**CHAMBER
OF PROGRESS**

**Statement for the Record by Chamber of Progress**
**February 2, 2022 Hearing**
**"The Road Ahead for Automated Vehicles"**

February 2, 2022

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
Chairwoman
House Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
House Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Highways & Transit
House Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rodney Davis
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Highways & Transit
House Committee on
Transportation and Infrastructure
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives DeFazio, Norton, Graves, and Davis:

Chamber of Progress appreciates the opportunity to submit a statement for the record for the hearing entitled, "The Road Ahead for Automated Vehicles," held by the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure on February 2, 2022. Chamber of Progress is a new progressive tech industry group fighting for public policies that will build a fairer, more inclusive country in which all people benefit from technological leaps. Our partners include a number of autonomous vehicle (AV) companies, but our partner companies don't have a vote or veto over our positions.

**AVs Will Reduce Traffic Fatalities, Expand Access to Seniors and Disabled, Improve Emissions**

There are many benefits that AVs can provide to society. <u>AVs can provide access to people with disabilities and the elderly</u>. A Bureau of Transportation Statistics survey found that six million people with disabilities lack access to the transportation they need, limiting their ability to find job opportunities and see loved ones.[1] AV companies have the opportunity to

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[1] https://www.bts.gov/archive/publications/special_reports_and_issue_briefs/issue_briefs/number_03/entire

make transportation much more accessible from the start by accounting for a number of impairments, including visual and mobility, in their design within all of their fleets.

Additionally, studies forecast that <u>AVs could reduce greenhouse gas emissions from cars and trucks</u>—the biggest source of transportation emissions—by 80 percent.[2] Most AVs will be electric, and many others are hybrids. That's largely because electric vehicle (EV) technology and AV technology complement one another. Electric vehicles are easier for computers to control than traditional vehicles, and combining EV and AV technology maximizes cost and fuel savings. Plus, AVs drive more efficiently than humans can.

Finally, deploying AVs on the road now <u>could save hundreds of thousands of lives over the long term</u> as the technology continues to become more advanced every year.[3] Research shows that 90 percent of car crashes are caused by human error. By eliminating human error, AVs can make our roads safer. Studies suggest that putting AVs on the road now could save hundreds of thousands of lives over the long term.[4]

**Public Support for AVs is Strong**

The time is now to support robust AV deployment. In fact, a survey commissioned last fall by Chamber of Progress found that there is support for the deployment of AVs.[5]

The survey found that 53% of voters are ready to increase autonomous vehicle testing and deployment, and 53% are ready to ride in an AV either now or in the next five years. A larger majority of those surveyed (63%) believe there are major benefits to AVs including accessibility and independence for non-drivers, including wheelchair users, the blind, seniors, and those living in transportation deserts.

In fact, the same polling showed 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% of respondents favored local AV testing.

<u>For Democrats and union members, support was even higher;</u> 60% of Democratic voters and 75% of labor union members support AV testing in their state.

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[2] https://e360.yale.edu/features/will-self-driving-cars-usher-in-a-transportation-utopia-or-dystopia
[3] https://www.rand.org/blog/articles/2017/11/why-waiting-for-perfect-autonomous-vehicles-may-cost-lives.html
[4] https://www.rand.org/blog/articles/2017/11/why-waiting-for-perfect-autonomous-vehicles-may-cost-lives.html
[5] https://progresschamber.org/morning-consult-poll-dems-biden-voters-union-members-support-autonomous-vehicles/

**AVs have the potential to spur new job creations and fill in turnover gaps.**

In addition to the jobs created by increasing efficiency in the transportation and logistics industries, widespread use of AVs can increase demand for maintenance and IT professionals. To meet this demand, companies like Nuro have partnered with community colleges to create technician training programs.[6] Additionally, companies like Waymo, Zoox, and Cruise have hired remote human operators to assist their vehicles and improve passenger experience.[7]

The Department of Transportation also predicts that AVs can improve working conditions in existing transportation jobs by reducing the risk of accidents and shifting demand toward last-mile services and short trips.[8] For long-haul truckers, this could mean fewer nights spent sleeping in truck cabs and more time on deliveries close to home. Driverless vehicles would also cut down the amount of turnover the trucking industry faces as most drivers are of retirement age or close to it.

Finally, the Department of Labor and its state partners have created job transition and retraining programs to assist those affected by the introduction of autonomy. These entities help drivers adapt to new technologies and market conditions, helping them find gainful employment. By utilizing these driverless vehicles, involuntary job losses would be reduced.

**Government investment is needed to ensure a robust future with AVs.**

The timeline to a full transition to fully autonomous driving is unknown and difficult to predict, but the importance of ensuring a robust skilled workforce is critical to realizing the full benefits of AV technology. Governments at all levels have a real opportunity to not only ensure that innovation in this field flourishes, but also to help secure the future for current commercial drivers who are prepared to enter new roles. Furthermore, any new entrants should have robust opportunities to gain necessary training and skills.

There is real opportunity for governments to play a major role in helping commercial drivers prepare for an autonomous vehicle future. For example, Congress could establish grant programs to incentivize new entrants into training programs focused on roles established by evolving AV technology. As referenced in Senator Gary Peters' Workforce DATA Act,[9] Congress could also pass a provision that measures the impact of automation

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[6] https://www.losaltosonline.com/schools/de-anza-college-introduces-autonomous-vehicle-training-program/article_ffbd1d4c-57b6-11ec-b9db-3f562772a842.html

[7] https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2021-08-10/driverless-cars-are-proving-to-be-job-creators-at-least-so-far

[8] https://www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/2021-01/Driving%20Automation%20Systems%20in%20Long%20Haul%20Trucking%20and%20Bus%20Transit%20Preliminary%20Analysis%20of%20Potential%20Workforce%20Impacts.pdf

[9] https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/1738

on the workforce in order to inform workforce development strategies in the AV industry. Finally, Congress could pass legislation to direct the National Academies to study how to measure the impact of automation on the workforce, including job creation, job displacement, job retention, and skill shifts.

As industries evolve, it is important to build incentives for interested individuals to begin training for future positions that will be established under an AV workforce; however it is just as important to enhance or establish relevant programs that will respond to any potential job loss or job displacement.

Furthermore, the full array of roles that will be available under an AV workforce have yet to be determined. Therefore, fully understanding what potential positions may be created through industry evaluations and studies will be important in bolstering training programs and incentivizing new workers to join the industry.

Our country has undergone industrial change based on technological innovations for over a century. Now is the time to apply those lessons and develop creative and efficient avenues of ensuring that workers are prepared for a future with fully utilized AV technology.

Thank you for your leadership on this important issue and for holding this hearing.

Sincerely,

Koustubh "K.J." Bagchi
Senior Director, Federal Public Policy