



## Opening Remarks: 27th International Technical Conference on the Enhanced Safety of Vehicles

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*AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY*

Thank you for that kind introduction. Good morning, and welcome to the 27th International Technical Conference on the Enhanced Safety of Vehicles. I am very honored to be in Japan with you to discuss the enhanced safety and equity of vehicles and equipment, topics of great importance to all of us.

I would like to recognize several distinguished individuals in attendance today. State Minister Toyoda Toshiro. Toyoda Daijin, thank you for your insightful speech. And Minister Nakatani, my thanks to you for your thoughtful remarks as well.

Many people contributed to making this conference a reality. Director-General Notsu, as the senior lead for MLIT, thank you for your leadership, and many contributions to this conference. I would also like to recognize Kenji Sato. Sato-san led the ESV staff at MLIT and is a longtime friend of NHTSA and a valued partner in traffic safety.

I also want to recognize Minister Fujimoto from the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry. Both Minister Nakatani and Minister Fujimoto have been very supportive of our international programs, and we are happy they were able to join us here today. And thank you to everyone at NHTSA who helped make this conference possible. Many of them are in attendance and will be speaking over the next few days.

Later this morning, we will present the 2023 NHTSA ESV U.S. Government Awards, and I offer my hearty congratulations to all of these very deserving recipients.

I also warmly welcome the university students in the audience. Students have a special place in my heart, as I taught law courses at the University of California, Los Angeles, for many years before joining NHTSA. As students, you represent the future of vehicle and traffic safety, and I encourage you to innovate, collaborate and apply your knowledge so you can make a difference. Saving lives is important, noble work.

In fact, we are all here because we care deeply about vehicle safety and saving lives.

Making measurable, meaningful decreases in traffic crash injuries and fatalities requires us all to think big. Don't be afraid to set ambitious goals and aim high.



In the United States, NHTSA and the U.S. Department of Transportation have adopted a National Roadway Safety Strategy that incorporates what we call the safe system approach, which emphasizes this new, people-first way of thinking about traffic safety.

This strategy includes five key principles: safer people, safer roads, safer vehicles, safer speeds, and improved post-crash care.

The safe system approach acknowledges that everyone has a role to play in traffic safety if we're to achieve our goal of zero traffic fatalities.

Let's use speeding, which represents one of our biggest traffic safety challenges, as an example. Speeding plays a role in about one-third of all traffic fatalities in the United States, and it's one of the biggest factors in whether a crash results in serious injury or death.

There isn't a single way to combat the speeding epidemic. Instead, the most effective way to address this critical and complex safety issue is through a safe system approach.

There's the behavioral aspect – why do people speed? How can we educate them that speeding is dangerous?

There are laws – setting speed limits that are safe and consider everyone who uses the road. Should speeds in high-risk corridors be lowered?

There's road design – are traffic calming measures incorporated? Is the speed limit appropriate for the road design? Does the road need redesigning to make it safer by slowing vehicles down?

There's enforcement. Is law enforcement deployed in the right places, across all communities, in ways that are equitable? Are automated speed cameras appropriate?

Then there's vehicle safety technology and regulations. In fact, NHTSA is working on a rulemaking to require automatic emergency braking in all new light and heavy-duty vehicles including pedestrian AEB in light vehicles. Once deployed, automated emergency braking can bring vehicles to a complete halt before a crash occurs or can dramatically slow vehicles down, causing significantly less damage.

And finally, there's post-crash care – how our emergency medical services are responding and are trained to care for those injured in traffic crashes.

So, as you can see, one issue – speeding – requires many different strategies, all falling within the safe system approach. Later today, there will be a special plenary session on the safe system approach, and I encourage you all to attend.

One of the best ways to achieve a safe system is by building partnerships. We believe this spirit of cooperation is essential, as we can share best practices, research, and data. Collaboration and open communication can create meaningful relationships and lasting change.



That's what's so special about ESV, which focuses on harmonizing research and broadening knowledge. For more than 50 years, ESV has served as a platform for nations to build relationships, share data and research, and work together.

The same applies to automotive companies too.

Of course, we respect intellectual property rights, but companies can learn a lot from each other about how to safely deploy new technologies and strengthen vehicle cybersecurity. In fact, there's a special plenary session on cybersecurity later today.

For example, this collaborative approach has been beneficial as the agency works on new regulations requiring light-duty AEB. We greatly appreciate what we have learned from Japan, Germany, and other countries as we finalize this regulation.

After all, cooperation saves lives.

NHTSA and the U.S. Department of Transportation have a long history of cooperation and collaboration with the United Nations and the World Health Organization to address traffic safety issues. And we will continue that important relationship. We are proud of the work at the UN to address impaired driving, driver education, automated driving systems, and general vehicle safety regulations through WP.1 and WP.29.

Our agency is committed to working with our international partners: governments, industry, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders, to achieve the UN objective of reducing fatalities by 50% by 2030.

We can all work to make our transportation system safe for all users – everyone inside and outside a vehicle, including pedestrians, cyclists, children, motorcyclists, older people, and people with disabilities.

And when we speak of fatalities, we always remember: These are people, not statistics. They are our family members, friends, colleagues, and neighbors. Every life is precious.

Safer vehicles are one of the five key components of the safe system approach and an area of specialization for many in this audience.

Vehicles with automated driving systems hold the potential to improve safety and expand transportation equity to people with disabilities, underserved communities, and older adults. Our third special plenary session today will look at mobility for an aging society.

NHTSA is working to learn more about the safety of vehicles with SAE Level 2 advanced driver assistance systems and Level 3-5 automated driving systems.

Data are important tools in helping us learn how these systems perform in the real world. NHTSA has expanded the data we collect by issuing a Standing General Order requiring crash and incident reporting for vehicles with SAE Level 2 and Level 3-5 capabilities.



This Standing General Order provides NHTSA with additional data on crashes involving vehicles where ADS or Level 2 ADAS systems were engaged or used just before the crash. Reports are required for all ADS crashes and serious ADAS crashes. The data have also led us to recall ADS vehicles for the first time in our history.

We post updated data on our website every month. Transparency is essential to us, and I'm sure these data will interest many of you.

Speaking of new technologies, automakers, and nations worldwide are focused on the environmental impact of new vehicles.

The internal combustion engine is slowly becoming obsolete, and one day, every vehicle will be powered by alternative means.

Until then, it's important to ensure that internal combustion engines become more efficient. Federal law directs NHTSA to set maximum feasible Corporate Average Fuel Economy, or CAFE, standards to improve energy conservation and security.

Our most recent CAFE standards require an industry-wide fleet average of approximately 49 mpg for passenger cars and light trucks in model year 2026. And they will reduce the United States' gasoline consumption by more than 220 billion gallons.

These new standards fulfill an executive order that President Biden signed on his very first day in office. We are now working on light-duty standards for model years 2027 and later. Expect to see a proposed rule in the coming months.

Cooperation and collaboration are critical as we move toward decarbonization as a global community. Everyone, regardless of their economic status, deserves access to safe, equitable transportation that protects the environment.

As electric vehicles have grown more popular, NHTSA has increasingly examined and prioritized battery safety. To be clear, fires involving lithium-ion batteries represent a small fraction of all vehicle fires, but when they do occur, putting the fires out poses special challenges.

The agency has a long history of working with other federal partners, states, automobile manufacturers and suppliers, standards development organizations, safety advocates, first responders, vehicle owners, and others to ensure the safety of EV owners and those who interact with these vehicles.

NHTSA is working to publish a proposed rule this year to add several new safety requirements for propulsion batteries in electric-powered vehicles, including in extending them to heavy vehicles.

The United States experienced several large hurricanes last year, and several EVs that had been submerged in seawater later caught fire. NHTSA continues to research the effect of saltwater immersion on batteries and is working with state officials to gather more information.

We are conducting research on high-voltage battery safety, including expanded research into battery prognostics and diagnostics systems that can detect issues before fires begin.

As demand for electric vehicles grows, we will continue to work with our international partners to share information and prioritize safety.

After all, safety will always be the top priority for NHTSA, whether the vehicle has a human driver or ADS system and whether someone is inside or outside a vehicle. Saving lives is an incredible responsibility, and reducing the number of injuries and fatalities will require ambitious plans.

Unfortunately, no magic solution will reduce traffic fatalities dramatically. Instead, we need to use every approach we have. That is why I encourage you to consider adopting the safe system approach if it is not already part of your organization's plans.

Learning from others, including the international community, can help as you strive to meet the UN objective of reducing fatalities by 50% by 2030. Cooperation, collaboration, and information sharing are absolutely vital to achieving our shared safety mission.

Thank you very much for your time and for joining us for the 27th ESV conference.