

Ford Is Developing Voice-to-Text System for Drivers (Update1)

By Keith Naughton - September 21, 2009 16:02 EDT

Sept. 21 (Bloomberg) -- [Ford Motor Co.](#) said it's researching a voice-to-text system for use by motorists, after endorsing a proposed U.S. ban on texting while driving.

"A voice-recognition approach is better than bringing in a piece of paper and unfolding a map or looking down at a mobile device," Jim Buczkowski, Ford's director of electronics, said after a press conference today in Dearborn, Michigan. "We're looking at various combinations of accomplishing that task because it's being asked for by consumers."

Ford, which offers the Sync voice-controlled information and entertainment system, on Sept. 10 became the first automaker to support the texting legislation. The proposal, introduced by New York Senator [Charles Schumer](#), would withhold 25 percent of U.S. highway aid from states that don't ban writing or reading text messages on hand-held devices while driving.

In endorsing the texting ban, Ford's vice president of government relations Peter Lawson said the automaker wouldn't support a law that would restrict hands-free systems such as Sync, developed with Microsoft Corp. and introduced in 2007. General Motors Co. offers hands-free communications in its vehicles through its OnStar system.

Ford and the Consumer Electronics Association also announced today that [Alan Mulally](#), the automaker's chief executive officer, will deliver opening remarks at the International Consumer Electronics Show on Jan. 7 in Las Vegas.

The second-largest U.S. automaker offers a message system on "a handful" of phones that reads texts to drivers who push a button on the dash, Buczkowski said. Ford is working on a system to convert a driver's spoken words to text and send them to a mobile device. He wouldn't say when that might go on sale.

"We have to make it easy to use and a good value," Buczkowski said.

Selling Point

Ford cars and trucks with Sync sell twice as fast as vehicles without it, said [Alan Hall](#), a company spokesman. The system, a \$395 option on some models, is on 70 percent of the vehicles Ford is selling this year, he said.

Ford fell 11 cents to \$6.83 at 4 p.m. in New York Stock Exchange composite trading. The [shares](#) have almost tripled this year.

To contact the reporter on this story: Keith Naughton in Southfield, Michigan
at Knaughton3@bloomberg.net

To contact the editor responsible for this story: Jamie Butters at jbutters@bloomberg.net