

April 15, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Majority Leader
The Honorable Charles Schumer, Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

As a diverse coalition of stakeholders representing vehicle safety, public health, bicyclists, pedestrians, motorcyclists, transportation, smart growth, consumers, environmental interests, disability advocates, first responders, regions, cities and others, we write to express our deep concern about a recent blog post implying that the SELF DRIVE Act be a part of America's strategy to combat COVID-19. At this time of severe crisis, our country needs tests, ventilators and personal protective equipment, not autonomous vehicles (AV) with unproven technology that do not meet baseline safety standards. While Congress should set policy to safely harness the future benefits promised by AVs, the AV legislation from the prior Congressional session and the recent staff draft provisions fail to address key safety challenges contributing to the motor vehicle crash mortality and injury toll. In addition, as states and cities are struggling with the COVID-19 emergency, their authority to protect their residents from an increasing number of crashes involving vehicles with automated capabilities should not be subverted. **We adamantly oppose any efforts to attach legislation from last session or staff draft provisions from this session for the deployment of AVs to any must-pass legislation, including additional COVID-19 relief or economic stimulus packages.**

We encourage and look forward to continuing to work with Congress to produce an AV bill that ensures these technologies fulfill their life-saving potential. It is necessary to incorporate several recent recommendations by the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) based on its crash investigations in our nation's first AV bill. These investigations have uncovered serious problems, including inadequate countermeasures to ensure driver engagement, reliance on voluntary reporting, lack of standards, poor corporate safety culture, and a misguided oversight approach by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). AV legislation from last session and AV staff draft provisions from this session do not sufficiently address these recommendations by including specific directives or regulations nor do they adequately prevent negative impacts on safety, congestion, pollution, land use, accessibility and mobility.

[A letter sent last August](#) by a broad coalition of stakeholders, many of which are represented on this letter, identified numerous priorities, such as directed rulemakings, that must be included in

any proposed AV legislation to ensure AVs will be safely integrated into our transportation system. They include:

- Prioritizing safety for all road users including motorists, pedestrians, motorcyclists, transit riders, and cyclists;
- Ensuring safety for occupants and access for everyone, including people with sensory, cognitive, and physical disabilities, including wheelchair users, as well as people with neurological conditions;
- Preserving local control to protect motorists and vulnerable road users, and protecting consumer rights;
- Providing appropriate data to consumers and local authorities; and
- Equipping NHTSA with the resources and authorities it needs to oversee this new technology.

Public opinion about AVs is critical to acceptance of the technology and its development. However, the results of a January 2020 public opinion poll reveal that the public has serious apprehensions about driverless car safety and is highly supportive of rules and performance requirements for this developing technology. An overwhelming majority (85%) are concerned about sharing the road with driverless vehicles as motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians. And, a large majority (68%) affirmed that knowing companies had to meet minimum safety requirements for their driverless cars before selling them to the public would largely allay their concerns and apprehension about the technology. AV legislation from last session and AV staff draft provisions from this session fail to address this public sentiment by creating strong requirements that would enable innovation and stimulate public trust and benefits.

It is essential that Congress exercises leadership on pressing transportation policy matters -- especially to address the facts that more than 36,000 Americans die each year on our nation's roadways; transportation is the largest sector for greenhouse gas emissions; and many people with disabilities, older adults, and people with lower incomes do not have adequate mobility in our current transportation system. Attaching AV legislation from last session or staff draft provisions from this session to a must-pass bill would not demonstrate leadership; rather, Congress would be relinquishing its responsibility to develop smart, sensible AV policy that would put people first, improve safety and mobility, and reduce emissions.

Thank you for your consideration. Our organizations are committed to continuing to work cooperatively with you to advance a comprehensive AV bill which helps people across our nation to benefit from the promise of this technology.

Sincerely,

Access Living of Metropolitan Chicago (IL)
Active Transportation Alliance
Adventure Cycling Association
Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety
Alaska PIRG (AK)

America Walks
American Motorcyclist Association
American Public Health Association
Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals
Atlanta Bicycle Coalition (GA)
Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota (MN)
Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia (PA)
Bicycle Coalition of New Mexico (NM)
Bicyclists of Iowa City (IA)
Big Shark Bicycle Company
Bike Cleveland (OH)
Bike Delaware (DE)
Bike New York (NY)
Bike Pittsburgh (PA)
Bike Walk Connecticut (CT)
Bike Walk Macon (GA)
Bike Walk Montana (MT)
Bike Walk Savannah (GA)
BikeAthens (GA)
BikeNWA (AR)
BikeWalkKC (MO)
Building Memphis (TN)
Business for a Better Portland (OR)
CAARMA Consumer Advocates Against Reverse Mortgage Abuse
California Association of Bicycling Organizations (CA)
California Bicycle Coalition (CA)
Cascade Bicycle Club (WA)
Center for Auto Safety
Center for Disability Rights
City of Fort Scott (KS)
City of Springfield (OR)
Consumer Action
Consumer Federation of America
Consumers for Auto Reliability and Safety
Cycle California! Magazine (CA)
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
East Metro Strong (MN)
Emergency Nurses Association
Empire State Consumer Project, Inc. (NY)
Florida Bicycle Association (FL)
Friends of Osprey Junction Trailhead Park (FL)
Georgia Bikes (GA)
Idaho Walk Bike Alliance (ID)
Indiana Bicycle Coalition INC DBA Bicycle Indiana (IN)

International Brotherhood of Teamsters
KidsAndCars.org
League of American Bicyclists
Local Motion
Missouri Bicycle & Pedestrian Federation (MO)
National Association of City Transportation Officials
National Association of Regional Councils
National Consumers League
New Urban Mobility Alliance
New York City Department of Transportation (NY)
People for Mobility Justice
Po Campo
Public Citizen
Rails-to-Trails Conservancy
Richmond Area Bicycling Assn. (VA)
Safe Routes Partnership
Smash the Box
Society for Advancement of Violence and Injury Research
Tennessee Citizen Action (TN)
TransitMatters
Transportation Alternatives
Transportation for America
Transportation Learning Center
Trauma Foundation
Truck Safety Coalition
Ulupono Initiative (HI)
Virginia Bicycling Federation (VA)
Virginia Citizens Consumer Council (VA)
Washington Bikes (WA)
West Virginia Connecting Communities (WV)
Wyoming Pathways (WY)

cc: Members of the U.S. Senate
Members of the U.S. House of Representatives