

**U.S. Department of Transportation Releases New “Faces of Distracted Driving” Video
Bob & Eilene Okerblom of Santa Maria, California Speak About the Loss of Their Son Eric**

WASHINGTON – U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today released the latest video in the U.S. Department of Transportation’s “Faces of Distracted Driving” series.

The video features Bob and Eilene Okerblom of Santa Maria, California, who lost their 19-year-old son Eric in a distracted driving crash in 2009. A student at the University of California at Berkeley, Eric was killed when his bike was struck by a truck traveling at 60 MPH. Cell phone records indicate that the driver was texting just prior to the collision.

Since their son’s death, Bob and Eilene Okerblom have become advocates against texting and cell phone use behind the wheel. Bob Okerblom is currently cycling cross-country to honor his son’s memory and raise awareness about distracted driving.

Watch: “Eric Okerblom, 19” – <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rr7TfwtO17I>

“I applaud Bob and Eilene for all of the work they are doing to raise awareness about the deadly consequences of distracted driving,” said U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood. “I hope that everyone who hears about the loss of their bright and talented son Eric will remember to keep their eyes on the road and their hands on the wheel.”

“My message is as personal as it can get: my son is dead because a driver was not focused on the road,” said Eilene Okerblom. “All I can do now is stand up for the protection of other lives.”

“We all have a responsibility, to ourselves and to each other, when we get behind the wheel,” said Bob Okerblom. “Eric did not have to die that day.”

“Faces of Distracted Driving” is a video series exploring the tragic consequences of texting and cell phone use while driving. It features people from across the country who have been injured or lost loved ones in distracted driving crashes. In 2009, nearly 5,500 people died and half a million were injured in accidents involving a distracted driver. The series is part of Secretary LaHood’s effort to raise greater awareness about the dangers of distracted driving.

WATCH: “Faces of Distracted Driving” – www.distraction.gov/faces

The U.S. Department of Transportation is encouraging anyone who would like to share their distracted driving experiences to post videos on YouTube and email the links to: faces@distraction.gov.

To learn more about USDOT’s efforts to stop distracted driving, please visit www.distraction.gov.