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Together for Safer Roads Announces Findings on Truck of the Future Pilot Program

Data Analyzed by U.S. DOT Volpe Center Shows Reduction in Speeding, Increased Awareness of Vulnerable Road Users

New York, NY (April 15, 2024) – Together for Safer Roads (TSR), a leading NGO dedicated to promoting road safety in collaboration with public and private sector partners, announced the findings from a study on its Truck of the Future (ToF) pilot program, which works to enhance road safety for vulnerable road users (VRUs) in urban areas. The pilot, conducted throughout 2023, showcased promising results in utilizing innovative aftermarket technologies to mitigate potential conflicts between large fleet vehicles and VRUs.

Recent data underscores the urgent need for measures to protect VRUs: In 2021, 84% of the 7,388 pedestrian fatalities recorded occurred in urban areas, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. The ToF pilot program, a public-private partnership, sought to address this challenge by installing VRU Detection Systems on fleet vehicles, providing drivers with enhanced visibility and real-time feedback on potential near misses.

The VRU technology, developed by TSR member VisionTrack, utilizes AI-powered cameras to detect pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists, and scooter users around the vehicle. Fleets participating in the pilot include The City of New York, with 10 vehicles each from two separate city departments, and AB InBev's subsidiary in Mexico City, which had 10 vehicles participate in the pilot.

A total of 67,732 VRU alerts were collectively recorded over the course of the pilot program amongst the three participating fleets. Only VRUs detected within 0.8 meters of the vehicle were flagged to the driver. This volume of close proximity VRU alerts underscores the challenges faced by drivers on today's roads, and the importance of a technology that provides drivers with a 360-degree view of vision around the vehicle and alerts on imminent risks.

Key findings from the pilot program study include:

- Reduction in Speeding: Installation of the VRU Detection System was associated with a decrease in speeding over time, particularly in the most severe 'red' category and among outlier speeders. This finding was surprising as the system did not directly alert drivers when they were speeding. The reduction in speeding suggests the VRU Detection System's benefits may go beyond providing indirect vision and detection alerts, to creating positive behavioral shifts among drivers towards safer practices. Speeding, as we know, is a leading contributing factor to both crashes and the severity of said crashes once they occur.

- Increased VRU Awareness: Drivers demonstrated greater awareness of VRUs over time. In one fleet, the proportion of VRU alerts that occurred while the driver was speeding decreased over time, suggesting that drivers consciously slowed down in areas where a VRU was likely to be detected. Meanwhile, a NYC department saw more alerts during warmer months, when more people were out, showing the system's importance in busy areas where the system would flag a VRU. AB InBev's fleet saw an approximately 50 percent reduction in the number of VRU alerts over the first three months of the pilot, possibly due to changes in driver behavior. These results highlight how the system could help drivers be more aware and avoid incidents, making roads safer overall.

- Positive Feedback:
    - Both drivers and managers provided positive qualitative feedback on the effectiveness of the VRU Detection System, highlighting its potential to prevent crashes and improve overall road safety. Nine out of 10 drivers surveyed thought that the alerts would help prevent a crash.
    - In a survey of managers/admin users post-pilot, both NYC (with a rating of 5 out of 5) and AB InBev managers (with a rating of 4.80 out of 5) felt that the cameras and alert systems were very helpful in making the roads safer.

"The findings from the Truck of the Future pilot program underscore the transformative potential of innovative technologies to make roads safer for Vulnerable Road Users and fleet vehicle drivers alike," said Peter Goldwasser, Executive Director of Together for Safer Roads. "TSR remains committed to fostering cross-sector collaborations that prioritize the safety of all road users in ways that are actionable and scalable."

"The City of New York is proud to have participated in the Truck of the Future pilot program," said Keith Kerman, DCAS Deputy Commissioner and NYC Chief Fleet Officer. "These findings reaffirm our dedication to implementing cutting-edge solutions to protect pedestrians and cyclists on our streets, while also aligning with other key actions the City is undertaking, including the recent Mayoral Executive Order that addresses visual obstructions for truck operators in New York City."

"As a corporate participant with one of the larger global fleets, and as a founding member of Together for Safer Roads, we are encouraged by the positive outcomes of the Truck of the Future pilot program," said Catalina Garcia Gomez, Global Director of Corporate Affairs at AB InBev. "This initiative aligns with our commitment to promoting responsible and safe driving practices among our drivers."

"Video telematics are a vital component of a comprehensive fleet safety plan, especially as it relates to after-market vehicle modifications," said Matthew Ison, Vice President of Sales - North America at TSR member VisionTrack. "We are thrilled to be involved in the Truck of the Future pilot and showcase specifically the increasing capabilities of AI in telematics to provide drivers with greater awareness of surrounding VRUs, change driving behaviors, and create safer roads for all."

Download the report and summary of key findings.

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About Together for Safer Roads (TSR):

Together for Safer Roads (TSR), is a leading NGO focused on building cross-sector partnerships to improve fleet trucking safety, leveraging the technology, data, and expertise of its members to create innovative programs aimed at preventing traffic crashes, injuries, and fatalities across the globe. TSR's membership includes some of the largest and most influential fleets worldwide, as well as prominent road safety technology companies. TSR collaborates with governments, businesses, and community stakeholders on local projects, fleet safety management, and technology initiatives, with the ultimate goal of achieving Vision Zero – the complete eradication of traffic fatalities and severe injuries. Learn more at TSR's website.

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