our lives, every day. We share the responsibility to make our transportation system safe. Together, we can deliver on the promise of safety for all Americans whether they drive, walk or ride. Please join me on a two-year sprint to advance NHTSA's safety mission, together we will make a difference by saving lives and preventing injuries on our roadways.

Thank you.

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