March 11, 2022

Support S. 8468: Will Make New York a Safer And More Equitable Place

Senator Timothy M. Kennedy
Chair
Senate Transportation Committee
New York State Legislature

Dear Chair Kennedy and members of the committee,

I write on behalf of Chamber of Progress, a tech industry coalition promoting technology's progressive future. Our organization works to ensure that all Americans benefit from technological leaps.

We strongly **support S. 8468** and urge this committee to do the same. This bill is the best opportunity for the state of New York to safely usher in the benefits of autonomous vehicles.

First, AVs will help close the food gap. All New York residents should have access to healthy, affordable food options in their neighborhoods. Residents in low food access areas continue to be plagued by the food desert crisis and are forced to travel far away to get to grocery stores. In some communities AVs are delivering groceries and food via low-speed, seatless, passengerless autonomous vehicles. This would give New York residents that live outside food-rich areas the same convenient and affordable access to fresh fruits, vegetables, milk, and meat they need to live happily and healthily.

Second, AVs will help close the accessibility gap. One in five adult New Yorkers live with a disability.[1] Though public transit is available, it is harder for those with disabilities to navigate by bus or train in times of inclement weather, in times when an accessible stop is shut down, or when there is no room for their equipment on a busy day. For the blind and other people living with disabilities, safe autonomous vehicles can't arrive fast enough.

Third, AVs will bring safer streets and reduce the number of accidents. During the first half of 2021, 398 people lost their lives in traffic related accidents.[2] Research shows that at least 90% of car crashes are caused by human error, and studies suggest that putting AVs on the road now could save hundreds of thousands of lives over the long term. By eliminating cases of distracted drivers, drivers under the influence, or geographically lost drivers, AVs can reduce the number of pedestrian and bike fatalities that occur in New York.

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[1] https://www.health.ny.gov/community/disability/prevalence.htm#:~:text=Based%20on%20responses%20to%20the,an%20impairment%20or%20health%20condition.

[2] https://www.news10.com/news/ny-news/report-new-york-traffic-fatalities-increased-in-2021/#:~:text=In%20the%20first%20half%20of%202020%2C%20there%20were%20351%20traffic,also%20up%2019%25%20from%202019

Finally, AVs will spur new jobs in New York. The Federal Department of Transportation reported in 2021 that the use of automation systems would create jobs in the transportation and logistics industries, and other business sectors.[3] The US 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.

With the tremendous potential of AVs to make New York a safer and more equitable place, it is so important to test, improve, and deploy AVs without delay. For the sake of supporting those with disabilities, addressing food deserts, reducing traffic deaths, and increasing job opportunities, we encourage you to support S. 8468.

 Sincerely,

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

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[3] *Driving Automation Systems in Long Haul Trucking and Bus Transit*, U.S. Department of Transportation, (Jan. 2022) 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