

Remarks by ATSSA Chairman Henry Ross

Opening General Session Breakfast

Tues., Feb. 3, 2009

San Jose, Calif.

Good morning everyone and welcome to California. It's great to be on the west coast in warm, sunny weather, and I am glad that all of you are here today to celebrate and enjoy ATSSA's 39th Annual Convention and Traffic Expo.

Thank you for making this event the most successful roadway safety industry show in North America – for almost forty years.

A little later on this morning, Chairman-Elect Joe Jeffrey will assist me on stage to help give away a \$5,000 grand prize to one of our lucky guests in the audience drawing.

But before we do that however, at various times throughout the program this morning, we will be giving away five \$1,000 prizes. Yes, that's right, we're giving away a total of \$10,000 in cash today.

All you have to do to win is be present when your name is called during the drawings.

The big \$5,000 drawing will take place right after we hear from today's featured guest speaker – political pundit Mark Shields.

Mark will be joining us a little later on, but first, I have some official annual business to take care of, as well as make some special announcements and then we will present some well-deserved awards.

Yesterday, our committees had some great meetings and I want to acknowledge and thank all of the volunteers who serve on ATSSA's committees.

I also want to thank the employers of these volunteers for allowing them the time they need to be so heavily committed and involved in our industry, in addition to performing their already demanding duties within your companies.

Serving on an ATSSA committee is a great way to interact with peers and friends on issues that are relevant and important to our industry.

Over the years, the work that has been done in ATSSA committees has resulted in many benefits and business opportunities for all of us.

Committee members are always looking for more volunteers to serve with them, so if you're interested in joining a committee, please speak with a staff member in the ATSSA booth sometime this week. They will be happy to help you become even more involved with your association.

But it's not just committees – there are countless other volunteer opportunities for all of you to become involved with.

Take for example the recently released “*ITS Safety & Mobility Solutions*” booklet – a full-color, 36-page, highly detailed and well-researched publication which was the culmination of a two-year undertaking by ATSSA's ITS Council.

Also involved in this project were representatives from the Minnesota-DOT and the project's co-chairs – Brian Nicholson of ADDCO and Drew Kramer of National Capitol Industries.

And we cannot forget volunteer success stories like Charlie Bond of Nippon Carbide, who led the charge for the highly-successful Sign Maintenance and Management Workshop in Texas, or the countless ATSSA Chapter events, the How-To's, and other industry events which would not have been possible without volunteer interest, planning, and undying determination.

Thank you to all of ATSSA's volunteers for all of your hard work.

And now, we're into a New Year, a new administration, with new opportunities, and with a new focus on our future.

The economy is putting many of us in difficult and challenging situations. Some might say we're in uncharted waters. Many of us here today are being forced to make tough business and personnel decisions that we would have never imagined just a year ago.

Fortunately for our industry, an intense focus and interest remains on transportation-related issues among the public, the media, and with our elected officials. All of these groups realize the importance and need for safer roads, a safe commute, and a forgiving roadway when the unexpected unfortunately happens.

And in addition to the hard work ATSSA member companies performed in their home towns last year, much of what ATSSA members accomplished on Capitol Hill in 2008 paved the way to once again include the key word “safety” in the reauthorization process of our nation's transportation bill.

Years ago, safety was routinely overlooked – but now, it cannot be avoided. In fact today, safety is a priority at the top of everyone's list.

But, not surprising to any of us, safety has always been ATSSA's top priority. From day one.

Today, when everyone is talking safety, ATSSA is in the center of those discussions, especially those discussions that take place where it matters the most – on Capitol Hill.

This past September, over 100 ATSSA members converged on Capitol Hill, and during 140 visits in one day, ATSSA members met Representatives of 35 different States to once again bring the “Safer Roads Save Lives” message directly to our elected officials.

ATSSA’s reauthorization policy – “Toward Zero Deaths” – received highly favorable reviews on the Hill, and our members were, as always, well-received and welcomed, as members of the House and Senate gave them their full attention, asking them many important and tough questions related to ATSSA’s lifesaving efforts on America’s roadways.

And, of course – it was a lot of fun.

The next round of legislative visits will take place April 22 and 23, and all of you are invited and encouraged to attend and participate.

These visits will once again allow ATSSA’s voice to be heard as the reauthorization process “presses on” until the new transportation bill is ultimately signed by the President.

Ideally, we expect the new bill to be signed in September, but in reality, it may not be until sometime in 2010.

The new bill is expected to create thousands of business opportunities for each and every one of you, and just as important, these new business opportunities will help create and secure jobs for thousands of Americans who are ready and willing to work.

America’s new leadership is counting on ATSSA to help them understand how your lifesaving roadway safety products and services help make our nation's roadways safer.

No one can explain our industry and what it is that you do better than you can, therefore, I encourage you again to consider being part of the April legislative visits in Washington. Imagine the impact if we had 50-percent participation from our membership?

I can’t encourage you enough to join us.

A quick overview of the planned activities includes:

A legislative briefing on April 22 at the Crystal City Marriot in Arlington, Virginia.

If you’ve never visited with an elected official before, we’ll show you how to conduct “official visits” in a fun, informative training session. We will also provide you with all of the talking points and materials you will need to make each of your visits a huge success.

Then, all day on April 23, ATSSA members will spend the day on Capitol Hill visiting with their elected officials. We'll use the Washington Court Hotel in Washington that day as our "home base."

We cannot let up. We have come too far. We must continue with a repeated "Safer Roads Save Lives" message, even as States reluctantly halt projects because of the downward economic trend. Your elected officials are genuinely interested in what it is ATSSA has to say, so please consider a visit to Washington, D.C. this April.

And just as important as your efforts are on Capitol Hill, ATSSA is consistently reaching out to elected officials and other organizations across the country.

In October, I had the privilege to testify in Oklahoma on ATSSA's behalf before an "Interim Study Group" on transportation and highway safety devices.

Oklahoma Representative Mike Thompson invited ATSSA because he wanted to know how ATSSA members' roadway safety devices worked, and how they were effectively saving lives around the country.

This was a tremendous opportunity to define numerous ATSSA member products and services.

Also this past fall, ATSSA Past-Chairman Pete Speer had a similar opportunity as he participated in a "roundtable" chaired by Washington-State Congressman Brian Baird, who also gave ATSSA an opportunity to specifically discuss roadway and infrastructure safety.

There were other similar opportunities in 2008.

Roger traveled and spoke before many associations and organizations, as did many ATSSA leaders, volunteers, Chapter members and ATSSA staff.

All of them took ATSSA's message of "safety" on the road to communities across the country and spread the good news of what it is each and every one of you is doing.

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication to our industry.

Let me leave you with an extremely positive and important fact.

Statistically, highway deaths in the U.S. are at a five-year low, and many of you here today are directly responsible for this fantastic achievement. But, as we all know, we still have a long way to go as we continue to aggressively work "Toward Zero Deaths" on our nation's roadways. It is going to take a lot of work – and it's going to take each and every one of us.

What is truly remarkable is the work that all of you do, the innovations that you are directly responsible for, the ideas, the products, the people, the services you provide.

Please take a good look around this week – a real good look on the show floor of this Expo.

You will see amazing products and services here in San Jose which could only have been achieved through the hard work and dedication of those of you here this morning.

This week, I hope you will see many old friends and make many new ones. If this is your first ATSSA show – you're in for the time of your life, and we're glad you made it.

Those of us “old timers” look forward to meeting you and welcoming you to ATSSA.

Have fun, sit back and enjoy the rest of the session this morning and thank you all for being a part of ATSSA – unquestionably, the nation's leader in roadway safety.

Thank you.

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