

**Remarks by ATSSA President Tom McSwain
ATSSA Opening General Session
Sunday, March 5, 2006
Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.**

Good morning everyone.

So many of the Foundation activities that Tim just spoke of – the Memorial, the poster contest and scholarships all have one thing in common – they’re programs that advance our larger core purpose to “Advance Roadway Safety.”

The Memorial, for example, is present at so many events throughout the year, that it helps remind people that roadwork and, by association, working in a work zone is an important – and dangerous occupation.

Thank you Tim for reminding us of the Foundation activities and how those activities help ATSSA’s goals.

And I want to thank you all for being here this morning.

We’ve got much to do today before the doors of Traffic Expo 2006 open, but before I begin my “official remarks,” there are a couple of things I want to share with you.

Serving these last two years as ATSSA’s president has been two of the busiest, most challenging and most gratifying years of my life.

Not only was an old geezer like me a new Dad in 2004, as if that isn’t enough stress in itself, all of us in ATSSA were immersed in something called “reauthorization,” followed by the joy of “authorization,” only to be once again faced with “reauthorization” for the next several years to come.

What those of you who traveled to Washington, D.C. along with ATSSA staff to meet with your elected officials did over the past two years is nothing short of miraculous.

These last two years are the days that I will never forget, and I hope none of you will forget them either.

If someone said to me 10 years ago that ATSSA would someday be a vocal and highly respected and recognized organization on Capitol Hill someday, I would have said not a chance.

But, here we are today.

ATSSA’s educational efforts to help members of Congress understand the benefits of the services we provide, as well as the lifesaving devices that we manufacture – what it is we do – have paid off.

Over the last few years, we've had Congressmen Oberstar, Rahall, Petri and Inslee here to speak with us, and more importantly, to visit with us on the exhibit floor to learn first-hand from ATSSA members how we make our nation's roadways safer.

As a result, their view of what safety means has greatly expanded, and they are more committed to participate in events that promote roadway safety, like Tom Petri from Wisconsin for example, participating in National Work Zone Awareness Week activities, or Jay Inslee's involvement in our technology fair on Capitol Hill, or Jim Oberstar strongly supporting "safety" as being a part of the new transportation bill.

That's in part, because these good people in Washington support our core purpose – "To Advance Roadway Safety."

I think 10 years ago, we might have gotten a lot of "hang-ups" or unreturned phone calls when making such requests.

Not so today.

Over the last two years, I have visited with many of you in Chapters across the country, and have spent a good deal of time on Capital Hill with ATSSA volunteers who have flown to Washington, D.C. from literally every state in the country.

The time you've spent away from home and your businesses, the personal sacrifices many of you have made in your life on behalf of ATSSA, is sincerely appreciated and recognized by all ATSSA members, the Board, the staff and certainly by me.

I mentioned Congressman Jim Oberstar a minute ago.

When Mr. Oberstar was at the ATSSA convention a few years ago, he stood at a podium – much like this one – during the Opening General Session that year, and proclaimed – "ATSSA, you have arrived."

Yes, we have arrived, and I thank all of you for your never-ending dedication in helping this association so effectively "Advance Roadway Safety".

Thanks to all of you for helping ATSSA reach this significant goal.

Following the reauthorization of the transportation bill, the ATSSA staff – with the tremendous help of people like Debby Ricker, Dane Alsabrook, Bubba Lee, Bruce Owen, Taylor Bowlden, Tim Cox, members of ATSSA's Government Relations Committee, and so many others, did something remarkable.

First, they took a sixteen-hundred-page bill and boiled it down to focus on areas that affect the ATSSA membership. The things each of you are involved within your day-to-day business operations.

Then, specific program areas were identified – such as the five-billion-dollar Highway Safety Improvement Program, High-Risk Rural Roads, and the Safe Routes to School Program, as well as when it is appropriate to install wider lines, brighter signs, lighting, guardrail and cable... all of these areas of the bill were identified to help ATSSA members focus on the areas that would best advance their businesses.

A couple of detailed presentations were prepared at ATSSA headquarters with all of this information – one highlighting these very specific items of the bill I just mentioned, and the other a “behind the scenes” look at how ATSSA went about putting the “Safety” in SAFETEA-LU.

Then the staff and I then set off to Chapters across the country to deliver these presentations, answer questions, have discussions, all in an effort to help get ATSSA members to understand the tremendous opportunities open to them under SAFETEA-LU, as well as the importance of having a seat at the table during state strategic highway safety planning sessions.

All of this work – and it was a tremendous amount of work, believe me – was completed and underway just weeks after President Bush signed the bill into law.

Did these efforts pay off in benefiting our members, specifically “Goal D” of the associations’ Strategic Plan, which reads, “ATSSA will support our members’ business development?”

You bet this effort paid off.

As of today, there are 45 ATSSA State Strategic Highway Safety Plan Representatives across the country, working with their DOTs, and other agencies, organizations and private individuals to ensure that the safety benefits of ATSSA member products, devices and services are not overlooked when these state plans are developed.

Our involvement in this planning process ensures that miles of guardrail, not just miles of asphalt – are put in place on our roadways, when appropriate, to make them safer for all motorists today, and for years to come.

The ATSSA Member Value Survey in which a large number of us participated last year revealed many things.

And probably one of the most significant things we learned through that process is that we– the ATSSA members – look to this association to help grow our businesses.

The “Core Safety Component” contained in SAFETEA-LU would never have been achieved – in fact – “Safety” might have been overlooked completely – had it not been for the hard work and commitment by you – the ATSSA member – on Capitol Hill.

And we're going back to the Hill in September. Back for ATSSA Leadership Training, Legislative Visits and the ATSSA Midyear Meeting. Three big events – all rolled into one – September 13 through 16.

As you can see – we not only work on the Hill – we also have a lot of fun and meet a lot of important people who appreciate sharing their time with a group of men and women so passionate about saving lives.

If you've never participated in Legislative Visits, I encourage you to join us in September, in conjunction with the Midyear Meeting and Leadership Training.

Without a doubt, ATSSA's work over the years on Capitol Hill was unmistakably responsible for putting the "Safety" in SAFETEA-LU, and I am grateful and honored to be part of such an overwhelmingly successful organization that excels not just at this, but at all that it undertakes.

Thank you all very much for all that you have done these past two years to make all of this possible.

Now, you're probably wondering – does all of this take money?

Well, yes, it does.

Not only did many of you visit Washington, D.C., traveling away from your family and businesses to do the business of ATSSA, but you generously contributed to the ATSSA PAC to give us one strong, unique, compelling "voice" where it mattered the most. One Voice – to Advance Roadway Safety.

I would ask that those in the audience today who have contributed to the ATSSA PAC at any time, please stand now and be recognized by your friends for your generosity.

So now, being a soon-to-be ex-President, I regrettably must move on.

This is both a sad day and a happy day for my family and for me.

Over the last two years with my fellow ATSSA members we've laughed, we've cried, we've met, we've argued, we've had great ideas, and we've had some times that weren't so good.

But through it all, we had fun.

Wherever I go with this association, to a Chapter meeting, to Capitol Hill, to this Expo for that matter, ATSSA is fondly talked about and always bragged about.

ATSSA has something that the other associations we may belong to do not. And what that is, is a sense of family.

I look out into this room right now and I see so many good friends. I see old friends, new friends, people I don't like, people who don't like me. I think I am outnumbered on that one!

But seriously... we all have to agree on this.

ATSSA always brings us together as family and friends.

Whether it be at the Midyear Meeting, at this Expo, at Chapter meetings, at How-To's... whatever the occasion, we have many opportunities throughout the year to see each other and to share with each other our challenges and our successes, our joys and our sorrows.

This is the beauty of this association, and that is why I belong to ATSSA.

My term as your president is about to conclude and I want to offer my deepest and most sincere thanks to all of you for your support, advice, and dedication to Advancing Roadway Safety during my term.

I am just as proud today as Kathi was two years ago when she stood here, and as Chip was before her.

And, two years from now, your new president, Pete Speer, I guarantee, will have that same feeling of accomplishment, gratitude and happiness in his heart that I have right now, for being part of such a remarkable organization.

Who wouldn't be proud?

As Mr. Oberstar said... "ATSSA has arrived."

I am proud to have been part of that journey with you.

Thank you.