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New Research Reveals Distracted Driving in Construction Zones Declining

Drivers are Increasingly Aware of the Dangers and Are Curbing Dangerous Phone Behaviors

Alexandria, Va. – Today, Transurban-Fluor and AAA Mid-Atlantic released new research revealing that distracted driving is declining in the Capital Beltway HOT Lanes construction zone. For the third 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. The survey of 1,000 Beltway drivers found that distracted driving awareness programs have had a positive effect on drivers' distracted driving habits, with the number of people who talk on hand-held cell phones while driving decreasing 33 percent in just one year.

Moreover, key driver distraction behaviors decreased across the board in the latest survey. Transurban-Fluor and AAA Mid-Atlantic found that talking on a hands-free or hand-held cell phone, reading texts and writing texts all decreased in the past year. The greatest decrease has occurred with the number of people talking on hand-held cell phones, declining from 33 percent in 2010 to 22 percent in 2011 – the lowest it has been since the survey started.

“For years, distracted driving has been a major safety issue especially in construction zones where changing driving conditions require even greater attention and focus,” said Lon Anderson, managing director of public and government relations, AAA Mid-Atlantic. “While we are happy to see progress in our efforts to reduce distracted driving, our work is not done. Even one distracted driver makes the road less safe for all drivers and every construction worker on the road. We urge all drivers to put down the phone when behind the wheel.”

Distracted driving awareness programs – such as the Orange Cones. No Phones. Employer Safety Pledge and High School Safety Challenge – are having a positive effect on driver's distracted driving habits. Almost half of Northern Virginia drivers (46 percent) and 60 percent of Fairfax County drivers are aware of Orange Cones. No Phones. As a result, drivers are making an effort to change their cell phone use behaviors in the Capital Beltway HOT Lanes construction zone. Nearly two-

thirds of drivers – 64 percent – report that they have changed their use of cell phones in construction zones by either not texting or not talking on the phone.

Not only are distracting behaviors decreasing, but the frequency of cell phone use behind the wheel has decreased as well. In 2010, 81 percent of drivers used their phones behind the wheel at least occasionally. In 2011, the number of drivers using phones behind the wheel at least occasionally has decreased to 66 percent.

The 2010 report revealed that work pressures were driving people to distraction. In response, Orange Cones. No Phones. launched the Employer Safety Pledge challenging regional businesses and organizations to commit to increase awareness of the dangers of distracted driving in construction zones. The program included an online toolkit with materials and information specifically designed to reduce distracted driving. More than 100 businesses signed up and more than 100,000 employees within Northern Virginia received anti-distracted driving and educational information.

As a result, the number of drivers responding to a work-related issue from the road has decreased slightly from 50 percent in 2010 to 48 percent in 2011. However, employees' reasons for responding have greatly changed. In 2010 the majority of employees – 57 percent – responded because their employer expected an immediate response. In 2011, only 18 percent respond for that reason. The biggest motivator for responding from the road this year is employees' desire to try to multi-task and save time.

“With regional traffic congestion consuming so much of drivers' daily lives, commuters turn to dangerous behaviors to save a few minutes,” said Tim Steinhilber, Transurban-Fluor's general manager for the Capital Beltway HOT Lanes Project. “Though HOT Lanes will provide faster, more reliable travel options when they open, we strongly encourage all drivers to remain vigilant during this last year of construction and to keep their eyes on the road, their hands on the wheel and their phones on hold.”

In addition to relieving the pressure on employees to respond immediately, employers have increased their employee's awareness of company distracted driving policies. Last year, 51 percent of distracted drivers were not aware of their employer's distracted driving policy. In 2011, that number has declined to 31 percent.

While cell phone use while driving is declining, there is still more work to do. Despite the progress among most drivers and the billions of dollars of ongoing construction throughout the region, some drivers are still distracted. Forty-nine percent of drivers surveyed had texted or taken a call from the road within the past week.

Construction on the Capital Beltway HOT Lanes is fully underway along a 14-mile stretch of the Beltway in Virginia from the Springfield Interchange to just north of the Dulles Toll Road. The project includes the replacement of more than \$268 million of aging infrastructure including 58 bridges and overpasses. HOT Lanes construction is expected to be completed in late 2012.

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 17 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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