Driver Distraction Study from The University Of Michigan Transportation Research Institute and Toyota Shows Significant Correlation Between Parent and Teen Distractions

TORRANCE, Calif., Nov. 27, 2012 – Toyota Motor Sales, U.S.A., Inc. (TMS), today announced preliminary findings from a major, national study of teen drivers (ages 16 to 18) and parents of teen drivers conducted jointly with the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute (UMTRI). The Study shows a significant correlation between parent and teen behaviors behind the wheel, suggesting parents can play an influential role in modeling risky behavior on the road. The UMTRI/Toyota Teen Driver Distraction Study, the largest scientific survey of its kind, also found that texting while driving remains commonplace among teens, despite ongoing, nationwide efforts to educate drivers on the significant risks associated with these behaviors.

The UMTRI/Toyota Study is based on national telephone surveys of more than 5,500 young drivers and parents. The survey includes interviews with 400 pairs of teens and parents from the same household (dyads). This is a unique factor that allows researchers to analyze closely how driving behaviors among parents and teens within the same family unit relate to each other. In addition to a national sample, the study includes local surveys in Chicago; Philadelphia, Pa.; Houston, Texas; Long Island, N.Y.; Los Angeles and Washington, DC.

Commenting on the connection noted in the study between parent and teen driving behavior, Dr. Tina Sayer, CSRC Principal Engineer and teen safe driving expert, said: "Driver education begins the day a child's car seat is turned around to face front. As the Study shows, the actions parents take and, by extension, the expectations they set for young drivers each day are powerful factors in encouraging safe behavior behind the wheel. Seat belts and good defensive driving skills are critical. However, the one piece of advice I would give to parents to help them keep newly licensed drivers safe on the road it is to always be the driver you want your teen to be."

Nationally, motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of death for U.S. teens and, in 2010, seven teens between the ages 16 and 19 died every day on average from motor vehicle injuries, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [1]

The Study, sponsored by Toyota's Collaborative Safety Research Center (CSRC), was designed to shed new light on frequently discussed driving risks and to identify effective recommendations to help keep teens safe and help parents serve as more effective driving role models. The Study also looked at a range of risk factors that receive less public attention but pose great risks on the road as well as the role parents and peers play in encouraging distracted driving behaviors.

Today's announcement represents only a portion of the study's preliminary findings. UMTRI and Toyota's CSRC continue to analyze, compare, and contrast the data and will publish additional findings incrementally over the next few months.

Key Findings from the UMTRI/Toyota Teen Driver Distraction Study
The sample of teens and parents from the same households (the dyad sample) showed a strong correlation between driving behaviors and attitudes within families. In general, parents who engage in distracting behaviors more frequently have teens who engage in distracting behaviors more frequently. Other findings from the dyad sample include:

- **What Teens *Think* Their Parents Do Behind the Wheel Matters More Than What**

Parents Say They Do: What teens *think* their parents do while driving has a greater impact on the teens' behavior than what parents actually report they do.

- If a teen *thinks* that his or her parent looks for something in the vehicle while driving, the teen is *four times* (4.1) more likely to also look for something while driving (as compared to if the teen does not think their parent does this at all).
    - If a teen's parent reports looking for something in the vehicle while driving, the teen is two times (2.2) more likely to do the same (as compared to if the parent does not report this behavior at all).
- If a teen *thinks* that his or her parent eats or drinks while driving, the teen is *three times* (3.4) more likely to likely to do the same (as compared to if the teen does not think their parent does this at all).
    - If a teen's parent reports eating or drinking while driving, the teen is two times (2.2) more likely to do the same (as compared to if the parent does not report this behavior at all).
- If a teen *thinks* that his or her parent deals with passenger issues while driving (interacts with passengers regarding requests, concerns and conflicts), the teen is *five times* (4.7) more likely to do so themselves (as compared to if the teen does not think their parent does this at all).
    - If a teen's parent reports dealing with passenger issues while driving, the teen is two times (1.7) more likely to do the same (as compared to if the parent does not report this behavior at all).

- **Teens Think Their Parents Engage in Driving Distractions More Often Than May Be the Case:** A third of teens (32 percent) believe that their *parents* use an electronic device for music while driving, while only one in ten parents (10 percent) report that they do so. Seventy-one percent of teens believe that their *parents* read or write down directions while driving, while 55 percent of parents say they do so. Eighty-five percent of teens believe that their *parents* deal with passenger issues while 70 percent of parents say they do so.

- **Parents May Underestimate How Much Their Teens Text While Driving:** Teens read or send text messages once a trip *26 times more often* than their parents think they do. More than a quarter of teens (26 percent) read or send a text message at least once every time they drive versus the one percent of their parents who said their teen does this.

Key findings from the larger, national sample of more than 5,500 respondents include:

- **Cell Phone Use by Teen Drivers Is Similar to Parents**: More than half of teens (54 percent) report that they use a hand-held cell phone while driving, similar to the six in ten parents (61 percent) who report that they do so.

- **Texting While Driving Remains Pervasive:** A quarter of teens (24 percent) respond to a text message once or more every time they drive. Nearly one in three teens (30 percent) read a text or email once or more every time they drive. Almost one in ten parents (nine percent) respond to a text once or more every time they drive, while 13 percent of them read a text or email once or more while driving. Perhaps even more alarming, one in five teens (20 percent) and one in ten parents (10 percent) admit that they have extended, multi-message text

conversations while driving.

- **Digital and Social Media Are Significant Driving Distractions for Teens:** Teens search for music on a portable music player, such as an iPod, four-and-a-half times more frequently than parents do while driving. More than half of teens (53 percent) say they do so, while just 12 percent of parents do. More than one in ten teens, or 11 percent, say that they update or check social media, such as Facebook or Twitter, while driving.

- **Teens Regularly Drive with Young Passengers Despite Serious Risks**: Nearly three-quarters of teens (69 percent) say they drive with two or three teen passengers and no adults in their car, which, according to a study by the AAA Foundation, is associated with a doubling of the driver's risk of being killed in a crash.[2] Almost half of teens (44 percent) do so with more than three teen passengers and no adults, which is associated with a quadrupling of a driver's risk of being killed.[3] Additionally, half of teens (50 percent) say that they deal with passengers while driving. Nearly one in three teens (30 percent) say they do this at least once a trip or more.

Driver Education Begins When the Car Seat Starts Facing Forward

"Children look to their parents for a model of what is acceptable. Parents should know that every time they get behind the wheel with their child in the car they are providing a visible example that their child is likely to follow," said Dr. Ray Bingham, Research Professor at the University of Michigan Transportation Research Institute and Head of the Young Driver Behavior and Injury Prevention Group. "By examining the willingness of U.S. parents and teens to engage in high-risk driving behaviors, this study will inform programs that help reduce distracted driving and the non-fatal injuries and death that it causes."

Toyota complements this research with extensive safety education programs for young drivers and their parents as well as direct outreach to consumers, including:

- *Toyota Driving Expectations* (www.toyotadrivingexpectations.com), which provides hands-on, real world defensive driving courses that go far beyond what is taught in standard driver education courses;
- *Toyota Teen Driver* (www.toyotateendriver.com), a partnership with Discovery Education, which offers free online teen safety resources to parents, teens, educators and schools and has annual contests, including the Toyota Teen Driver Video Challenge and Educator Challenge, which reward scholarships and prizes, and are designed to inspire teens to make safer decisions behind the wheel; and
- Additional teen safe driving partnerships with DoSomething.org and the National Safety Council.

Sitting down with teens to draft a Safe Driving Contract can help jumpstart this dialogue. This contract is a mutual agreement that outlines a parent's expectations for a teen's driving behaviors and the consequences when those expectations are not met. Parents can find a sample agreement at www.toyotateendriver.com.

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[1] The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Web-based Injury Statistics Query and Reporting System, Sept 28, 2012

[2] AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, "Teen Driver Risk in Relation to Age and Number of

Passengers"
May 2012
[3] *Ibid.*

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