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Statement of Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety On Today's Rulemaking to Require the Use of Electronic On-Board Recorders (EOBRs) on Long-Haul Commercial Vehicles

WASHINGTON, D.C., (January 31, 2011) Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) commends the proposed motor carrier safety rule requiring within three years that long-haul commercial vehicles, trucks and buses, be equipped with Electronic On-Board Recorders (EOBRs). The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), the agency of the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) responsible for motor carrier safety, has recommended requiring EOBRs for motor carriers engaged in long-haul operations and some other carriers in order to objectively document driving time and on-duty status. This action will help reduce driver fatigue, eliminate fraud, and improve hours of service rules enforcement.

Safety groups for decades have urged the agency to required EOBRs to improve enforcement of federal hours of service limits and reduce fraud. In 1995, Advocates and others filed a petition with the DOT asking them to adopt a rule requiring EOBRs. That same year Congress also directed that federal agency action be taken on EOBRs. During the 111th Congress, a Subcommittee of the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee, chaired by Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), held hearings on motor carrier safety that addressed the need for mandatory EOBRs. Additionally, since the 1990s the National Transportation Safety Board has issued safety recommendations calling for EOBRs on all commercial motor vehicles, the latest in 2007.

“This rule will make our highways safer by addressing commercial driver fatigue. It represents a major improvement over the current system where some drivers use paper logbooks, often called ‘comic books’, to evade safety regulations. Electronic monitoring of motor carriers by EOBRs will assure effective enforcement and protect commercial drivers as well as the motoring public,” said Joan Claybrook, Advocates’ Consumer Co-Chair.

The use of technology to enforce hours of service rules and to assist law enforcement at roadside inspections has been a top safety priority for truck safety supporters in Congress, highway safety organizations, truck crash victims and survivors, and law enforcement organizations. Currently, EOBRs are required in all European Union countries as well several countries in South America and Asia.

“DOT Secretary Ray LaHood and his team are setting a safety course that we welcome. FMCSA is carrying out its mission to make safety its highest priority by moving forward with long-overdue safety rules as well as replacing weak rules issued by the Bush Administration, said Jackie Gillan, Advocates’ Vice President. “Each year about 4,000 people die in truck crashes. Fatigue is a major factor in truck crashes and revising the current hours of service rule coupled with today’s proposal requiring EOBRs are critical steps toward reducing this unacceptable death toll.”

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