

Remarks by ATSSA Chairman Henry Ross – ©2009
ATSSA Midyear Meeting – Memphis, Tenn. – August 20, 2009

Good morning everyone and welcome to Memphis and ATSSA's "Committee Opening General Session."

Before we begin, I want to thank all of you for taking time from your busy schedules to attend ATSSA's Midyear Meeting. I understand the sacrifices each of you makes in travel, time away from the office, and most importantly, time away from your families.

Thank you again for being here.

Also – one other thing – I'd like to introduce three new ATSSA staff members who have joined our team since our last Midyear Meeting. All three Associate Directors in our Member Services Department, and they are (please stand when I call your name) –

Mike Metzger.

This is Mike's first day on the job, by the way.

Divya Chidambaram, who is the staff liaison to the Pavement Marking Committee.

and Blake Balzart, who is the staff liaison to the Sign Committee.

Welcome aboard (lead applause).

The last time a large number of us met together was during this past April's "Fly-In" to Capitol Hill.

During that event, 55 ATSSA members hand-carried key talking points from ATSSA's "Toward Zero Deaths" reauthorization policy with them to 87 meetings with elected officials who represent 19 states.

That's a lot of visits.

It is vital that we continue our efforts and hard work on Capitol Hill. Over the years, we have made so much progress.

I would urge each committee today to have a brief discussion on committing to 100-percent participation at the next fly-in, which will be April 13-15, 2010 in Washington, D.C.

Our elected officials truly appreciate hearing your points-of-view as their constituents – and as businessmen and women in local communities – so please consider attending in April. This is an extremely critical time to get our collective voice heard on Capitol Hill with the six year transportation authorization bill set to expire on September 30. I ask that you help our industry get the necessary safety funding and investments needed for our industry now and in the future by participating in April's fly-in.

Also, on Capitol Hill last month, I had the opportunity to testify before the House Committee on Small Business's Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight, chaired by Congressman Jason Altmire of Pennsylvania. The Committee's Ranking Member – Mary Fallin of Oklahoma was present, as was Bill Shuster of Pennsylvania.

During the question and answer phase of the hearing, Mr. Altmire asked me if ATSSA had any specific ideas on how to reduce the many accidents on our nation's roadways.

That question gave me the opportunity to cite several examples from ATSSA's "Toward Zero Deaths" policy, including the need to focus on increased funding for High Risk Rural Roads and the need to invest in low-cost safety improvements. I also stressed the need to improve our nation's roadways for older drivers including brighter signs that benefit all motorists.

On July 27, Congressman Altmire introduced the "Older Driver and Pedestrian Safety and Roadway Enhancement Act of 2009" which proposes spending \$500 million per year to help make roadways safer for older people.

The legislation calls for spending on improvements to infrastructure, pavement markings and road signs to better accommodate older drivers' and pedestrians' needs in locations all across the country.

This is a fantastic bill and ATSSA – along with AARP – fully supports it. ATSSA has been working hand-in-hand with the AARP to ensure that this legislation was introduced. We sent out a national press release on July 28 endorsing Congressman Altmire's bill, which was picked up by CNBC as well as many other national news outlets.

Our presence continues to be welcomed and appreciated on Capitol Hill – therefore, I urge you again to consider attending the upcoming April fly-in in Washington.

Those dates again are April 13-15, 2010.

We have three excellent guest speakers for you this morning.

ATSSA's Government Relations Consultant Kathy Ruffalo will take the podium in a moment, followed by David Reese, chair of ATSSA's Roadway Safety Advancement Fund and the PAC Oversight Committee. Then we will hear from Tennessee-DOT Safety Plan Manager Gary Ogletree.

Gary is going to tell us how Tennessee has reduced fatalities and accidents through Roadway Safety Audits, Kathy will give us a "Capitol Hill Update," and David will discuss the importance of supporting our PAC which in turn helps ATSSA "Advance Roadway Safety" on Capitol Hill.

Ordinarily our Director of Government Relations – Laura Dennis – would give the Capitol Hill Update, but Roger has given her some well deserved time off to get married and head out to Maui for a honeymoon.

It's my pleasure to introduce Kathy Ruffalo, a government affairs consultant with over 20 years of public policy experience at both the federal and state levels of government.

From 1989 to 1999, Kathy served as a policy advisor to the Senate's Environment and Public Works Committee with the primary responsibility for developing, drafting and negotiating federal transportation policy. During her tenure with the Committee, Kathy worked on the ISTEA, National Highway System and the TEA-21 legislation.

From 1999 to 2004, Kathy left Washington to become a senior policy advisor to Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne, returning to Capitol Hill and the Environment and Public Works Committee in 2005 to work on the SAFETEA-LU legislation.

Most recently, Kathy was appointed by the United States Congress to be a member of the National Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission.

Kathy is a 1989 graduate of Northwestern University and holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Industrial Engineering and Management Sciences.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Kathy Ruffalo.

And now, please welcome the Chair of ATSSA's Roadway Safety Advancement Fund and the PAC Oversight Committee – David Reese.

It's now my pleasure to introduce Gary Ogletree who is going to speak on how the State of Tennessee has reduced accidents through their Road Safety Audit Review Program.

Gary holds a Bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering from Tennessee Technological University.

He began his career with T-DOT in 1982, serving for 16 years in field construction and then supervising the Murfreesboro field office for 12 years.

Gary moved to Region 3 Maintenance and was instrumental in the development and training of the first T-DOT Highway Incident Management – "HELP" – units. Gary served as the Nashville HELP unit coordinator for six years until his promotion to Safety Plan Manager in January 2005.

Gary was a member of the team that created Tennessee's first Strategic Highway Safety Plan in 2004 and has been working with a multi-disciplinary committee to prepare the third revision of the document to be signed by the Governor this month.

Gary has also worked with T-DOT's Office of Project Planning to develop the Road Safety Audit Review Program that is in place to implement safety improvements on targeted spots, sections and corridors.

Ladies and gentlemen – please welcome Gary Ogletree.

Thank you very much Gary.

This concludes our committee opening general session this morning, however, I have one final announcement before we head off to our committee meetings.

Lunch will be available for committee members from noon to 1:30 p.m. in the Ballroom West Foyer. We ask that you take a break during that time, grab a lunch, and take it back to your meeting rooms, as we do not have a central dining area.

Thank you all again and enjoy your day.

#