Ford backs Bill to ban texting while driving

(AP) -- Ford said Thursday it backs federal legislation pressuring states to ban texting while driving in an effort to reduce driver distractions that could lead to accidents.

In a statement, Ford safety executive Sue Cischke cited research that shows drivers who take their eyes off the road for extended periods increase the risk of accidents. That includes drivers who send text messages on hand-held devices while on the road.

The legislation, introduced in July by Sen. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., and Rep. Carolyn McCarthy, D-N.Y., would require states to bar drivers from texting while driving or risk losing a a quarter of their annual federal highway funding.

Fourteen states and the District of Columbia have passed laws making the practice illegal.

"This legislative approach addresses a nationwide problem we all can agree is necessary to improve safety," Cischke said.

Ford supports the use of handsfree and voice-activated wireless devices to keep drivers more focused on the road, she said.

In a study released in late July, the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute found that drivers of heavy trucks who texted behind the wheel had a collision risk 23 times greater than when they were not texting. The institute concluded the results applied to all drivers, not just

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Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood plans to hold a summit Sept. 30 of experts in Washington to address the issue of cell phone use and texting while driving.

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