

U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood Proposes Rule to Ban Texting for Truck and Bus Drivers
*Department Announces Unprecedented Partnership with Cornell University
to Engage Public in Rulemaking Process*

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood today announced a federal rule that proposes to specifically prohibit texting by interstate commercial truck and bus drivers. The proposed rule would make permanent an interim ban announced in January 2010 that applied existing safety rules to the specific issue of texting.

The Department also announced an unprecedented partnership with Cornell University to increase public involvement and collaboration in the rulemaking process. The Cornell e-Rulemaking Initiative (CeRI) partnership will make the federal regulatory process more accessible to the public through Regulation Room, an online public participation environment where people can learn about and discuss proposed federal regulations and provide effective feedback to the Department.

"This is good news on two fronts," said Secretary LaHood. "This rulemaking keeps our commitment to making our roads safer by reducing the threat of distracted driving. And our partnership with Cornell on the e-Rulemaking Initiative is an important step toward keeping President Obama's promise of opening government to more effective citizen participation."

Today's proposed rule to ban texting by drivers of commercial vehicles and bus drivers is the first effort in this innovative partnership. Citizens can find more information on the Cornell online effort and provide comments on the proposed rule at regulationroom.org over the next 30 days. The Department of Transportation encourages participation in this rulemaking through Regulation Room, but the public may also submit comments to the DOT docket at regulation.gov.

FMCSA research shows that drivers who send and receive text messages take their eyes off the road for an average of 4.6 seconds out of every 6 seconds while texting. At 55 miles per hour, this means that the driver is traveling the length of a football field, including the end zones, without looking at the road.

Drivers who text while driving are more than 20 times more likely to get in an accident than non-distracted drivers. Because of the safety risks associated with the use of electronic devices while driving, FMCSA is also working on additional regulatory measures that will be announced in the coming months.

"We are committed to using every resource available to eliminate the dangers of distracted driving," said FMCSA Administrator Anne S. Ferro. "This rulemaking to prohibit texting by interstate commercial truck and bus drivers, along with the Cornell E-Rulemaking Initiative, reinforces our unwavering commitment and provides the public with a unique opportunity to share their ideas and comments on how together we can make our roads safer."

The proposed rule will be on public display in the Federal Register March 31 and will appear in print in the Federal Register on April 1.

During the September 2009 Distracted Driving Summit, the Secretary announced the Department's plan to pursue this regulatory action, as well as rulemakings to reduce the other risks posed by distracted driving.

President Obama also signed an Executive Order directing federal employees not to engage in text messaging while driving government-owned vehicles or with government-owned equipment. Federal employees were required to comply with the ban starting on December 30, 2009.

The public can follow the progress of the U.S. Department of Transportation in working to combat distracted driving at www.distracted.gov.

A Message from Ray LaHood - Every single time someone takes their eyes or their focus off the road – even for just a few seconds – they put their lives and the lives of others in danger. Distracted driving is unsafe, irresponsible and in a split second, its consequences can be devastating.

