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Contact: Olivia Alair
Tel: 202-366-4570

Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood Announces Second National Distracted Driving Summit

WASHINGTON – U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today announced that the second National Distracted Driving Summit will be held on September 21, 2010, in Washington, DC. To build on the growing momentum sparked by the first summit last fall, Secretary LaHood will convene leading transportation officials, safety advocates, law enforcement, industry representatives, researchers, and victims affected by distraction-related crashes to address challenges and identify opportunities for national anti-distracted driving efforts.

“Working together, we can put an end to the thousands of needless deaths and injuries caused by distracted driving each year,” said Secretary LaHood. “By getting the best minds together, I believe we can figure out how to get people to put down their phones and pay attention to the road.”

Last fall, Secretary LaHood sparked a national conversation on distracted driving when he held a Distracted Driving Summit in Washington, DC. The Obama Administration immediately committed to lead by example, by enacting an Executive Order banning all text messaging by four million federal employees while they’re driving government-owned vehicles, while driving any vehicle on official government business, or using mobile devices issued by the government while behind the wheel. Secretary LaHood also taped a national PSA and launched a new government website – www.distraction.gov – to provide the public with a comprehensive resource about how to get involved.

At this year’s event, experts from around the country will explore accomplishments since our first summit, as well as the many challenges that lie ahead. Key topics will include research, technology, policy, public outreach, and best practices in enforcement.

In the year since Secretary LaHood convened the first Distracted Driving Summit, efforts to curb distracted driving have grown exponentially. Dozens of state and local governments have enacted anti-distracted driving legislation and the federal government has established texting bans for commercial truck and bus drivers. The Department of Transportation helped victims establish a national non-profit advocacy organization called FocusDriven and launched pilot law enforcement campaigns in Hartford, CT and Syracuse, NY.

Research by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) shows that in 2008, nearly 6,000 people died and more than half a million were injured in crashes involving a distracted driver. More than 20 percent of all crashes that same year involved some type of distraction.

To learn more and get involved in the DOT’s efforts to stop distracted driving, please visit www.distraction.gov. Additional details will be released as they become available at www.distraction.gov/2010summit.