

**DATE:** July 20, 2010  
**TO:** Mayor and City Council  
**FROM:** Technology Services Director  
**SUBJECT:** No Texting While Driving

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Council approves a resolution supporting AT&T in its effort to educate the general public about the danger of texting while driving.

**BACKGROUND**

Texting while driving is the act of composing, sending, or reading text messages, email, or making other similar use of the internet on a mobile device while operating a motor vehicle, such as an automobile, truck, or train. The practice has been viewed by many people and authorities as dangerous. It has also been ruled as the cause of a number of motor vehicle accidents.

Texting while driving attracted interest in the media after several highly publicized car crashes were caused by texting drivers, including a May 2009 incident involving a Boston trolley car driver who crashed while texting and the 2008 Chatsworth train collision, which killed twenty-five passengers. Investigations revealed that the engineer of that train had sent forty-five text messages while operating.

On July 1, 2009, the state of California enacted a law that prohibits sending electronic text messages while driving, and applied a fine of \$76 for the first offense and \$175 each subsequent offense.

On October 1, 2009, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) announced President Barack Obama's signing of an Executive Order directing federal employees not to engage in text messaging while driving government-owned vehicles, among other activities. According to Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood, "This order sends a very clear signal to the American public that distracted driving is dangerous and unacceptable. It shows that the federal government is leading by example." As a part of a larger move to combat distracted driving, the DOT and the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration launched the public information website <http://www.distraction.gov>. On January 26, 2010, DOT announced a federal ban on texting while driving by truckers and bus drivers.

## DISCUSSION

Texting while driving leads to increased distraction behind the wheel. In 2006, Liberty Mutual Insurance Group conducted a survey with more than 900 teens from over twenty-six high schools nationwide. The results showed that thirty-seven percent of students found texting to be "very" or "extremely" distracting. A study by the AAA discovered that forty-six percent of teens admitted to being distracted behind the wheel due to texting. One example of distraction behind the wheel is the 2008 Chatsworth train collision that killed twenty-five passengers. The subsequent investigation revealed that the engineer had sent forty-five text messages while operating the train.

A 2009 experiment by Car and Driver magazine that took place at a deserted air strip showed that texting while driving had a greater impact on safety than driving drunk. While legally drunk, a vehicle's stopping distance from seventy mph increased by four feet; by contrast, reading an e-mail added thirty-six feet, and sending a text added seventy feet.

A simulation study at the Monash University Accident Research Centre provided strong evidence that retrieving and, in particular, sending text messages has a detrimental effect on a number of safety-critical driving measures. Specifically, negative effects were seen in detecting and responding correctly to road signs, detecting hazards, time spent with eyes off the road, and (only for sending text messages) lateral position. Mean speed, speed variability, lateral position when receiving text messages, and following distance showed no difference. A separate, yet unreleased simulation study at the University of Utah found a six-fold increase in distraction-related accidents when texting.

Eighty-nine percent of U.S. adults think that text messaging while driving is "distracting, dangerous, and should be outlawed." The American Automobile Association Foundation for Traffic Safety has released polling data that show that eighty-seven percent of people consider texting and e-mailing while driving a "very serious" safety threat, almost equivalent to the ninety percent of those polled who consider drunk driving a threat. Despite the acknowledgement of the dangers of texting behind the wheel, about half of drivers sixteen to twenty-four say they have texted while driving, compared with twenty-two percent of drivers thirty-five to forty-four. Texting while driving received greater attention in the late 2000s, corresponding to a rise in the number of text messages being sent.

On July 27, 2009, Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI) released preliminary findings of their study of driver distraction in commercial vehicles. Several naturalistic driving studies of long-haul trucks and lighter vehicles driving six million combined miles used video cameras to observe the drivers and road. Researchers observed 4,452 "safety-critical" events, which includes crashes, near crashes, safety-critical events, and lane deviations. Eighty-one percent of the "safety-critical" events involved some type of driver distraction. Text messaging had the greatest relative risk, with drivers of heavy vehicles or trucks being more than twenty-three times more likely to experience a safety-critical event when texting. The study also found that drivers typically take their eyes off the forward roadway for an average of four out of six seconds when texting; and revealed that when traveling at 55 mph, that same texting driver travels the distance of a football field without their eyes on the road. VTTI's conclusions from this study included that "texting should be banned in moving vehicles for all drivers".

**ECONOMIC IMPACT**

None

**FISCAL IMPACT**

None

**PUBLIC CONTACT**

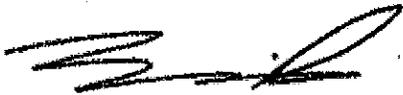
None

**NEXT STEPS**

If adopted, the Resolution will be distributed as appropriate.

*Recommended by:* Clancy Priest, Technology Services Director

Approved by:



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Fran David, City Manager

Attachments:

Attachment I: Resolution

HAYWARD CITY COUNCIL

RESOLUTION NO. 10-

Introduced by Council Member \_\_\_\_\_

**RESOLUTION SUPPORTING AT&T IN ITS EFFORT  
TO EDUCATE THE GENERAL PUBLIC ABOUT THE  
DANGER OF TEXTING WHILE DRIVING.**

**WHEREAS**, the City of Hayward holds the health and safety of its citizens as a paramount concern; and

**WHEREAS**, wireless phone use has become ubiquitous through our community, California, and the nation as a whole, and use of text messages has grown exponentially in recent years; and

**WHEREAS**, any time a driver attempts to send an electronic text message while driving, his or her attention is diverted from the road; and

**WHEREAS**, a recent Pew Internet & American Life Project study found that twenty-six percent of American teens of driving age say that they have texted while driving, and forty-eight percent of all teens twelve to eighteen say that they have been a passenger while a driver has sent a text message; and

**WHEREAS**, a recent Nationwide Insurance study showed that eighty percent of respondents support some type of ban on sending text messages or emails while driving; and

**WHEREAS**, a recent Virginia Tech study showed sending electronic text messages while driving makes an accident twenty-three times more likely; and

**WHEREAS**, a study conducted by The Transport Research Laboratory in the United Kingdom showed that sending text messages while driving is riskier than driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs; and

**WHEREAS**, a driver that attempts to send electronic text messages while driving is not just a hazard to themselves, but to passengers, other drivers, and pedestrians as well; and

**WHEREAS**, the United States Department of Transportation has banned all commercial truck and bus drivers from sending electronic text messages while driving, with the support of the drivers' unions; and,

**WHEREAS**, it is illegal to send electronic text messages while driving in the state of California;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the City of Hayward promotes safe driving across California and hereby joins AT&T in its effort to educate the general public about the danger of texting while driving.

IN COUNCIL, HAYWARD, CALIFORNIA July 20, 2010

ADOPTED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: COUNCIL MEMBERS:

MAYOR:

NOES: COUNCIL MEMBERS:

ABSTAIN: COUNCIL MEMBERS:

ABSENT: COUNCIL MEMBERS:

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk of the City of Hayward

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Attorney of the City of Hayward