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Media Contacts:

Michelle Holland
571.379.6363
mholland@transurban.com

John Townsend
202.253.2171
jtownsend@aaamidatlantic.com

Andrew LaVanway
703.628.2503
alavanway@okco.com

New Research Prompts Virginia Secretary of Transportation, Capital Beltway HOT Lanes Project Partners, AAA Mid-Atlantic and Dulles Corridor Metrorail to Enlist Employers to Fight Distracted Driving in Construction Zones

Booz Allen Hamilton, Inova Health System, SAIC and Tysons Corner Center Are First To Take Orange Cones. No Phones. Employer Safety Pledge

Alexandria, Va. – Today, due to alarming research revealing an increase in distracted driving on I-495 (the Capital Beltway), Virginia Secretary of Transportation Sean T. Connaughton, Transurban-Fluor, AAA Mid-Atlantic and the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project launched the Orange Cones. No Phones. Employer Safety Pledge, challenging 100 regional employers over the next 100 days to commit to meaningful steps to reduce distracted driving. Four of the region's largest, premier employers Booz Allen Hamilton, Inova Health System, Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC) and Tysons Corner Center are the first to take the pledge. TYTRAN, Tysons Corner's transportation advocacy group for employers, also has taken the Employer Safety Pledge.

"Half of all distracted drivers on the Capital Beltway use their phones on the road to address work-related issues, despite having to navigate fully ramped-up construction zones throughout Northern Virginia" said Sean T. Connaughton, Virginia Secretary of Transportation. "Employers have a real opportunity to eliminate a major source of distracted driving, making both their employees and our roadways significantly safer. Over the next 100 days, we are challenging at least 100 employers to take the Employer Safety Pledge."

For the second year in a row, Transurban-Fluor and AAA Mid-Atlantic surveyed regional drivers to understand distracted driving on the Capital Beltway and how it impacts driver safety. Despite the billions of dollars in ongoing infrastructure construction throughout the region, driver distraction is on the rise in Northern Virginia. The survey found that 55 percent of Beltway drivers currently use their phones while driving, with more people talking on a hand-held cell phone, reading texts or writing texts. In just the last year, the number of Beltway drivers reading text messages while driving increased by 47 percent.



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration



As a result, the Capital Beltway and other regional roads are less safe. The number of drivers who have had an accident or near-miss as a result of driving distracted increased from 18 percent in 2009 to 25 percent in 2010.

“Drivers are getting the message – 72 percent of Beltway drivers have seen stories in the news about the dangers of distracted driving,” said Tim Steinhilber, Transurban-Fluor’s General Manager for the Capital Beltway HOT Lanes Project. “However, it seems drivers often believe that responding to a work message is more important than paying attention to the road. Changing this behavior requires a culture change that employers can help make, and we will be reaching out to more than 10,000 regional employers in the coming weeks to help them make that change.”

In fact, of distracted drivers using a phone on the road to address a work-related issue, 57 percent do so because they feel the need to provide an immediate response. Moreover, more than half of the same group (52 percent) say that their employer does not have a formal policy regarding distracted driving.

Construction on the Capital Beltway HOT Lanes and Dulles Corridor Metrorail Projects is fully ramped up along major commuter routes in Virginia, making it more important than ever for drivers to stay alert on local roadways.

- Capital Beltway HOT Lanes and Dulles Corridor Metrorail Projects include construction on a total of more than approximately 25 miles in Northern Virginia
- More than approximately 210,000 vehicles travel through the two construction zones each day
- There are approximately 2,000 construction workers working across the two major projects
- Major construction work is underway on most commuter routes, including the Capital Beltway, I-66, I-95/395, Dulles Toll Road, Dulles Connector Road, Dulles Airport Access Highway and many major arterial routes
- The two projects include nearly \$5 billion in construction activity

Orange Cones. No Phones. Employer Safety Pledge

Regional businesses and organizations taking the Employer Safety Pledge commit to increase awareness of the dangers of distracted driving in construction work zones, creating a new “norm” where employers consider on-road safety above the need for an immediate response. To aid the committed organizations, Orange Cones. No Phones. partners will provide an online toolkit with materials and information specifically designed to reduce distracted driving, including:

- Intranet copy for internal communications

- Copy and banner advertisements for websites
- Safety tips for drivers
- Broadcast e-mail to send to employees
- Distracted driving research statistics
- Social media resources (Facebook and Twitter)
- Distracted driving FAQs

“Booz Allen Hamilton, Inova Health System, SAIC and Tysons Corner Center deserve both praise and recognition for being the first regional organizations to take the Employer Safety Pledge and commit to reducing distracted driving,” said Sharon Bulova, Chairman, Fairfax County Board of Supervisors. “Their participation demonstrates not only their commitment to the safety of their employees, but also how businesses can marry good business practices with good community partnership.”

About Orange Cones. No Phones.

Launched in 2009, Orange Cones. No Phones. is a partnership between Transurban-Fluor, AAA Mid-Atlantic supported by Federal Highway Administration, Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia State Police and Fairfax County Police. Focused on reducing distracted driving in the Capital Beltway HOT Lanes construction corridor, to date the campaign has reached target-drivers with more than 10 million impressions via media, advertising, high school assemblies, social media and in-person events. For more information on Orange Cones. No Phones. visit www.orangeconesnophones.com.

For more information on the Capital Beltway HOT Lanes project and how the new HOT Lanes will impact you and your community, visit www.virginiahotlanes.com.

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