

Remarks by Bill Bronrott
FMCSA Deputy Administrator
First Group Annual Safety and Environmental Awards
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Introduction and Congratulations

Good evening. On behalf of Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administrator Anne Ferro, thank you very much for the invitation to join you tonight.

Welcome to my home state – the great state of Maryland. And welcome to Baltimore, home of one of the most vital multi-modal transportation hubs in North America.

I hope you will have some time to tour this Crown Jewel city of our state. If you went to the Orioles game last night and sat in the centerfield bleachers, you not only sat on sacred ground where hall of famer Cal Ripkin hit more than a few home runs during his long uninterrupted career, but it is also where – a few years earlier -- Babe Ruth's father ran a neighborhood tavern!

Okay, that's all the Baltimore trivia I have for you tonight because I know tonight is about honoring an elite group of you who pursue your jobs as no trivial matter, because safety is serious business.

So, again, let's give all of tonight's award winners another round of applause!

[Applause]

I also want to congratulate your Senior Vice President for Safety, Gary Catapano. Gary was very recently appointed by FMCSA Administrator Anne Ferro to our Motor Carrier Safety Advisory Committee.

This broadly-based advisory committee gives us invaluable input and insights on ways to improve truck and bus safety, and we are especially grateful to you, Gary, for your willingness to serve.

FMCSA's Role

I have been down in the trenches of highway safety over the past 30 plus years chasing down the goal of zero deaths.

So, I was thrilled to open up your invitation and see your theme: "Injury Prevention -- If you cannot do it safely, don't do it!" *I know I am where I'm supposed to be tonight!*

Our vision at the U.S. Department of Transportation is that of livable, sustainable and safe communities. A vitally important piece of that picture are school buses, transit buses, inter-city buses, chartered buses -- along with light rail and commuter rail – that are all seamlessly integrated into an efficient and safe transportation system that serves people in our urban centers, suburban communities, and rural regions.

A transportation system that also factors in pedestrians, so that crossing the street to a school bus stop or a transit station isn't a death-defying act.

At FMCSA, our core mission, simply put, is preventing crashes, injuries and fatalities involving large trucks and buses. Simple, but not easy.

Today, there are a Half Million commercial motor carriers --including 4,000 motorcoach companies -- and 4 million active Commercial Driver's License holders in the United States. In comparison, there are 11 Hundred of us – the majority of whom are out on the front lines, at the roadside, alongside specially trained law enforcement in each state across the country.

We pursue our mission by tying all of our efforts to 3 core principles:

- Raising the safety bar for those seeking to enter the industry;
- Requiring carriers and drivers to maintain our high safety standards to operate in the industry; and
- Removing from our roadways those carriers, drivers and vehicles that are high-risk.

We do this with a dynamic combination of rules and regulations, education and enforcement, and innovation and technology.

We are keenly aware that more Americans now travel on intercity and chartered buses than on airlines.

We are eager to work with you to make bus safety operations on par with aviation safety standards. Zero deaths. And one level of safety for all passenger travel.

This is a top priority of Secretary LaHood and Administrator Ferro. That is why they recently announced a new **Motorcoach Safety Strikeforce** to deploy teams of specially-trained safety investigators throughout the country to begin targeted and in-depth inspections of higher risk motorcoach companies.

We have also developed a number of consumer education tools to encourage travelers to *Look Before You Book* a bus trip. This includes a smart phone application called the **SaferBus App** that gives consumers a quick and free way to review a bus company's safety record before buying a ticket.

We know that the overwhelming majority in the industry get it. Our primary focus is on the small percentage that don't.

But there is only so much that we can accomplish with regulations, enforcement and legal actions alone.

It also comes down to partnerships to prevent bad things from happening in the first place. And, that is why the Secretary and our Administrator have reached out to the nation's Governors, Police Chiefs, state Motor Vehicle Administrators, as well as to your industry, to ask for your partnership in this campaign for zero crashes, deaths and injuries.

On a day to day basis, it comes down to doing what your safety champions proving works best – creating a safety culture that rewards drivers who are well-trained and well-rested, and owners, operators, safety officers, and mechanics who are committed to ensuring that their buses are safely maintained.

Tonight's top achievers have demonstrated that achieving zero safety incidents is possible. You are living your core value of being "Dedicated to Safety -- always keeping it front of mind."

First Group's Safety Work

We know you at First Group have enormous challenges. You work each day to transport millions of people to their destinations – to school, to work, or to a city hundreds of miles away from a customer's home.

You contribute to making our communities livable, and you help reduce traffic congestion and pollution by moving people out of cars.

You operate within tight budgets – manage competing priorities – all the while knowing that a crash can happen in a blink of an eye.

You embody a deep commitment to your customers – keeping them at the heart of everything you do.

When you think about safety, your customers – your passengers– don't have to. They can step onto one of your buses knowing with confidence that they will get to their destination not just on time, but safely.

It's often said that a safety-first attitude starts at the top. That's true. But, safety is also like a circle, and everyone has a role to play to make sure it remains unbroken. In the end, the safety of your customers is literally in your hands.

Closing

My gratitude and congratulations to each of you being honored here tonight. And my thanks to those in your lives – at home and on the work-front -- who support your commitment to safety and to environmental excellence.

On behalf of a grateful nation, thank you!