



December 16, 2021

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
California Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

Autonomous Trucking will Help Fix the Broken Supply Chain and Address the Trucker Shortage

Dear Governor Newsom:

As we approach the holiday season, a broken supply chain has left many California store shelves empty, hitting families and gift-giving charities alike.¹ As Governor, you have made it clear that fixing the supply chain is a top priority for your administration, and you have implemented policies to help ease congestion and alleviate backlogs. We urge you to **simultaneously pursue solutions that help put autonomous trucks on the road** in California in an effort to end the supply chain crisis and resulting economic hardships.

As a center-left tech industry coalition, Chamber of Progress works to ensure that all Americans benefit from technological leaps. Research shows that autonomous vehicle technology would help to address issues including mobility for disabled Americans and seniors, transportation deserts, and traffic fatalities. Industry experts also suggest that autonomous trucks could be used to end a nationwide truck driver shortage that has contributed to the ongoing supply chain crisis.²

Across the country, the trucking industry has experienced extreme turnover and widespread job vacancies, resulting in significant delays to product shipments and rising prices for basic necessities. Though exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, retention has been an issue in trucking for decades. The American Trucking Association reports an annual turnover rate of 90 percent and projects that the nationwide shortage of truckers will double to over 160,000 job vacancies by 2030.³ Autonomous vehicles offer a solution to help fill the gap left by a strained labor market and high demand for timely shipping.

The crisis facing the trucking industry hasn't just resulted in delayed shipments, but also in higher prices for consumers. To attract and retain drivers, trucking companies have raced to offer increased pay and larger bonuses.⁴ The combination of growing labor expenses and rising fuel costs has resulted in a spike in the cost of shipping and a corresponding rise in the price of

¹Haleluya Hadero, *Supply Chain Problems Hit Charities' Holiday Gifts for Kids*, NBC Bay Area, (Dec. 2021)
<https://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/california/supply-chain-problems-hit-charities-holiday-gifts-for-kids/2744245/>

²Joanne Muller, *How autonomous trucks could fix our broken supply chains*, Axios, (Dec. 2021)
<https://www.axios.com/how-autonomous-trucks-could-fix-our-broken-supply-chains-41162ade-3b8d-43dd-a6f2-45063cee1f45.html>

³Michelle Fleury, *How will the US deal with a shortage of 80,000 truckers?*, BBC News, (Dec. 2021)
<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-59136957>

⁴Don Lee, *Facing record labor shortages, trucking firms battle fiercely for drivers*, LA Times, (Dec. 2021)
<https://www.latimes.com/politics/story/2021-12-07/facing-record-labor-shortages-trucking-firms-battle-fiercely-for-drivers>



consumer goods.⁵ Those price increases hit low-income families the hardest, with the cost of some everyday groceries increasing by as much as 50 percent.⁶

Autonomous, driverless trucks can mitigate these costs by filling driver vacancies, and eliminating the need for excessive recruitment, retention, and other overhead costs ultimately bringing down the price of shipping and consumer goods.

Recent polling shows **overwhelming support for autonomous vehicle (AV) testing and deployment among Democratic voters and union members.**⁷ A survey conducted by Morning Consult this September found that a majority of adults support AVs being tested in their state. Narrowing the results to respondents in Western states including California, the poll found that 58 percent of respondents favored local AV testing. For Democrats and union members, support was even higher; 60 percent of Democratic voters and 75 percent of labor union members support AV testing in their state.

While we have years to go before we see the deployment of self-driving trucks nationally, you can help California lead the way **by directing the Department of Motor Vehicles to commence a rulemaking enabling the testing and deployment of Class 8 autonomous trucks in the Golden State.** By helping guide the deployment of autonomous trucking with clear standards and rules, California can pave the way and help ensure the industry serves everyone and secures our supply chain.

We ask you to encourage the Department of Motor Vehicles to create pro-autonomous trucking rules and support the mission of autonomous trucking in order to address the truck driver shortage and ease the supply chain crisis, reducing the cost of consumer goods and making it easier for families to manage on a day-to-day basis.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

Montana Williams
Director of State & Local Public Policy
Chamber of Progress

⁵ Alex Longley, Catherine Bosley, and Deirdre Hipwell, *Out-of-Control Shipping Costs Fire Up Prices From Coffee to Toys*, Bloomberg Business, (Dec. 2021)

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-06-12/out-of-control-shipping-costs-fire-up-prices-from-coffee-to-toys>

⁶ Nelson D. Schwartz and Coral Murphy Marcos, *Higher Food Prices Hit the Poor and Those Who Help Them*, NY Times, (Dec. 2021) <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/27/business/economy/food-prices-us.html>

⁷ *Morning Consult Survey*, Chamber of Progress, <http://progresschamber.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Morning-Consult-AV-survey.pdf>