



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**National Highway
Traffic Safety
Administration**

1200 New Jersey Avenue SE.
Washington, DC 20590

OCT 28 2010

Mr. Phillip E. Russo
125 Village Blvd. Suite 200
Princeton Forrestal Village
Princeton, NJ 08540

Dear Mr. Russo:

Thank you for your letter to Secretary Ray LaHood in support of efforts to prevent distracted driving. Because the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is responsible for overseeing much of the distracted driving issue in passenger motor vehicles, the Secretary asked that I respond to your letter.

As you know, distracted driving is taking a terrible toll on our Nation's highways; we estimate that approximately 5,500 people died in 2009 because of distracted or inattentive driving. Surveys indicate that most drivers are aware that it is unsafe to use electronic devices while driving, but a significant number of drivers do so anyway. Young drivers are particularly at risk, as they are generally more likely than others to use electronic devices and also more likely to use them while driving.

Secretary LaHood, along with safety advocates and victims of crashes caused by distraction, is committed to reducing distracted driving. Several bills have been introduced in Congress to combat distracted driving, and the Secretary has pledged to work with Congress in passing a bill that is effective and enforceable. Since the September 21 Distracted Driving Summit, NHTSA continues to move forward with activities and efforts as identified in the agency's overall driver distraction plan. (To view the plan, please visit www.distraction.gov.)

The Department of Transportation (DOT) and NHTSA support distracted driving laws that prohibit the use of hand-held cell phones and text messaging while driving, as well as vigorous enforcement of strong traffic safety laws. Well-enforced laws have been proven effective in increasing seat belt use and reducing harmful driving behaviors such as impaired driving; it is expected that similar results can be achieved with enforcement of distracted driving laws.

NHTSA is currently testing the high visibility enforcement model and targeted media messaging in a distracted driving demonstration project in two cities that have laws banning hand-held cell phone use while driving (Hartford, CT and Syracuse, NY). The third wave of enforcement was recently completed in October 2010 and the project will wrap up with a final wave in April 2011.

★★★★★
NHTSA

The goal is to develop a “model program” suitable for replication by other States and regions to decrease distracted driving behaviors.

Safety is the highest priority of the Department, and our work continues in the fight to eliminate distracted driving. The Secretary and I thank the NAFA Fleet Management Association for its support in combating distracted driving. We are encouraged by the efforts of concerned citizens like you to help eliminate distracted driving by spreading the word of its dangers. Hopefully, all of us working together will make a difference in this disturbing trend.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Brown', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Michael Brown

Director

Office of Impaired Driving and Occupant Protection